

CHARITAS

SERVANT OF CHARITY: RESERVED PUBLICATION

THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD IN FR. GUANELLA

MESSAGES OF THE POPE

COMMUNICATIONS

DECREES

DECEASED CONFRERES

Editing Office: Casa Generalizia - Vicolo Clementi, 41 - 00148 Roma

ENGLISH EDITION

Year 91 - April 2013 - N. 229

CHARITAS n. 229
RESERVED TO THE SERVANTS OF CHARITY
YEAR XCI - APRIL 2013

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LETTER OF THE SUPERIOR GENERAL

THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD IN FR. GUANELLA

During this Year of Faith, the General Council wanted to prioritise our attention towards the Fatherhood of God, called for by motion no. 3 of the 19th GC: “The 19th General Chapter requests the General Council to appoint some confreres to make in-depth studies on topics specifically related to our charism: ‘the bond of charity’, ‘the Fatherhood of God’ and ‘our spiritual fatherhood’. The General Council will then prepare some formative materials on these topics”.

We have already received the study aids for this Year of Faith, centred on the Fatherhood of God and the implications of this fundamental aspect of our charism for our spiritual life and apostolic commitment.

I would also like to offer some points for reflection, to help everyone live with fervent awareness of the spiritual wealth that comes from the Fatherhood of God.

In his Wednesday audiences this year, the Holy Father, Benedict XVI, wanted to focus his attention on faith, and began appropriately with the first words of the Creed: “I believe in God the Father”.

“It is not always easy today to talk about fatherhood,” began the Pontiff, “especially in the Western World. Families are broken, the workplace is ever more absorbing, people worry and often struggle to make ends meet and the distracting presence of the media invades our

daily life: these are some of the many factors that can stand in the way of a calm and constructive relationship between a father and a child.

At times even imagining God as a father becomes problematic without credible models of reference. It is not easy for those who have experienced an excessively authoritarian and inflexible father or one who was indifferent and lacking in affection, or even absent from the life of the family, to think serenely of God and entrust themselves to him with confidence.

Yet the Gospel reveals to us this face of God as a Father who loves, even to the point of giving his own Son for humanity's salvation."

The Pope then continued his address, inviting us to reflect on our condition as children: we are weak children, in need of everything, and this fragility appeals with even greater strength to the goodness and tenderness of the Father, just as the Lord sends us on mission for the sake of people's weakness and asks of us to become fathers modelled on him.

While it is true that our culture today does not help us express in human terms the spiritual wealth of the gift that the Lord has given us with the charism, we cannot simply limit ourselves to complaining about the loss of values, but must witness to the beauty of being God's family and having received the mission to become family with the poor.

This is the primary challenge for us Guanellians today! We have a special responsibility: to discover the beauty and the formative value of what it means to be a father/mother, modelled on God's own Fatherhood/Motherhood. There is need today for the Guanellian charism to deeply influence culture with its charismatic values. Our main task is to transform our charism into culture through our witness and proclamation.

Christians have received the gift of God's fatherhood through the Jewish world and that of the early Christians. We must gain an ever deeper understanding of this gift, so that our faith in God the Father does not remain something superficial, but a motivated faith for which we can give reasons, because the world of today has urgent need of this hope.

The Guanellian charism is an element of hope for our troubled world.

We must rejoice in this charism we have received and live it faithfully, both in our relationship with God and the way we pray, and as a characteristic feature of our relationship with the world, beginning with our confreres. The charism must permeate and transform our whole life.

Therefore, I invite everyone to deepen their awareness of the charism, not only in terms of knowledge, but also as a spiritual and relational experience, as something that strengthens the identity the Spirit has given to us, and therefore as the joy of belonging to the Guanellian Family. The Guanellian charism and the spirituality it inspires is a sure answer to the many needs of the human heart, and it is our duty to make it known and give it to the Church and to the whole world for the benefit of all, starting with the poorest.

God's Fatherhood, the foundation of our charism

God's fatherhood is the central core of Fr. Guanella's spirituality. The gift (charism) Fr. Guanella received from God was the source and motivation of his relationship with God, his brothers and the world, both humanly and supernaturally. The experience of God's fatherhood is also the essence of the charism that Fr. Guanella has passed on to us. It is therefore important for us to ask ourselves: 'what does all this mean to me?'

In one way or another, God has called us to share in this charism so that it becomes the driving force of our life and our spirituality. This is something wonderful! It is the foundation of our being "family". Whenever we meet each other, we feel that we have something in common, beyond the fact of being from the same country or having become friends due to similarities of character or plans. It is something deeper, a gift that comes from the Spirit and makes us God's family, gives our lives a sense of confidence and makes us capable of understanding the poor in a very special way.

When did Fr. Guanella receive the charism?

He clearly did not receive it all at once, as it needed sufficient preparation. I have always liked to consider the short period spent in Olmo as particularly important. Without a special intervention of the Lord, these months would merely have been a time of failure, disappointment and frustrated hopes of being able to accomplish what God was asking of him.

He felt that God was asking something more of him, and so he was

able to give up other plans, such as staying with Don Bosco. It was in Olmo, tired and disheartened, when the “temptation” to return permanently to the Salesians arose once more, that Fr. Guanella became clearly aware that God was asking him for something different. And so, although he looked upon Don Bosco as a father, he decided to give up his plans with the Salesians for good, and to remain in expectation and openness towards the will of God. This was the time in which God revealed himself (‘the time of mercy!’).

The revelation of the charism occurred precisely in this situation of despair and material poverty, when, through discouragement, he came close to abandoning the project that God had sown in his heart. This was when the founder understood that, with God, all personal human plans must be put aside in order to receive and fulfil his true and unique plan for the one he calls. In this situation, Fr. Guanella had the spiritual consolation of tangibly experiencing the Fatherhood of God, who never abandons those who are faithful to him but ultimately rewards them.

Fr. Guanella arrived at a deep understanding of God as Father during the time of his greatest difficulty and trials: this is a guarantee that the charism is well founded. The presence of personal suffering and the need of God as a father is a fundamental experience that everyone has to undergo, and so Fr. Guanella made a commitment to allow himself to be guided by the Father in all that Providence would allow him to do. He referred to this time not only as the “time of Providence”, but also as the “time of Mercy”.

Fr. Guanella’s life can be divided into two phases: the first we could compare to climbing a mountain, when someone strives to find and achieve their goals, but experiences the difficulties of the journey and lack of support from those who ought to help. Having reached the mountain top with great effort (Olmo is a rocky peak at an altitude of about 1000 metres), enlightenment then occurs, as on Tabor, the ‘mountain of beatitude’, and from there Fr. Guanella, like the Lord’s three disciples, began his “descent”. He now felt himself led, urged and invited not to waste any more time, but to run down to the valley, and almost like an avalanche that has broken away from the mountain top, as he cascaded downwards he also swept everyone else along with him, becoming a force of love that could no longer be stopped by anyone or anything.

And so in Olmo Fr. Guanella received a special grace, through a living experience of God that would mark him for his entire life: that of

His Fatherhood. His human experience of family ties and various favourable circumstances was now brought to completeness in the gift of God as Father. Human experiences cannot adequately explain this gift: they can prepare for it and provide insight, but can never allow it to be savoured and loved as when it is truly received from God. This is also confirmed by Fr. Attilio Beria: on the peak of Olmo there was a revelation from God, somewhat similar to the revelation to Paul on the road to Damascus, although for Fr. Guanella it was not a radical novelty, as he was prepared to receive that gift. Nevertheless, we are talking about an extraordinary grace through which Fr. Guanella received a new ability to interpret life, based on his experience of God's fatherhood. With his grace, God ensures that the plan is no longer only that of the person who is called. It is no longer merely a human plan, but one that comes from God's will and for which he alone can ensure a successful outcome (Fr. Guanella felt as if he had Providence in his pocket). Thus Fr. Guanella lived with a deep conviction of having become like 'a puppet in the hands of Providence', without however feeling any frustration or loss of value and dignity. We have all heard how Paul VI, on the day of the Founder's beatification, asked the question: "What can we say about Fr. Guanella? What could we describe as his prominent characteristic?" He then answered with a classic phrase: "It is God who does!" Thus the life and work of Fr. Guanella was entirely shaped by God. This is still the fundamental attitude for living his charism.

From the Fatherhood of God to human fatherhood

In Olmo, therefore, there was a revelation concerning God as Father, a revelation that marked a profound change in Fr. Guanella and in his attitude towards others. He overcame the pessimism typical of that time, by which he had been influenced up to then: the human person fallen in sin was seen as a "worm" that crawled upon the earth.

From his experience of God's fatherhood, even human limitations acquired a new meaning. The human person, who without the grace of God is 'a pitiful wretch and a worm', is elevated by grace to the dignity of a child of God.

Fr. Guanella was led to affirm that for even the most limited person, there is always the possibility of progress and redemption. This

statement was something totally new to the pedagogical vision of his time, according to which people who committed crimes did so due to their inherently bad nature, and were therefore beyond remedy or redemption. Fr. Guanella's insight also provided a positive contribution to human development in the field of rehabilitation. People with mental disabilities were confined to asylums or kept inside their homes, segregated from others to prevent them causing any harm. Fr. Guanella discovered not only that these people do no harm to anyone, but that they are often the most loving and can benefit others and society through their simplicity and solidarity.

Today we could also apply this principle to those people who have not experienced their own parents' love during their childhood, due to the erosion of family values prevalent in our society. Although they have not experienced human fatherhood, there is still the certainty of a God who is Father of all, and can provide sufficient energy to overcome the difficulties of life.

Pain and death in the light of the charism of God's fatherhood.

Like Fr. Guanella, we Guanellians are often called to confront pain and death in our service to the brothers and sisters, and we need to give a meaning to these experiences that we are being offered by the charism of God's Fatherhood.

If we consider that Christ himself reached the fullness of understanding of God as Father on the cross, where he surrendered himself to the Father's will in total freedom, we can also understand why Fr. Guanella received the fullness of his charism during the hardest moment of his life.

Suffering is necessary in a person's life. Limitations are part of human nature, and when we prefer to hide them and look on ourselves as God, failure is the inevitable result. When people refuse to acknowledge their mortality and do everything to remove the experience of death, they become incapable of understanding life. The charism of God's fatherhood is also an answer to the need each person has of God. Those who receive this gift are able to understand life with greater optimism and hope. We, who live the spirituality of God's fatherhood, are able to face the experience of death in a very positive way.

One of the most important experiences in our houses is that of as-

sisting many people during the final moment of life. Death is a major challenge for today's society. People in our modern society often find themselves alone in the most important moment of life, and Fr. Guanella's faith helped him recognise this dramatic loneliness.

The 'Holy Crusade' of prayers for the dying (the Pious Union of St. Joseph) was Fr. Guanella's last spiritual intuition, and brought his charism of charity to completion. With spiritual attention to the last moment of human life, a new horizon opens towards a different and everlasting life. Fr. Guanella also left us this legacy and responsibility: being able to present and face death with a sense of faith and hope, because it gives us the certainty of meeting our Father, who awaits us in Heaven.

During this year, in which we celebrate the centenary of the approval of the Pious Union of St. Joseph for the dying, we have a special opportunity to gain deeper understanding of the spiritual and humanising sense of this charismatic intuition of the Founder, to live it with renewed commitment and to promote it among the faithful.

Integration of contemplation and action

Another aspect of God's fatherhood in Fr. Guanella is the integration of action and contemplation, or activity and mysticism. All charisms, and particularly that of God's fatherhood, are founded on mysticism: no charism can consist of asceticism or activity alone. A person that does not feel welcomed by God as his child cannot fully express the charism of God's fatherhood. Mystical contemplation of God means to see him, hear him and draw near to him as to a father, both in moments of prayer and when active and involved with one's neighbour.

We express it like this: "To see God and serve him in the poor". The Gospel says the same thing: "whatever you do for one of these little ones, you do it for me". We Guanellians not only give a glass of water or provide the poor with houses and nice things, but we also do everything to share human poverty and experience the presence of God there. Our mysticism is based on that which God himself chose, by humbling himself and assuming human nature: the kenosis, to the point of identifying with a disabled person that everyone has rejected. Who can see something positive in a person with serious disabilities, who is rejected

and marginalised by everyone? Only those who have discovered that God is Father of all, making that person a “child”, in fact a “beloved child” of the Father who is in heaven. This is the mysticism of the mission, the mysticism of charity. When we have attained this, we will be saints! Fr. Guanella is a saint, not because he did great things or extraordinary material works, but because of his willingness to allow God to act and because he was able to recognise God in the lowliest creatures. This is his holiness!

Faith in Providence

Faith in Providence is a logical consequence of the Guanellian charism.

When Fr. Guanella said he felt that Providence was in his pocket, he meant that he had made a pact with God, which he would describe with phrases such as: “I work until midnight, and after midnight God will do the rest”.

Belief in Providence requires commitment and collaboration with the grace of God.

The clearest form of collaboration with God’s Providence is certainly work and effort. He began one of his most important booklets of spirituality (‘Maxims of Spirit and Action’) by talking about hard work (effort): “work until midnight and then go to sleep, because God will do the rest”. This is the balance that gives serenity and peace. When some of his confreres asked him: “What will become of us when you are no longer here to guide us?” Fr. Guanella responded with great calmness and simplicity: “The Lord will send others, better than me, to continue his work. If the work is God’s and not mine, there will be people to continue it!”

God’s Fatherhood-Motherhood and family spirit

Pope John Paul I had the beautiful insight into fatherhood and motherhood as being intimately linked in God. When we think of God’s fatherhood, we include all the maternal aspects and attitudes of God evident in the Old Testament and completed by Jesus and the doctrine of the Church.

Thus we can say that also in Fr. Guanella the charism is expressed in human terms with the integration of female and male elements to attain the fullness of charity and service to the poor. Likewise, there can be no true family or balanced development of children without this integration.

This leads to some necessary consequences and duties that derive from the charism:

To welcome those that have no one and offer them a family environment

This family atmosphere must be clearly perceived in our homes, because it is a specific aspect of our spirit. People that visit our houses normally say that they can feel this, even if there is now a danger of obscuring it and giving precedence to other, more technical and organisational elements of our service.

Characterising our educational relationship with our guests

The Guanellian educational method is not merely a methodology but a spirituality, and therefore requires us to assimilate certain interior values and attitudes that allow us to reach the hearts of the people with whom we live. These values and attitudes are well described and explained in the Basic Document for Guanellian educational projects.

Fr. Guanella received and appreciated the preventive system while he was living with don Bosco, but he combined it with a particular personal style to adapt it to the situations of poverty in which he worked, giving it his own fatherly and caring touch, which was able to win over even the least intelligent of people and those furthest from the Church.

Even today we have much to say to the world regarding the profound crisis in education, due to the lack of the figure and role of the father in a western culture centred on freedom and self-fulfilment.

Our educational proposal, based on the charism of God's fatherhood, is a privileged environment for our charitable service, in which we can express all the potential of the spiritual fruitfulness and fatherhood of someone who understood the fatherly way in which God educates us all.

An exciting conclusion!

The charism makes us true evangelisers, educators in the faith and, above all, fathers.

St. Paul, when speaking to the believers in Corinth, describes himself in the following terms: “You may have many teachers, instructors and educators, but you have only one father, and it was I who fathered you in Christ”.

The father in a family is the one who begets, not only physically, but especially morally and spiritually, by forming the heart of his child.

Therefore, if we also wish to correctly apply the educative method based on the principle that every human work is a participation in God’s fatherhood, we need to seriously involve ourselves in achieving the purpose of all life-giving fatherhood, which is to elevate people and allow them to grow in all those attitudes that make them true fathers and mothers in the image of God.

Therefore, we are all fathers in a certain sense. Education cannot be imparted without love. We are constantly repeating this: education is a work of the heart and, as such, has to reach the hearts of others in order to generate moral and spiritual development in them, so that they in turn may learn to continually grow in their ability to transmit love to those around them.

Fr. ALFONSO CRIPPA
Superior General

Rome, 19 March 2013
Solemnity of St. Joseph

MESSAGES OF THE POPE

REFLECTIONS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI PUBLISHED FOR THE FIRST TIME ON THE OCCASION OF THE 50th ANNIVERSARY OF THE OPENING OF THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL

It was a splendid day on 11 October 1962 when the Second Vatican Council opened with the solemn procession into St Peter's Basilica in Rome of more than two thousand Council Fathers. In 1931 Pius XI had dedicated this day to the feast of the Divine Motherhood of Mary, mindful that 1,500 years earlier, in 431, the Council of Ephesus had solemnly recognized this title for Mary in order to express God's indissoluble union with man in Christ. Pope John XXIII had chosen this day for the beginning of the Council so as to entrust the great ecclesial assembly, which he had convoked, to the motherly goodness of Mary and to anchor the Council's work firmly in the mystery of Jesus Christ. It was impressive to see in the entrance procession bishops from all over the world, from all peoples and all races: an image of the Church of Jesus Christ which embraces the whole world, in which the peoples of the earth know they are united in his peace.

It was a moment of extraordinary expectation. Great things were about to happen. The previous Councils had almost always been convoked for a precise question to which they were to provide an answer. This time there was no specific problem to resolve. But precisely because of this, a general sense of expectation hovered in the air: Christianity, which had built and formed the Western world, seemed more and more to be losing its power to shape society.

It appeared weary and it looked as if the future would be determined by other spiritual forces. The sense of this loss of the present on the part of Christianity, and of the task following on from that, was well summed up in the word “*aggiornamento*” (updating). Christianity must be in the present if it is to be able to form the future. So that it might once again be a force to shape the future, John XXIII had convoked the Council without indicating to it any specific problems or programmes. This was the greatness and at the same time the difficulty of the task that was set before the ecclesial assembly.

The various episcopates undoubtedly approached the great event with different ideas. Some of them arrived rather with an attitude of expectation regarding the programme that was to be developed. It was the episcopates of Central Europe – Belgium, France and Germany – that came with the clearest ideas. In matters of detail, they stressed completely different aspects, yet they had common priorities. A fundamental theme was ecclesiology, that needed to be studied in greater depth from a Trinitarian and sacramental viewpoint and in connection with salvation history; then there was a need to amplify the doctrine of primacy from the First Vatican Council by giving greater weight to the episcopal ministry. An important theme for the episcopates of Central Europe was liturgical renewal, which Pius XII had already started to implement. Another central aspect, especially for the German episcopate, was ecumenism: the shared experience of Nazi persecution had brought Protestant and Catholic Christians closer together; this now had to happen at the level of the whole Church, and to be developed further. Then there was also the group of themes: Revelation – Scripture – Tradition – Magisterium. For the French, the subject of the relationship between the Church and the modern world came increasingly to the fore – in other words the work of the so-called “Schema XIII”, from which the *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* later emerged. This point touches on the real expectations of the Council. The Church, which during the Baroque era was still, in a broad sense, shaping the world, had from the nineteenth century onwards visibly entered into a negative relationship with the modern era, which had only then properly begun. Did it have to remain so? Could the Church not take a positive step into the new era? Behind the vague expression “today’s world” lies the question of the relationship with the modern era. To clarify this, it would have been necessary to define more clearly the essential features that constitute the modern era. “Schema XIII” did not succeed in doing this. Although the Pastoral Constitution expressed many important elements for an understanding of the “world” and made significant contributions to the question of Christian ethics, it failed to offer substantial clarification on this point.

Unexpectedly, the encounter with the great themes of the modern epoch did not happen in the great Pastoral Constitution, but instead in two minor docu-

ments, whose importance has only gradually come to light in the context of the reception of the Council. First, there is the *Declaration on religious Liberty*, which was urgently requested, and also drafted, by the American Bishops in particular. With developments in philosophical thought and in ways of understanding the modern State, the doctrine of tolerance, as worked out in detail by Pius XII, no longer seemed sufficient. At stake was the freedom to choose and practise religion and the freedom to change it, as fundamental human rights and freedoms. Given its inner foundation, such a concept could not be foreign to the Christian faith, which had come into being claiming that the State could neither decide on the truth nor prescribe any kind of worship. The Christian faith demanded freedom of religious belief and freedom of religious practice in worship, without thereby violating the law of the State in its internal ordering; Christians prayed for the emperor, but did not worship him. To this extent, it can be said that Christianity, at its birth, brought the principle of religious freedom into the world. Yet the interpretation of this right to freedom in the context of modern thought was not easy, since it could seem as if the modern version of religious freedom presupposed the inaccessibility of the truth to man and so, perforce, shifted religion into the sphere of the subjective. It was certainly providential that thirteen years after the conclusion of the Council, Pope John Paul II arrived from a country in which freedom of religion had been denied by Marxism, in other words by a particular form of modern philosophy of the State. The Pope had come, as it were, from a situation resembling that of the early Church, so that the inner orientation of the faith towards the theme of freedom, and especially freedom of religion and worship, became visible once more.

The second document that was to prove important for the Church's encounter with the modern age came into being almost by chance and it developed in various phases. I am referring to the *Declaration "Nostra Aetate" on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions*. At the outset the intention was to draft a declaration on relations between the Church and Judaism, a text that had become intrinsically necessary after the horrors of the Shoah. The Council Fathers from Arab countries were not opposed to such a text, but they explained that if there were an intention to speak of Judaism, then there should also be some words on Islam. How right they were, we in the West have only gradually come to understand. Lastly the realization grew that it was also right to speak of two other great religions – Hinduism and Buddhism – as well as the theme of religion in general. Then, following naturally, came a brief indication regarding dialogue and collaboration with the religions, whose spiritual, moral, and socio-cultural values were to be respected, protected and encouraged (*ibid.*, 2). Thus, in a precise and extraordinarily dense document, a theme is opened up whose importance could not be foreseen at the time. The task that it involves and the efforts that are still necessary

in order to distinguish, clarify and understand, are appearing ever more clearly. In the process of active reception, a weakness of this otherwise extraordinary text has gradually emerged: it speaks of religion solely in a positive way and it disregards the sick and distorted forms of religion which, from the historical and theological viewpoints, are of far-reaching importance; for this reason the Christian faith, from the outset, adopted a critical stance towards religion, both internally and externally.

If at the beginning of the Council the dominant groups were the Central European Episcopates with their theologians, during the Council sessions the scope of the common endeavour and responsibility constantly broadened. The bishops considered themselves apprentices at the school of the Holy Spirit and at the school of reciprocal collaboration, but at the same time servants of the word of God who were living and working in faith. The Council Fathers neither could nor wished to create a new or different Church. They had neither the authority nor the mandate to do so. It was only in their capacity as bishops that they were now Council Fathers with a vote and decision-making powers, that is to say, on the basis of the Sacrament and in the Church of the Sacrament. For this reason they neither could nor wished to create a different faith or a new Church, but rather to understand these more deeply and hence truly to “renew them”. This is why a hermeneutic of rupture is absurd and is contrary to the spirit and the will of the Council Fathers.

In Cardinal Frings I had a “father” who lived this spirit of the Council in an exemplary way. He was a man of great openness and breadth, but he also knew that faith alone leads us out into the open, into that space which remains barred to the positivist spirit. This is the faith that he wished to serve with the authority he had received through the sacrament of Episcopal Ordination. I cannot but be ever grateful to him for having brought me – the youngest professor of the Catholic theology faculty of the University of Bonn – as his consultant to the great Church assembly, thereby enabling me, alongside the others, to attend that school and to walk the path of the Council from within. The present volume contains a collection of the various writings that I presented at that school. They are thoroughly fragmentary offerings, which also reveal the learning process that the Council and its reception meant and still means for me. I hope that despite all their limitations, these various offerings, combined, will help to make the Council better understood and to implement it in a healthy ecclesial life. I warmly thank Archbishop Gerhard Ludwig Müller and his collaborators at the *Pope Benedict XVI Institute* for the extraordinary commitment they have taken on in order to produce this volume.

Castel Gandolfo, on the Feast of Saint Eusebius, Bishop of Vercelli, 2 August 2012

BENEDICT XVI: A PONTIFICATE CENTRED ON CHARITY

Charity has been a central feature of the pontificate of Benedict XVI, from his encyclicals to his Lenten message this year, in which he stated that “believing in charity calls forth charity”. This evangelical word describes the Pope himself, who reminds us that there can be no real Eucharist unless it becomes bread broken for others, and love for the least.” Msgr. Enrico Feroci, Director of Caritas in the diocese of Rome, keenly emphasises the Pontiff’s precious magisterial teaching on charity. He recalls gestures and meetings he had with the Holy Father during his visits to various institutes in the capital.

“Three years ago, on 14 February 2010, when the Pope came to visit us at the Don Luigi Di Liegro Hostel in via Marsala, near Termini station, one of the female guests greeted him on behalf of all the others. I noticed that he was moved while listening to her speaking; his eyes moistened when he heard that the poor were going to pray for him. We were very touched by his humanity: it was a great sign of his involvement not just with his mind, but also with his heart.

Another historic meeting occurred on 11 June 2011, when the Pope wanted to receive representatives of the various Roma and Gypsy ethnic groups in the Paul VI Audience Hall. “May your people never again be the object of harassment, rejection and contempt! On your part, always seek justice, legality and reconciliation and do your utmost never to be the cause of suffering for others,” he emphasised on that occasion. “It was a truly unforgettable event: for the first time a Pope welcomed Roma and Sinti people to his home, recalling the persecution they suffered during World War II and showing his affection for the Gypsy world in general”, commented Marco Impagliazzo, President of the Community of Sant’Egidio, which in these eight years of pontificate has been graced on several occasions by the presence of Pope Benedict XVI. On 27 December 2009, feast of the Holy Family, the Pontiff wanted to go to the soup kitchen run by the community on Via Dandolo.

He was welcomed not only by the Sant’Egidio representatives and volunteers, but also by a Romany woman and an immigrant from Senegal. After eating together with the 150 guests, he pointed out in his address: “What happens at home is taking place here today: those who serve and help mingle with those who are helped and served and those in greatest need are given priority”. These were key words for Marco Impagliazzo “to understand that the poor are not ‘clients’ of the Church, but that the spirit of the soup kitchen is similar to that of a family: there is no distinction between the volunteers and guests”.

Recently, on 18 November 2012, Benedict XVI visited the Community of Sant'Egidio's "Viva gli Anziani" home for the elderly and shared some reflections on the value of old age and the life of the guests. The president of the community remembers "the sense of humility, humanity and kindness conveyed by the Pope: he listened to many stories and chatted with several people, showing his closeness to people in need, and encouraged them to pray as intercessors before God – precisely the mission that he has chosen to live through his renunciation of the pontificate".

"Sometimes we tend, in fact, to reduce the term "charity" to solidarity or simply humanitarian aid. It is important, however, to remember that the greatest work of charity is evangelization, which is the "ministry of the word". There is no action more beneficial – and therefore more charitable – towards one's neighbour than to break the bread of the word of God, to share with him the Good News of the Gospel, to introduce him to a relationship with God: evangelization is the highest and the most integral promotion of the human person", Pope Benedict XVI stated in his message for Lent 2013 on the topic: "Believing in charity calls forth charity - We have come to know and to believe in the love God has for us" (1 Jn 4:16), presented today at the Vatican press office. The Pope talks about the relationship between faith and charity from two different points of view: the first one is theological and shows how faith constitutes "an answer to the love of God" and charity, on its turn, is as a concrete expression of "life in faith". The second one is more practical and experiential, in which believers are called to show, through "concrete works of charity", how their life changed after having experienced "the love of God"

A personal adhesion. Being Christian – the Pontiff writes, referring to his Enciclica 'Deus caritas est' – is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction... Since God has first loved us, love is now no longer a mere "command"; it is the response to the gift of love with which God draws near to us". Faith is "this personal adherence – which involves all our faculties – to the revelation of God's gratuitous and 'passionate' love for us". However, Benedict XVI underlines that "this process is always open-ended: love is never finished and complete", on the contrary, Christians are "profoundly open to loving their neighbour in concrete ways" in a profound disposition to charity. Charity is conceived as "walking in the truth", that is an interior and exterior dynamism which, by progressively drawing near to "the love of God", pushes believers to "put into practice" the love received, for the benefit of the neighbour, especially the most needy ones.

Between fideism and moral activism. At this point of the message for the Lent, the pontiff warns about the risk we easily could run. He writes, in light

of the above, that “it is clear that we can never separate, let alone oppose, faith and charity. These two theological virtues are intimately linked, and it is misleading to posit a contrast or “dialectic” between them. On the one hand, he explains, “it would be too one-sided to place a strong emphasis on the priority and decisiveness of faith and to undervalue and almost despise concrete works of charity, reducing them to a vague humanitarianism”. Though, “on the other hand it is equally unhelpful to overstate the primacy of charity and the activity it generates, as if works could take the place of faith. For a healthy spiritual life, it is necessary to avoid both fideism and moral activism”. At this point, Benedict XVI analyses the meaning of “charity”, by linking it to its highest form, that is evangelisation. Referring to the words of Pope Paul VI, he affirms that “the proclamation of Christ is the first and principal contributor to development”. And in order to explain such a truth, he says also that “works of charity are not primarily the result of human effort, in which to take pride, but they are born of faith”, giving testimony to Christ.

Looking towards the future with hope. At the end of his message, the Pontiff continues his reflections on the theological aspects of the relationship between faith and charity. He reminds that “faith, as gift and response, causes us to know the truth of Christ as Love incarnate and crucified, as full and perfect obedience to the Father’s will and infinite divine mercy towards neighbour”. Such a faith “invites us to look towards the future with the virtue of hope, in the confident expectation that the victory of Christ’s love will come to its fullness”. On the other hand, “charity ushers us into the love of God manifested in Christ and joins us in a personal and existential way to the total and unconditional self-giving of Jesus to the Father and to his brothers and sisters”. His message exhorts each believer to ask themselves whether their faith is really “oriented towards charity” and “is as genuine”, that is, whether it becomes concrete works of charity. In this sense, Benedict XVI defines charity “as the fulfilment of all the virtues”.

* * *

During this year the Pope benedict XVI gave us two messages on charity on the occasion of the Lent and the World Day of Prayer for Vocations. Almost at the end of the year he issued a “Motu Proprio” on the Service of Charity: “Intima Ecclesia Natura”. It analyses three different aspects which may enrich our guanellian spirituality centred on charity.¹

¹ *Message of His Holiness Benedict XVI for Lent 2012; Message of His Holiness for the XLIX World Day of Prayer for Vocations, 29th april 2012 - IV Sunday of Easter; Apostolic Letter as Motu Proprio of His Holiness Benedict XVI on the service of charity.*

COMMUNICATIONS

A) CONFRERES

a) MEMBERS AT THE END OF DECEMBER 2012

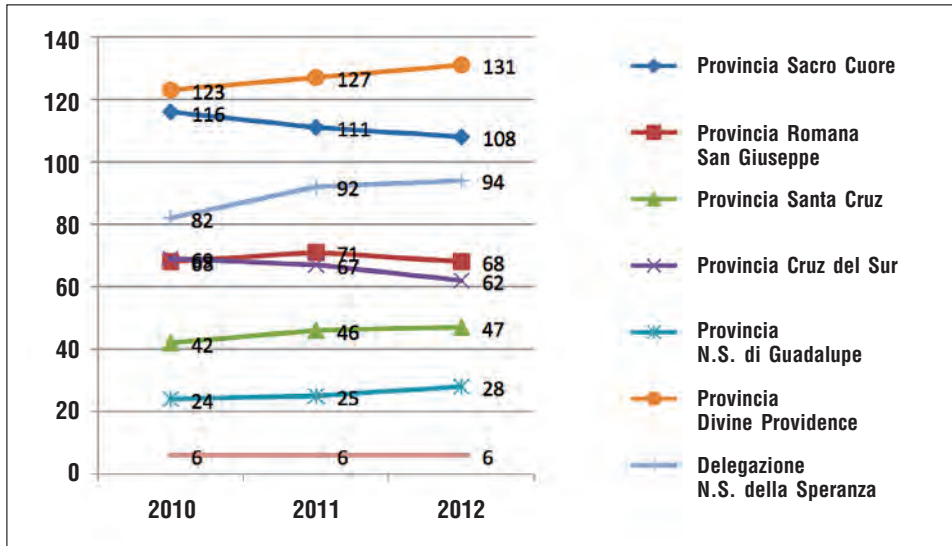
	Bishops	Priests	Seminarists	Brothers	Total
Perpetual	1	320	10	34	365
Temporary	–	–	149	4	153
Novice	–	–	–	–	25
Total	1	320	159	38	543

b) GEOGRAPHY OF THE CONGREGATION

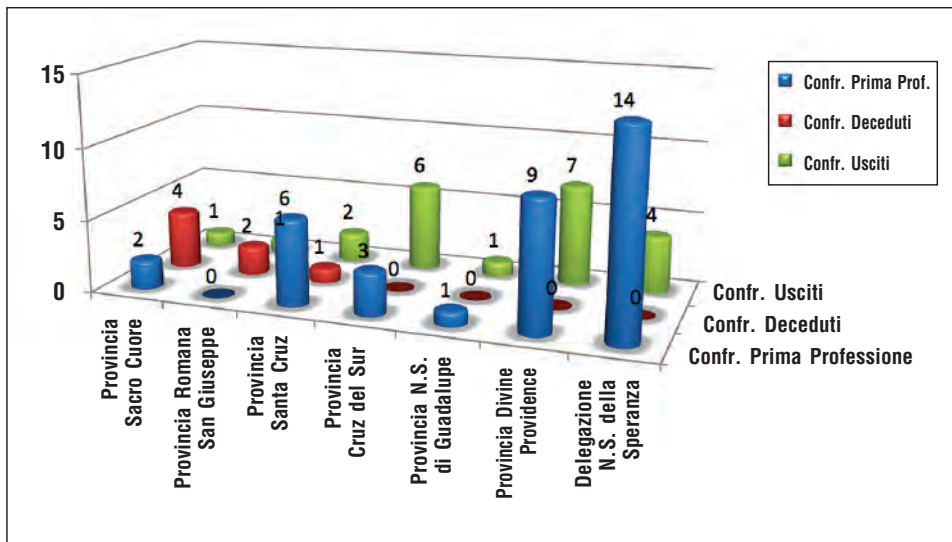
Country	Community	Perpetual				Temporary		Novice	Total
		Bishops	Priests	Seminarists	Brothers	Seminarists	Brothers		
Argentina	6	–	16	–	4	13	–	11	44
Brasile	10	1	28	–	5	3	–	–	37
Cile	3	–	10	–	5	–	–	–	15
Colombia	2	–	3	–	–	–	–	–	3
Colombia (C.G.)	1	–	3	–	–	3	–	–	6
Filippine	2	–	8	–	–	2	–	2	12
Ghana	1	–	3	–	–	2	1	–	6
Guatemala	1	–	3	–	–	–	–	–	3
India	5	–	34	1	–	56	–	8	99
Israele	1	–	2	–	1	–	–	–	3
Italia (S. Cuore)	19	–	85	–	8	2	1	–	96
Italia (Romana)	11	–	58	–	1	–	1	–	60
Italia (Curia)	2	–	11	8	–	15	–	–	34
Messico	4	–	6	–	1	–	–	–	7
Nigeria	2	–	7	1	3	33	–	4	48
Paraguay	3	–	8	–	1	–	–	–	9
Polonia	–	–	2	–	–	–	–	–	2
R.D. Congo	2	–	7	–	4	20	1	–	32
Spagna	2	–	5	–	1	–	–	–	6
Spagna (C.G.)	1	–	3	–	–	–	–	–	3
Svizzera	1	–	5	–	–	–	–	–	5
U.S.A.	2	–	11	–	–	–	–	–	11
Vietnam	1	–	2	–	–	–	–	–	2
Total	82	1	320	10	34	149	4	25	543

c) DIAGRAMS FOR STATISTIC 2012

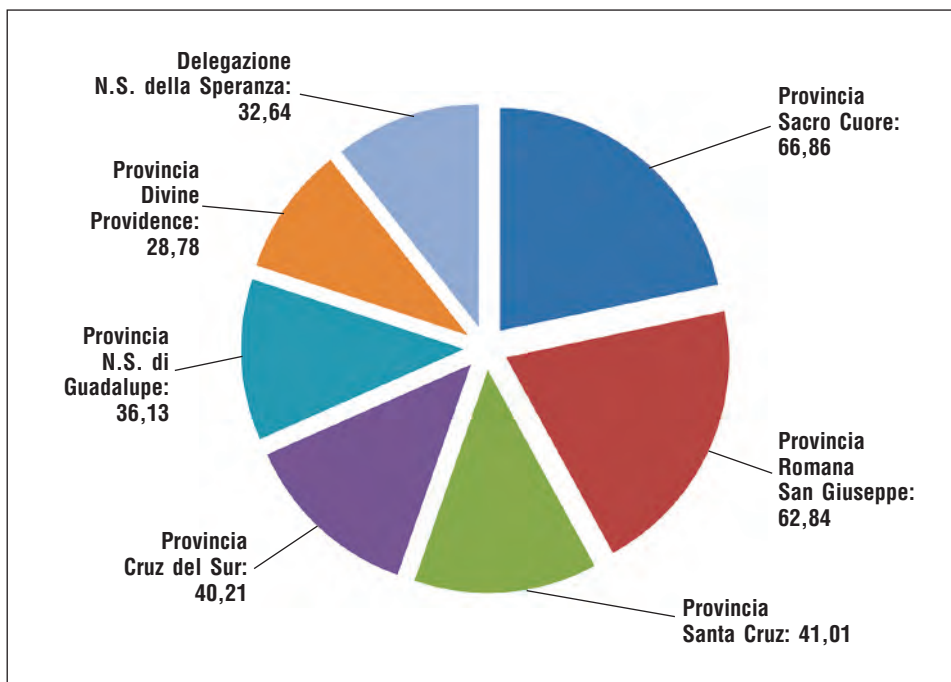
- 1) Variability on the number of confreres in each province: (as is noted, in the diagram only last three years are taken into account. Figures include from novices to confreres with perpetual vows, on the basis of the province they belong to, and the Community of the Generalate. Confreres who left the Congregation are not taken into account)



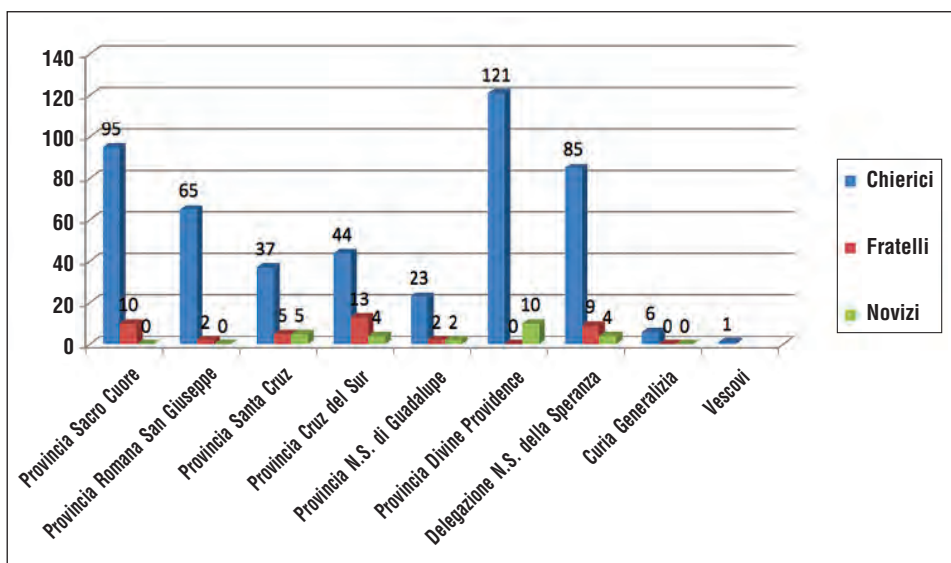
- 2) Confreres who made their First Religious Profession, confreres deceased or who left in 2012



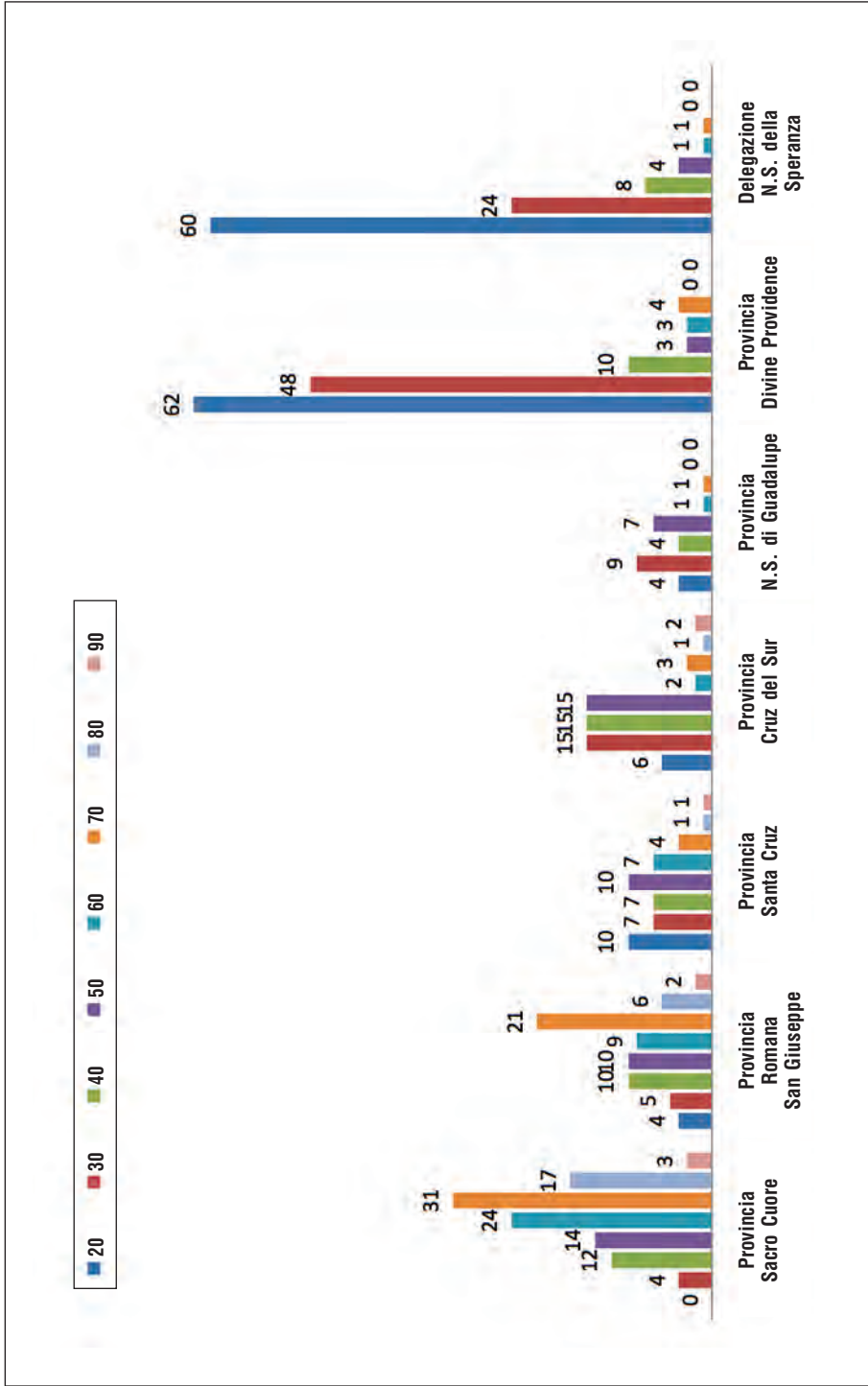
3) Average age of confreres for each Province



4) Distribution of confreres depending on the Province, Generalate and episcopacy in 2012



5) Number of Confreses in each Province and Delegation grouped by age braket



d) JOYFUL EVENTS IN 2013

1. 90 years and over		Years
Romanò don Luigi	09-03-1916	97
Bredice don Armando	22-08-1917	96
Cantoni don Giuseppe	16-07-1920	93
Credaro don Tito	11-02-1922	91
Vaccari don Danilo	01-12-1922	»
Invernizzi don Antonio	06-12-1922	»
Altieri don Vincenzo	11-12-1922	»
Belotti don Francesco	06-02-1923	90
Di Ruscio don Romano	24-04-1923	»
2. Over 80 years old		
Fogliamanzillo Fr. Salvatore	05-04-1924	89
Moroni don Angelo	25-09-1924	»
Altieri don Marcello	27-12-1924	»
Rizziero don Giuliano	29-12-1924	89
Castelnuovo don Mario	23-08-1925	88
Maglia don Carlo	21-07-1926	87
Liborio don Battista	05-09-1926	»
Maniero don Pietro	18-05-1927	86
Pasquali don Pietro	09-10-1927	»
Gandossini don Anselmo	22-07-1928	85
Gridelli don Tonino	13-12-1928	»
Scano don Pietro	15-06-1929	84
Tamburini don Antonio	23-10-1929	»
Casali don Tarcisio	10-02-1930	83
Cornaggia don Franco	11-12-1930	»
Sala don Mario	08-01-1931	82
Gasparoli don Mario	08-06-1931	»
Zanella don Settimo	10-06-1931	»
Merlin don Giuseppe	22-09-1931	»
Brulletti don Pietro	24-09-1931	»
Bini don Giuseppe	04-10-1931	»
3. 80th birthday		
Giannini don Giuseppe	16-08-1933	
Viganò don Piero Giovanni	05-11-1933	
Terzaghi don Leonardo	20-11-1933	

4. 50th birthday

Arija Garcia don Juan Manuel	01-01-1963
Rodríguez Caballero don Marcial	30-06-1963
Vogt don Mauro	28-07-1963
Valisi Fr. Carlo Ivano	13-12-1963

5. 50th anniversary of Profession

Troncoso Salazar don José Carlos	12-03-1963
Galli don Giuseppe	24-09-1963
Oggioni don Paolo	24-09-1963
Simion don Vincenzo	24-09-1963

6. 25th anniversary of Profession

Maidana Muñoz Fr. Hugo Eduardo	01-03-1988
Arockiasamy don John Bosco	08-09-1988

7. 50th anniversary of Ordination

Gandossini don Anselmo	23-06-1963
Simion don Pier Giorgio	23-06-1963
Minetti don Oronzo	30-06-1963

8. 25th anniversary of Ordination

Biondo don Arcangelo	26-03-1988
Lorenzetti don Fabio	23-04-1988
Frasson don Agostino	11-06-1988

B) EVENTS OF CONSECRATION

a) NOVICES

1. Bangalore (Divine Providence Province)

Alexis Francis Xavier
Almaraj Johnson Rajesh Kumar
Bisa Bea Gilberto
Latorre Barquilla Dennis

Maria Nathan Bosco Yesuraj
Mariya Anthuvan Arun David
Packiam Kulandai
Prasad Vijay Kumar Pilla
Sebastian Arockia Nathan
Solomon Stalin

2. Luján (Province of Cruz del Sur - Province of Santa Cruz - Our Lady of Guadalupe Province)

Almeyda John René
Aquino Marquez Arturo
Díaz Cáceres Benoní
Fachin Perini Marcio Antonio
Garcete Ramos Edelberto
Hüning Ricardo
Kroetz Alexandre
Monaco Rodrigo
Ovelar Ruiz Díaz Luis Ernesto
Souza Santos Renan Rafael
Zwirtes Sulzbaker Diovane

3. Nnebukwu (Delegation “Our Lady of Hope”)

Akong Christopher
Ekpo Mark
Kapapa Joel
Mongi Herman

b) FIRST RELIGIOUS PROFESSION

Anthony Jayaraj Saul	<i>Divine Providence Province</i>
Irudaya Raj Vanthu Rayar	<i>Divine Providence Province</i>
Jeyaseelan Martin	<i>Divine Providence Province</i>
Joseph Susaikannu	<i>Divine Providence Province</i>
Maria Antony Raj Savari Viagappan	<i>Divine Providence Province</i>
Packia Raj Sebastian	<i>Divine Providence Province</i>
Praveen Louis Raj	<i>Divine Providence Province</i>
Robert Kennedy Jesu	<i>Divine Providence Province</i>
Vinnarasan Isaac	<i>Divine Providence Province</i>
Biancotto Stefano	<i>Sacred Heart Province</i>

Pozzoli Paolo	<i>Sacred Heart Province</i>
Brítez Arlindo	<i>Province of Cruz del Sur</i>
Da Silva Martins Gildenor	<i>Province of Santa Cruz</i>
De Abreu Eli Marcel	<i>Province of Santa Cruz</i>
De Macedo Elimar Antonio	<i>Province of Santa Cruz</i>
Do Santos Costa Francisco Bernardone	<i>Province of Santa Cruz</i>
Gonçalves Valdecir	<i>Province of Santa Cruz</i>
Peredes Armoa Juan Carlos	<i>Province of Santa Cruz</i>
Rodríguez Caballero Luis	<i>Province of Santa Cruz</i>
Santos Da Silva Tiago	<i>Province of Santa Cruz</i>
Vargas Villamizar Rubén Darío	<i>Province of Santa Cruz</i>
Amodu Ochoyoda Benjamin	<i>Delegation Our Lady of Hope</i>
Baya Vangu Junior Joseph	<i>Delegation Our Lady of Hope</i>
Ilumu Kibuba Gabriel Sedar	<i>Delegation Our Lady of Hope</i>
Likita Neope Philimon	<i>Delegation Our Lady of Hope</i>
Njoku Onyedikachukwu Felix	<i>Delegation Our Lady of Hope</i>
Nland Massaba Landry Pierre	<i>Delegation Our Lady of Hope</i>
Nwanze Nwaebuni Stephen	<i>Delegation Our Lady of Hope</i>
Nzoloko Kisambu Rodrigue	<i>Delegation Our Lady of Hope</i>
Okafor Udoka Uchenna Jonathan	<i>Delegation Our Lady of Hope</i>
Oparaugo Chidiebere MacDonald	<i>Delegation Our Lady of Hope</i>
Pay-Pay Guiwini Jethro Thomas	<i>Delegation Our Lady of Hope</i>
Terkula Ierkpen Patrick	<i>Delegation Our Lady of Hope</i>
Ufinama Ntenda Gabriel	<i>Delegation Our Lady of Hope</i>
Valentine Chidozie Patrick	<i>Delegation Our Lady of Hope</i>

c) PERPETUAL RELIGIOUS PROFESSION

Makalu Nzioko Jean De Dieu	(R.D. Congo) in Kinshasa	24-10-2012
Mbanga Musi Leon	(R.D. Congo) in Kinshasa	24-10-2012

d) PERPETUAL RELIGIOUS PROFESSION AND DIACONATE

Maria Soosai Dominic			
Sebastian Baskar	(India) in Poonamallee	11-02-2012	12-02-2012
Antonysamy			
Daniel Jegan Patrick	(India) in Poonamallee	11-02-2012	12-02-2012
Arockiasamy John Peter	(India) in Poonamallee	11-02-2012	12-02-2012
Arulappan Kanikkai Raj	(India) in Poonamallee	11-02-2012	12-02-2012
Alletto Salvatore	(Italy) in Rome Theol. Sem.	21-04-2012	22-04-2012

Alphonse Baktiswalagan	(Italy)	in Rome Theol. Sem.	21-04-2012	22-04-2012
Cortes Rocha Marcos	(Italy)	in Rome Theol. Sem.	21-04-2012	22-04-2012
Espinoza Cruz Jesus	(Italy)	in Rome Theol. Sem.	21-04-2012	22-04-2012
Luwunu François	(Italy)	in Rome Theol. Sem.	21-04-2012	22-04-2012
Putonor Baridi Lawrence	(Italy)	in Rome Theol. Sem.	21-04-2012	22-04-2012
Rayapillai Amalorpavanathan	(Italy)	in Rome Theol. Sem.	21-04-2012	22-04-2012
Unegbu Vitus	(Italy)	in Rome Theol. Sem.	21-04-2012	22-04-2012

e) PRIESTLY ORDINATION

Corvalán Roberto Carlos	(Argentine)	in Santiago del Estero	26/05/2012
Brítez Godoy Antonio	(Paraguay)	in Caaguazù	11/08/2012
Maria Soosai Dominic Sebastian Baskar	(India)	in Poonamallee	22/08/2012
Arockiasamy John Peter	(India)	in Cuddalore	22/08/2012
Arulappan Kanikkai Raj	(India)	in Poonamallee	22/08/2012
Cortes Rocha Marcos	(Mexico)	in Puebla	24/10/2012
Espinoza Cruz Jesus	(Mexico)	in Puebla	24/10/2012
Alletto Salvatore	(Italy)	in Agrigento	08/12/2012
Okechukwu Anyanwu Leonard	(Nigeria)	in Aguweze	21/12/2012

C) IMPORTANT FACTS AND EVENTS

1. Towards the Beatification of Nicolò Rusca

On 19 December, Pope Benedict XVI authorised the Congregation for the Causes of Saints to publish a decree on the “martyrdom of the Servant of God Nicolò Rusca”, a priest born in Bedano (Canton Ticino) and killed in hatred of the faith in Thusis (Switzerland) on 4th September 1618. “The first biographies examining the religious conflict that led to the martyrdom of Nicolò Rusca were written by some Guanellians, and these studies were encouraged by Fr. Louis Guanella himself,” says Monsignor Saverio Xeres, professor, diocesan historian and editor of the “Positio super martirio”. “Saint Louis Guanella and Nicolò Rusca are the two most important charitable figures from the Diocese of Como.

During their lives, they focused their attention on those most in need and on the poverty and social difficulties of their times, always displaying a very close link and strong attachment to the communities and land to which they belonged.

21st April 2013: this is the date on which the solemn rite of beatification of the archpriest Nicolò Rusca will be celebrated in Sondrio. On 19th December last year, after an audience with Cardinal Angelo Amato, Benedict XVI authorised the Congregation for the Causes of Saints – of which Cardinal Amato is the Prefect – to publish the decree on the “martyrdom of the Servant of God Nicolò Rusca, diocesan priest; born in Bedano (Canton Ticino) in April 1563 and killed in hatred of the faith in Thusis (Switzerland) on 4th September 1618”.

The announcement was made this morning, 19th June, in Sondrio, by the bishop of the diocese of Como, Msgr. Diego Coletti, during the Solemn Mass in the collegiate church for the feast of Saints Gervasius and Protasius, the patrons of the city. In recent days the Vatican Secretariat of State confirmed the date of 21st April, which also coincides with the 450th anniversary of the soon-to-be Blessed Rusca’s birth.

“The saints”, said Bishop Coletti in his homily, “remind us of the Glory of God, and in the martyrs in particular we find the strength of witness. Reflecting on the complex political and religious context in which the human life of the archpriest Rusca unfolded,” he continued, “can help us, on the one hand, to understand the importance of an ever-deeper dialogue between Christians, in a climate of true ecumenism, and to discover the gift of mutual forgiveness, on the other.”

“Although the times have changed, the venerable Nicolò Rusca has much to teach us,” noted the archpriest of Sondrio, Monsignor Marco Zubiani. “The preparation process and celebration of Fr. Rusca’s beatification, which involves all of our diocesan Church, will take place almost entirely during the Year of Faith. It is a valuable opportunity to highlight the importance of faith as the centre of everything and to bear witness in everyday life, with particular attention towards the creation of a Christian community that is attentive to the problems of today’s world and the need for interfaith and inter-religious dialogue,” he added.

In the afternoon, also in Sondrio, he returned to meet the “Committee for the Beatification of Nicolò Rusca” (formed by the bishop, Msgr. Diego Coletti, the vicar general, Msgr. Giuliano Zanotta, Msgr. Saverio Xeres, Msgr. Marco Zubiani, Fr. Alfonso Rossi, Fr. Ferruccio Citterio, Fr. Simone Piani, Prof. Gianluigi Garbellini and Dr. Anna Rossi), which continues with the work of organising and preparing for the rite and everything connected with it (from the most practical and concrete aspects to publications, the liturgy, etc...).

• Nicolò Rusca

To introduce us to the figure of Nicolò Rusca (1563-1618), in addition to a brief *biography*, information sheets have been proposed on his *martyrdom*, his *writings*, with references to the defence of the Catholic faith and the relationship with the Protestants, and his *letters*, from which his zealous pastoral care can be clearly seen.

An account is also given of his *relics*, which are now preserved in the collegiate church in Sondrio.

An updated *bibliography*, including a list of sources, provides an account of the historical and documentary research behind the drafting of the *Positio super martyrio* (Rome, 2002), which led to the recognition of his martyrdom. Substantial reference was made to it for the writings published below.

Articles and short essays, *for further details* on his life and historical context, complete the presentation of the archpriest of Sondrio.

• **Biography of Nicolò Rusca**

Nicolò Rusca was born on 20th April 1563 in Bedano, near Lugano, part of an area that was then under the jurisdiction of the diocese of Como. His parents, Giovanni Antonio, a notary by profession, and Daria, daughter of the doctor Giangiaco­mo Quadrio, had five children: Nicholas, the eldest son, Bartholomeo and Luigi, who were also diocesan priests, Margherita, a Benedictine nun in the monastery of San Lorenzo in Sondrio, and Cristoforo, who continued the lineage with Giovanni Antonio and Carlo, who both became priests.

After initial studies in Pavia and Rome, Rusca spent seven years at the Helvetic College in Milan, founded by Charles Borromeo for the training of clerics from the Swiss cantons. He was ordained priest on 23rd May 1587.

His first assignment, in 1588, was as parish priest of Sessa, in the deanery of Agno (now Canton Ticino), where he remained for about two years.

He was then appointed archpriest of Sondrio, a territory belonging to the diocese of Como, but under the political rule of the Three Grey Leagues (later the Canton of Grisons), which had occupied Valtellina, together with Bormio and Chiavenna, for the past eighty years, due to its strategic importance. It provided a direct link between the Spanish possessions in the territory of Milan and those in Tyrol, and therefore Austria, as far as Germany and the Netherlands, on the one hand, and a link between the Republic of Venice, a military and political opponent of the Duchy of Milan, and the Swiss and their allies as far as France, on the other.

During his almost thirty-year stay in Sondrio – from 8th July 1591, when he took possession of the parish, until 1618 – Nicolò Rusca exercised an exemplary ministry: preaching and teaching Christian doctrine, administering the sacraments, establishing confraternities, particularly that of the Blessed Sacrament, restoring holy places and liturgical signs and practising piety combined with a way of life that “edified the people” and continuous study. The reform of the clergy called for by the Council of Trent, which was to lead to a more general reform of the entire Christian community – *salus animarum prima lex est* (the salvation of souls is the primary commitment and criterion) – found in him an exemplary “renewed” priest.

Of equal note was his fervent action in defence of Catholic doctrine, through writings and debates – there are records of at least three of these, between 1592 and 1597 – spurred by the desire to preserve and revive the faith of the valley population. The preaching of Protestant ministers, at first mainly exiles from Italy, later followed by pastors from Swiss territories such as Zurich, Geneva and Chur, was spreading here due to the Grison rulers, most of whom had passed over to the Reformation. Although the documentary sources attest to his firmness and clarity in regard to doctrinal content and membership of the church, his sincere respect and even friendliness towards people of different faiths can also be seen, for example, with Scipione Calandrino, the pastor of Sondrio, with whom he also exchanged books, or with the Grison governor and historian Fortunato Sprecher, with whom he was on “familiar” terms for two years.

The internal political and religious situation in the Three Leagues at the start of the seventeenth century led the Rhaetian state into a period of severe disorientation. Some pro-Venetian municipalities had staged an “armed uprising” in reaction to a pact signed between the Grisons and Spain in 1617. This initiative also assumed a clearly sectarian character, indiscriminately identifying supporters of Spain and some of the most eminent Catholics as enemies of the State. The insurgents converged near Thusis and established a court to try those suspected of treason. They began to hold biased summary trials, influenced by some young reformed pastors with radical tendencies, who attended in the role of ecclesiastical “supervisors”.

One of the victims of these was the archpriest of Sondrio, who had already undergone two other trials, in 1608-1609, from which he emerged completely exonerated. On the night between 24 and 25 July 1618, he was seized by dozens of armed men, who had come down to Sondrio through Valmalenco under the leadership of the protestant pastor Marcantonio Alba.

He was led through the canton of Grisons, first to Chur and then to Thusis, where he was tried on 1st September, while continuing to proclaim his innocence. He was subjected to torture and died on the evening of 4th September 1618.

• **The Martyrdom of Nicolò Rusca**

“Non est in tua potestate sed in Dei dignatione martyrium”.

“Martyrdom is not in your power, but is a grace from God, who makes you worthy of it”.

The bishop of Carthage, St. Cyprian, affirms in his *De mortalitate* (17) that martyrdom is not primarily a “merit”, but a special gift. He initially fled from the persecution of the Emperor Decius in 250, but later died as a martyr, on 14th September 258, during a new persecution ordered by the Emperor Valerian.

In another work he adds:

“The Lord has commanded us to retreat and escape from persecution; he taught and illustrated this through his own example. Since the crown comes from the gift of God (who makes people worthy of it) and cannot be received unless it is time to take it, whoever temporarily withdraws, while abiding in Christ, does not deny the faith but is waiting for the appropriate time” (*De lapsis*, 10).

The arrest, trial and murder of Nicolò Rusca in 1618 were not an isolated incident, but the conclusion of a life lived in faithfulness to Christ through daily hardships, without displaying any violent opposition. He was prepared to suffer persecution, but did not willingly seek martyrdom, according to the traditional wisdom of the Church, which has always prohibited “actively volunteering for martyrdom or provocation of one’s persecutors” (H. Misztal, *Le cause di canonizzazione*, 2005). The focus is never on the person, but on the truth to which they are prepared to bear witness.

At the end of the first trial, hearing rumours of new charges, the archpriest sought refuge outside of Sondrio for a few months, in late 1608 and early 1609, when he was welcomed and protected by Bishop Archinti. After a short stay in Bedano in the summer of 1617, when the situation had further deteriorated, he rejected attempts by relatives and friends to make him remain there and decided to return to his parishioners, even accepting the possibility of martyrdom.

• His capture, trial, and death

At the same time as these events, the internal situation of the Three Leagues, which had led to the armed uprising of some “pro-Venetian” municipalities against the pact signed between the Grisons and Spain in 1617, was becoming increasingly unstable. A court (*Strafgericht*) was established near Thusis, which, under the influence of young Reformed pastors, began to execute not only political enemies, but also some prominent Catholics. Nicolò Rusca was not spared.

On the night between 24th and 25th July 1618, dozens of armed men led by the pastor Marcantonio Alba came down to Sondrio through Valmalenco. They surrounded the parish house and took Fr. Nicolò, his brother Bartolomeo and a servant. After spending the night in the municipal gaol, his brother and the servant were released the next day. The archpriest, however, was tied to a mule and led through Valmalenco and Engadina as far as Chur, where he was locked up in the room of an unidentified inn. Some direct testimonies of this imprisonment in Chur were gathered by the two biographers, Iodoco and Stöcklin, including that of a certain Caterina Adanckin, who was impressed by the attitude with which the ascetic priest bore his captivity.

Meanwhile, the first steps were taken in defence of the archpriest, with his loyal community playing a primary role. Two days after the arrest, on 27th July, the bishop of Como, Filippo Archinti, who had been promptly informed, wrote to Archbishop Borromeo and to the nuncio to the Swiss, Ludovico Sarego. He requested the latter, in particular, to intervene with the Catholic cantons to put pressure on their Grison allies to defend the “poor archpriest of Sondrio,” which he promptly did.

All diplomatic attempts failed, however, and Nicolò Rusca was transferred to Thusis, where the court was located. He was once more locked up in makeshift prisons while awaiting the start of the proceedings against him.

The trial began on 1st September. It is not easy to summarise the charges, due to differences between the various sources:

- some repeat those of the trials of 1608-1609, namely, having been involved in the attack on the Protestant minister of Sondrio, Scipione Calandrino, and having reprimanded a young man for listening to reformed preaching, compounded by accusations of having bribed the judges for his acquittal;

- secondly, he was accused of being a “rebel” against the laws of the State, opposing the construction of the boarding school in Sondrio, and, more generally, obstructing the preaching of Protestant pastors. He had also allegedly managed to avoid any intervention by the magistrates through the help of his parishioners;

- a more general accusation was that he had maintained close relations with the Spanish “enemies” during trips to Milan and during the construction of Fort Fuentes;

- there was a series of alleged episodes concerning the violation of religious freedom, with the prohibition of Catholic midwives from assisting heretical women in labour, as well as a Catholic woman being reproached for using heretical wet nurses. He was accused of persuading a husband to abandon his evangelical religion, homeland and wife, as well as rejecting a godfather for a baptism, due to his being a heretic. Further contempt was shown towards the reformed religion through the call for public prayers *pro haeresum extirpatione*. The confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament, encouraged by Rusca, were even said to have concealed weapons in the presbytery in Sondrio in order to violently eliminate the reformers.

Nicolò Rusca defended himself against all the charges and, according to some reports of the trial, requested either banishment or imprisonment in order to avoid torture. As expected, since no admission of guilt was made, the priest was tortured for two consecutive days, on Monday 3rd and Tuesday 4th September. The behaviour of the Protestant pastors present in the court was particularly violent and insistent, insulting him and jerking him violently to increase the pain caused by the rope binding his arms, which was used to raise

him up. Nicolò resolutely continued to proclaim his innocence, without yielding in the slightest. Soon afterwards, under continued torture, he died.

These events occurred on the evening of 4th September 1618.¹

- **From ‘Beatificationis seu Declarationis Martyrii Servi Dei Nicolai Rusca’**

Fr. Guanella

The first and most determined supporter of the opening of the cause for the beatification of the archpriest of Sondrio in the twentieth century was Fr. Louis Guanella, who was beatified in 1964. He showed great interest in the figure of Rusca since his days as a seminarist. In his autobiographical memoirs he recalls travelling from Campodolcino, his birthplace, to Thusis during his holidays, together with Fr. Della Cagnoletta, his parish priest, “to visit the site of Rusca’s martyrdom”. This interest began in his early years, when “he heard his brother, Fr. Lorenzo, talking with Della Cagnoletta, then provost in Campodolcino, about the cause of the archpriest Rusca”.

He became directly involved in the cause of beatification at the start of the twentieth century. Aside from going personally to Rome and speaking with the bishops of Chur, Lugano and Como, he made his own contribution to promoting greater awareness of Rusca’s importance. For this purpose, he commissioned two priests to write his biography and published numerous articles in his Institute’s magazine, ‘La Divina Provvidenza’.

With regard to the biographies, the first was the one that Fr. Guanella had written by Don Giovanni Formentelli, a priest of his congregation: the text appeared in 1909 under the pseudonym Reto-Cenomano⁹. A second work, commissioned to Guanella’s nephew, Fr. Pietro Buzzetti, was published in 1913. Both texts – as recommended by Msgr. Arturo Benedetti, lawyer of the Roman Rota – would be used to gather evidence about Rusca’s martyrdom, *as well as* to create greater awareness of the priest from Valtellina. For this purpose, Fr. Guanella wasted no opportunity to distribute the two biographies.

Msgr. Aurelio Bacciarini

Blessed Fr. Guanella passed on his constant interest in Nicolò Rusca to his successor in the guidance of the Institute he founded, Aurelio Bacciarini,

¹ 2012 - The “Diocese of Como” committee for the beatification of Nicolò Rusca.

who then became apostolic administrator of Ticino (1917-1935) and whose own cause of beatification is currently in progress, too. Msgr. Bacciarini – a follower of Guanella in every aspect – also asked a priest of his diocese, Davide Sesti, to write a biography of Rusca, and personally gave some talks to commemorate the third centenary of the archpriest’s death.

In the foreword to *‘Una gloria ticinese, il venerabile Nicolò Rusca’* (*‘The Venerable Nicolò Rusca, a Ticinese Glory’*), Davide Sesti recalls the origin of the biography:

“In the first half of July, His Excellency Monsignor Aurelio Bacciarini, apostolic administrator of Ticino, advised me to write a brief and simple biography of the venerable Nicolò Rusca, and to make sure that it was ready by the 4th of September, the day marking the third anniversary of his precious death. Riva San Vitale (Switzerland), 3rd August 1918.

On 30th August, the apostolic administrator of Ticino wrote to the archpriest Sesti, thanking him “for having given the dear people of Ticino the beautiful and simple biography of the venerable Nicolò Rusca, martyr of the faith and pride of his homeland.

As well as promoting this biography, Msgr. Bacciarini commemorated the third centenary of Rusca’s death by visiting Sessa, where Nicolò had been parish priest, on 1st October 1918 and Rusca’s birthplace, Bedano, on 30th March 1919. These were both occasions to exalt the figure of a man who was “a saint, an apostle and a martyr of the faith, as well as an exemplary pastor”. The bishop also never failed to express the immense love he had in his heart for Nicolò Rusca, which he also shared with Fr. Louis Guanella. He mentioned hearing him say that the fact that the Protestant heresy had not invaded the valleys was due, in large part, to the archpriest of Sondrio.

Fr. Leonardo Mazzucchi

Finally, the testimony of Leonardo Mazzucchi, superior of the Congregation “Servants of Charity”, founded by Fr. Louis Guanella, should also be mentioned. It has been of great importance for learning of the esteem in which the Blessed Guanella always held Nicolò Rusca. This testimony was a further contribution to the fame of the archpriest of Sondrio as a martyr.

Since his youth, Fr. Louis Guanella held Rusca in great esteem as a holy martyr, and during his time as a cleric he would set off during the holidays on pilgrimage from his native village to Thusis, the site of the martyrdom. He also repeated this pilgrimage in 1897, when he established his foundations in Splügen and Andeer, which he entrusted to Rusca’s protection. Don Louis Guanella acquired this veneration mainly through continuous reading of docu-

ments and stories about Valtellina and Val Chiavenna, which he studied assiduously, and also quite probably through his frequent talks with Fr. Giuseppe Della Cagnoletta, a native of Sondrio, who, before becoming arch priest of Sondrio, had been provost of Campodolcino for several years and archpriest of Chiavenna for several more. This awareness and interest in regard to Rusca certainly originated mainly from his knowledge of the frequent conversations, at which he had also been present, between Fr. Della Cagnoletta and his elder brother, Fr. Lorenzo Guanella, who was provost in Roncaglia di Civo and then in Ardenno.

The two venerable priests, Fr. Della Cagnoletta and Fr. Lorenzo Guanella spoke with such interest in Rusca's cause and so much desire for the glorification of the Servant of God that when his brother died in 1906, Fr. Louis Guanella considered it his duty, as a loving tribute to his brother, to become personally involved in Rusca's cause. And so he spoke about him in Rome with Fr. Claudio Benedetti, consultor of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, and had a study made on Rusca's life and on the procedures for introducing the cause by the lawyer, Arturo Benedetti, grandson of the above-mentioned priest.

[...] Fr. Louis Guanella also assigned two priests from his congregation, who were living in Bregaglia and Reno Valley, to collect documents for the drafting of an account of Rusca's life, which was published under the pseudonym 'Reto Cenomano'. He then personally involved the bishops of the three dioceses of Como, Chur and Lugano. In Como, Msgr. Alfonso Archi then assigned Fr. Giovanni Baserga to also examine foreign archives in order to collect documents.

In Chur, Msgr. Giorgio Schmitt was pleased that Rusca's cause was being promoted, but preferred this not to be done directly in Chur, in order to avoid dissension and disturbance of the peace between the different denominations.

In Lugano, Msgr. Peri Morosini enthusiastically welcomed the initiative and was prepared to preside over the introduction of the venerable Rusca's cause.

He gave a report on these steps taken for Rusca's cause to His Holiness Pope Pius X in an audience on 29th January 1910.

He often spoke with us in conversation about his interest in Rusca's cause and the progress it was making, almost as if he were entrusting us with the task of continuing this involvement in it after his death.

Thus, virtually in continuation of this interest, Msgr. Aurelio Bacciarini, his successor as superior general of the Servants of Charity, became deeply and assiduously involved in the Rusca's cause, and almost even more so as Bishop of Lugano. In 1918, to mark the centenary of Rusca's death, he had a simple biography of the archpriest published, which is the one documented by Msgr. Davide Sesti. He also celebrated solemn liturgies in Bedano, the birth-

place of the Servant of God, and in Sessa, where Rusca was parish priest; while in Bedano, he even held a service in the venerable archpriest's house. Then, on every possible occasion, he requested and insisted that the start of cause be expedited, remarking that he would like to initiate it himself and was prepared to bear the expenses, although he refrained from doing so out of respect for Como.

2. Some history of the origins

Each year, as you can see in this issue, Charitas presents the official record of the past year, with statistics and decrees that mark the development of our Congregation. In the General Chapters the Superior General also presents the Capitular Fathers with a report on the previous six years. The latest of these was in the recent publication of the Chapter Documents from our last Chapter.

We know that it is always necessary to refer to the origins in order to fully understand our history.

Volume 17 of the Historical Essays: 'The Daughters of St. Mary of Providence and Servants of Charity in the twenty years following the death of the founder' contains the report on our Congregation that Fr. Aurelio Bacciarini, the Superior General at the time, sent to the Holy See a year after the Founder's death.

It is always nice to revisit those times...

In the report we can appreciate:

- the love of our first confreres for the Founder,*
- the awareness of being raised up by the Spirit and constantly sustained by God's Providence*
- the ecclesial sense and love for the Pope, reflecting that of the Founder,*
- the strong desire for the Pontifical approval of our Congregation.*

The report appears to have been intentionally drafted to prepare and encourage the canonical approval of the Congregation.

It is significant that the Holy See has no record of the religious profession made by the Founder and our first confreres in March 1908. In fact, from the report it seems necessary to conclude that the first profession was merely a simple private act internal to the Congregation, if the confreres were still actually incardinated in their respective dioceses.

Nevertheless, this beautiful official picture of our beloved Congregation can serve as an inspiration, to renew in us that sense of belonging which was so evident in the very first confreres.

- **Report on the Institute of the Servants of Charity founded by Fr. Louis Guanella**

To the Sacred Congregation for Religious, Rome

The origins

The modest institute to which we refer was founded in Como in 1886 and has therefore been in existence for 30 years. The instrument used by God to bring it into being was Fr. Louis Guanella, born in Campodolcino (Como) in 1842. After an unsullied childhood and youth, and successful studies in the Como seminaries, where he distinguished himself by his edifying virtues, he was ordained priest in 1866.

He was assigned by his bishop as parish priest in Savogno, where he served for eight years and gave the first heroic signs of the activity, particularly that of charity, which was to distinguish him as a father of orphans and comforter of the afflicted. As an admirer of Don Bosco and Cottolengo, and moved by the same charitable zeal, he was in continuous communication with these two great champions of charity and supported their works whenever he could. In 1875, with the permission of his bishop, he went to Don Bosco in Turin, not to join the institute of the Servant of God, but to develop the vocation that was stirring in his heart at the school of that illustrious teacher. Three years later, he returned to his diocese, where he made an initial attempt at establishing a college in Traona, which was forced to close due to the hostile climate of those times. In 1881 he was made spiritual treasurer of Pianello Lario, where the ground was prepared to establish the Institute of the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence, to provide refuge and assistance to the neediest daughters of the people. The Institute then developed with surprising speed. However, his great heart was not satisfied: the unfortunate male orphans, mentally handicapped, cripples, elderly and feeble, to whom less attention was paid and for whom it was more difficult to provide, were the pitiful torment of his soul, and so he decided to found an institute to provide relief for these great hardships.

He opened his first male nursing home, named *Casa della Provvidenza* (*House of Providence*), in Como in 1886, assisted by a few priests and some young postulants, who had joined him in this great work of charity. These were the modest first fruits of a work that arose in silence, humility, poverty, deprivation and almost universal hostility. Providence showed its protection, choosing *infirmi mundi*, that is the weak of this world, to perform its wonders.

Fr. Guanella devoted his life to this institute, just as he did to that of the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence: a life filled with kindness, brimming with activity and overflowing with sacrifice and renunciation. This holy life ended in Como on 24 October 1915, in the mother house of the Servants of Charity, to whom this man of God had left his programme of *prayer and suffering* as a legacy.

The name

Fr. Guanella frequently had a phrase on his lips that was like the breath of his soul; he would say: “May the fire of divine Charity come like a holy conflagration! May the Lord send the Spirit of his divine Charity and the world will be renewed!” In his zeal for the good of the unfortunate and the salvation of souls, he hoped and longed for legions of generous souls to assist him in the field of charity, in an institution that he said would be providential for our times. These co-operators, both priests and laity, he called *Servants of Charity*. This simple and beautiful name, a living expression of the spirit of Fr. Guanella, is still used and was authoritatively recognised by the Sacred Congregation for the Religious in the revision of the Constitutions.

The purpose

The purpose of the Institute is soberly and clearly described in chapter I of the Constitutions: «The *primary purpose* is the sanctification of its members through the practise of simple vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, and observance of the Constitutions. The *secondary purpose* is the exercise of Christian charity, by providing temporal and spiritual care and shelter to those poor people most in need of such assistance, placing them in separate houses or sections, according as they are children or elderly».

The secondary purpose does not exclude the apostolic life, which is practised as far as this is possible: the Supreme Pontiff, Pope Pius X, also endorsed this extension of the Institute’s secondary purpose by entrusting a parish in Rome to the Servants of Charity.

In accordance with their secondary purpose, in addition to their boarding school and novitiate, the Servants of Charity also have houses for the needy in several dioceses, with a total of over 1,500 residents, and have two parishes, one of which is the Bregaglia Valley mission parish in the Canton of Grisons (Switzerland), which serves *six municipalities*, and the other is San Giuseppe in Porta Trionfale, Rome, which numbers *about 20,000 souls*.

Subsequent development

In 1886, guided by the visible hand of Providence, Fr. Louis Guanella opened his first home for men in Como, called *Casa Divina Providenza*

(*House of Divine Providence*). This is the mother house of the Servants of Charity. It stands in a large area of 15 thousand square metres with a residential block and spacious courtyards, and can house over 400 residents. In the centre stands the sanctuary of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, to whose protection Fr. Guanella entrusted his works.

In 1898, at the encouragement of H.E. the Cardinal Archbishop of Milan, Fr. Guanella sent his Servants of Charity to the great Lombard metropolis, where they began charitable work with the festive and daily after-school oratory, known as the *Oratory of San Michele*. Four years later, in 1902, this modest oratory was converted into a large institution for orphans, the mentally handicapped and the elderly. It was named *Istituto San Gaetano*, after the saint of Providence, without the help of which this huge step by Fr. Guanella defies explanation.

In the same year, 1898, the sweet Providence of the Lord offered Fr. Guanella's charity a new field, in the Diocese of Chur, Switzerland. That large village was the location of the ancient Santa Anna boarding school, which for various circumstances could no longer continue.

The Bishop of Chur, who could not bear the loss of this important educational institute, invited Fr. Guanella to assume its ownership and administration. The man of God naturally accepted and the school flourished. It has since been greatly enlarged, with the recent addition of a rest home.

In 1900, Fr. Guanella began a work of such daring, that only his steely tenacity, animated by the charity of the Lord, could have attempted it. With the help of his first companions, priests and laymen, he decided to establish an agricultural colony, with a home for the mentally handicapped poor, in the plain of *Olonio San Salvatore*, in Colico, overlooking Lake Como. The land was sandy, infected with malaria and totally abandoned. Fr. Guanella soon managed to reclaim an area of 500 Milanese perches, and the civil authorities, from the local municipality to the Ministry of Agriculture, acclaimed his Christian and social genius. On that land where death had reigned, there is now a true village surrounded by beautiful greenery, with a church, a rest home, farmhouses, drinking water and a cemetery: all built by Fr. Guanella, whose memory will be blessed there forever.

Also in 1900, a lavish inheritance donated by Msgr. Giovanni Battista Baroni enabled Fr. Guanella to bring his ministry to Fratta Polesine, in the diocese of Rovigo. After having established a home there for orphaned girls and elderly women, entrusted to the daughters of St. Mary of Providence, some years later he opened a *rest home for infirm priests*, run by the Servants of Charity, to which he then added a large home for the elderly, poor and destitute.

A year later, in 1901, Fr. Guanella set about a charitable work that, humanly speaking, was unthinkable. Not far from his native valley lies the Bregaglia Valley, in the Swiss Grisons Mountains. This beautiful and ill-fated valley had passed over to Protestantism during the Reformation, due to the work of the apostate Vergerio, and since then it had not been possible to erect an al-

tar there, with all efforts by the Bishops of Chur, in whose diocese the valley lies, proving unsuccessful. Many Italian Catholics emigrated there for work and were therefore without religious assistance, with grave danger to their faith and their souls. Saddened by such a pitiful situation, Fr. Guanella, braving untold difficulties, bought a piece of land in Vicosoprano, a village in the centre of the valley, built a wooden church and sent one of his priests there. With the help of benefactors, the wooden church was soon transformed into a magnificent church dedicated to San Gaudenzio, the first apostle of the valley. Not satisfied with this true triumph, Fr. Guanella built a second church in Promontogno, another village in the valley, for the benefit of the numerous Italian Catholics there. This work, known as the Catholic mission of Val Bregaglia, was then established as a parish by the Bishop of Chur, and the Servants of Charity now perform a true work of salvation there, ministering to the Italian Catholics dispersed among the six municipalities of the valley.

In 1904, through a providential coincidence, Fr. Guanella purchased a 300,000 square metre property in Monte Mario, Rome. He established an agricultural colony there, with a home for the aged, dedicated to *St. Joseph*.

Another similar work began in 1907, in *Trenno Milanese*, where there is now a flourishing agricultural colony and a large home for the mentally handicapped and the elderly, called *Casa San Luigi*.

In 1908, Msgr. Bianconi, who was then bishop of Ferentino, invited Fr. Guanella to take over the administration of Maciotti orphanage, in the town of Ferentino, which was in difficult circumstances. The man of God agreed and sent his priests, who are now running it with a thirty-year lease. They have added a home for the mentally handicapped and the elderly, and minister to souls in the adjoining Church of Santa Agata.

In 1909, Fr. Ghinelli, the parish priest of *Gatteo di Romagna* (Cesena), died. He was a holy priest who had founded an institution for poor children. Fr. Guanella took up his legacy, and now the institute is run by the Servants of Charity, who have greatly enlarged it.

During his travels to Rome in 1910, Fr. Guanella noted that a large poor population was living on the outskirts of the Trionfale district, beyond reach of the small parish church (the ancient church of the Holy Rosary). Having asked the venerable advice of Pius X, he opened a temporary chapel there, with a nursery school and a festive oratory, in the expectation that Providence would give him the means to build a larger church. The new church was built, with great sacrifices on the part of Fr. Guanella and the generous assistance of the Supreme Pontiff, Pius X, to whom the man of God was particularly dear. This is the Church of the *Transito di San Giuseppe*, which was established as a parish church on 30th June 1912. This was the last foundation of the Servants of Charity built by Fr. Guanella. Our late Founder entered his eternal repose on 24th October 1915.

The following November, his Excellency Msgr. Marelli, Bishop of Ber-

gamo, in agreement with the City Hall, called the Servants of Charity to open a home for the aged and mentally handicapped in the city. The Servants of Charity accepted, reserving the right to seek the authoritative consent of the venerable Congregation for the Religious. At the same time, however, the danger arose of the chosen house being appropriated to serve the needs of the military command, and so the foundation was momentarily suspended.

Then Divine Providence made a visible gift to the orphaned children of Fr. Guanella, with an opportunity to acquire a large estate, with a residential block and farm buildings, in *Fara Novarese*: a highly suitable place for a boarding school and novitiate, of which the Servants of Charity were in need.

With the joyful consent of the Diocesan Bishop, the Institute's clerical aspirants are now housed there, and by the end of this year, having submitted a request to the Congregation for the Religious, the regular novitiate will be opened there.

It can be seen from this brief overview that, in the space of just a few years, the Institute of the Servants of Charity has extended to eight dioceses: Como, Chur, Milan, Rome, Ferentino, Cesena, Rovigo and Novara, where it provides relief to human suffering.

The homes for mentally sound orphans include elementary schools and craft and trade instruction, so that an education and livelihood can be provided.

We observe with satisfaction that, in general, the residents are well behaved and have satisfactory and often edifying piety. Their frequent reception of Holy Communion, particularly by the young men, hundreds of whom are daily communicants, is a spectacle of faith.

Moreover, among the elderly poor, who come to spend their final days in our homes, there has not been a single case of death without the sacraments for several years. This is a grace from St. Joseph, to whom Fr. Guanella chose to dedicate the *Pious Union for the Dying*, which was erected to the status of a Primary Union in our Church of San Giuseppe, in Porta Trionfale, Rome, and already numbers over 600,000 members.

Religious

The family of the Servants of Charity now consists of 142 members, divided as follows:

- A. Priests 48
 - a) with perpetual vows: 37
 - b) Postulants: 8
 - c) Oblates: 3

N.B.: The eight postulant priests are waiting to make their triennial vows in the near future, as no new vows have been received since the Founder's death.

B. Clerics 52 (the future hope of the Institute, the number is encouraging!)

Divided as follows:

In theological studies 12

High school students 10

Middle school students 30

N.B.: The clerics in theology and high school are bound by triennial vows.

C. Lay brothers 42 (so necessary in our Institute, they are also a good number)

Divided as follows:

Brothers with perpetual vows 19

triennial vows 11

Postulants 12

N.B.: The novitiate is presented in the following paragraph.

Disciplinary status

A. In general

By a special grace of the Lord, there have been no serious disciplinary complaints among the Servants of Charity and no one has been found lacking in terms of personal decorum.

Only two priests have left the Institute in the last decade, due to untested vocations. The common love for prayer is comforting and the mutual charity and obedience to the superiors is proof of the Spirit of God.

All are involved in caring for the poor or in works of ministry, where they give good account of their zeal: this can be seen in the missions in Bregaglia, in the religious reawakening in the parish of San Giuseppe, in Porta Trionfale, Rome, and elsewhere.

The Institute can certainly not be described as having all the regularity of a congregation that has been organised and established in the common life over time. This is only to be expected in a nascent institute, which is gradually acquiring regular uniformity. However, through the mercy of God, it has reached a good stage, in that the Constitutions are substantially observed.

We also wish in particular to call the Sacred Congregation's kind attention to two moral gifts of the Servants of Charity, for which we can vouch before God, namely:

– *The spirit of sacrifice.* Whoever visits one of our homes, where the most tragic misfortunes of the people are accepted, and sees the priests and lay brothers living from morning till evening together with the most unfortunate

and deformed people, or dedicated to service in the workshops, cannot fail to recognise in them an uncommon spirit of sacrifice. This spirit of self-denial, compassion and patience is certainly, as our Founder would say, a valuable aid to the integrity of the priestly and religious life.

– *The spirit of devotion to the Pope.* No one can ignore the incursion of modernism or semi-modernism that has recently spread among the secular and regular clergy, even sweeping away holy ideas and, above all, upsetting the divine harmony that should exist between the Pope's thinking and that of priests. Through the greatest grace of God, not the slightest trace of this pestiferous spirit has entered among the poor Servants of Charity. They all follow the Pope's thinking and not a single one harbours distorted ideas. Our late Founder left us the inheritance of his solid devotion to the Holy Father; we wish to preserve this and make it our boast in life and in death, and pray that the modernist spirit may never undermine its solidity.

B. *In detail*

– *The boarding school.* The Institute's best vocations are found, formed and strengthened in the boarding school, which is therefore given particular attention. Unfortunately, no suitable house was found for the boarding school before our Founder's death. Until the end of the last school year, the students were mainly gathered in a section of the house in Como, or dispersed among the various houses, where they were given the best teaching that circumstances could permit. Our late Founder has helped us from heaven to obtain the long-awaited house for our boarding school: the Casa di San Gerolamo in Fara Novarese, which we recently inaugurated, sending our entire middle school there. So now, with a proper atmosphere of recollection and uniformity of method, the clerics will receive better formation and education.

– *The Novitiate.* The novitiate has existed since the very foundation of the Institute, but in its own way, as the novices were dispersed among the various houses, and were admitted to the profession of vows once they were sufficiently proven in piety and works of charity. This was because it was never possible to find a house for the novitiate, as we were unable to dedicate sufficient resources to it and, above all, because the urgency of the work required the novices to be assigned to duties in the various houses. We were all convinced that despite this being inevitable in the early days of the Institute, it could not remain so in the future. As the life of the Institute becomes more regular, it should also have its own regular novitiate, from which to receive men formed in the same discipline and common life. This need can finally be fulfilled, since a novitiate conforming to canonical rules can now be established in the large building beside the boarding school in *Fara Novese*, and the request for this will be submitted to the Holy See this year.

– *On the separation between the Servants of Charity and the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence.* We know the rules issued by the Sacred Congregation in this regard and the insistent requests made to our venerable Founder on various occasions for true and complete separation. We can confirm with satisfaction that:

1) the rightfully desired separation has already been perfectly observed for several years. The two Institutes are independent, both in terms of discipline and of finances. The Servants of Charity have no administrative roles or involvement in the life of the sisters. The names of certain sisters are still included on the property titles of some buildings owned by the Servants of Charity, purely as a formality and in name only, but these are about to be replaced with the names of Servants of Charity.

2) The sisters perform charitable service in the homes of the Servants of Charity, running the kitchens, pantries and laundries, as is the case in seminaries and other similar institutions, however all the rules of separation required by religious discipline are observed. Visitors to our homes can confirm the truth of this.

An exemplary fact may be mentioned here in this regard. Our founder had opened a home for the mentally handicapped in *Ardenno Masino*, in Valtellina, entrusted, naturally, to the Servants of Charity. The sisters provided service there from the start. When the orders came from Rome regarding the matter of separation, this was found to be practically impossible in the Ardenno house, due to the layout of the building. So what did Fr. Guanella do? He closed the home and moved all the residents to his agricultural colony in San Salvatore, near Colico. This sacrifice was certainly not made lightly, but he disregarded this fact, in order to achieve the firmly desired purpose of true separation.

– *On other special orders issued by the Sacred Congregation.* With the letter dated 16th August 1912, and a second dated 4th May 1914, the Sacred Congregation issued several orders regarding the material progress of the Institute, such as efforts to reduce the Institute's debt, prudence in assuming new obligations, regularity in the meetings of the administrative council, etc.

These orders were implemented through a consolidation programme, with all plans for expansion abandoned for the time being, and council meetings held regularly, as the apostolic Visitor, Msgr. Balconi, was able to confirm. The fact remains, moreover, that since then the Institute has not assumed any commitments that could rightly be described as burdensome.

– *The cardinal protector.* As soon as he became pope, His Holiness, Benedict XV, in a gesture of particular kindness, assigned a protector to the Servants of Charity in the person of His Excellency, Cardinal Filippo Giustini. This appointment contributed greatly to the good of the Institute, as His Eminence always provided abundant paternal advice, which we strived to value highly.

– *The government of the Institute since the death of the Founder.* On the proposal of our Most Eminent Cardinal Protector, after the death of the Founder, the Sacred Congregation, with a Decree of November 1915, delegated Fr. Aurelio Bacciarini, formerly the vicar of the Institute, to govern the Servants of Charity, granting him general faculties for two years.

The appointed priest, understanding the serious responsibility entrusted to him, did all in his power to assist the Institute in the painful period following the irreplaceable loss of its Founder. However, he himself can testify before God that after this death – certainly through the Founder’s intercession – the spirit of solidarity and discipline among the Servants of Charity has never slackened but has grown even stronger.

It should be noted that the delegate of the Holy See, although provided with general powers, has nevertheless always consulted the Institute’s best and most experienced members in matters regarding its government.

Finances

A. Means of support

The means by which the Institute supports itself are the same that supported the activities of our late Founder and Father during the long and exhausting development of the foundations, namely:

1) A modest and variable monthly contribution made by almost all residents, either directly or indirectly, through municipalities or charitable bodies.

2) Mass stipends and offerings for the ministry of the priests.

3) Moderate earnings from the crafts and trades practised in the various houses.

4) Pious groups and benefactors’ associations established in large cities, such as Milan, Rome, Como etc., which provide a good contribution of yearly offerings and extraordinary donations.

5) The monthly magazine, *La Divina Provvidenza*, published by the Institute, which has been running for 25 years and collects continuous and numerous offerings.

6) The stipends that are given during the frequent participation of the orphans at funerals, at the invitation of the relatives of the deceased.

7) Extraordinary donations of considerable amounts (from ten or twenty thousand Lire up to 50 thousand and more), which Providence continues to send every now and then through charitable persons of means.

N.B. The specific and detailed prospectus following these general observations on the Institute’s finances shows that it enjoys a very comforting and healthy material situation, in that, not only have the needs of such extensive and complex work always been met, but we have also been able to put some profit aside for unforeseen emergencies.

B. *Economic prospectus*

A few remarks should be made by way of introduction:

1) The late Founder provided for his succession with a standard last will and testament.

2) All the deeds relating to this succession were duly carried out, including settlement of the substantial tax obligations.

3) After the death of Founder, the same appreciation on the part of the public continued, together with the same charitable donations, in fact – certainly though the prayers of the man of God – the contributions increased, despite the difficult times in which we live.

4) As can be seen from the budget, the Institute is in sufficiently good financial condition: despite the fact that economic difficulties are more acutely felt due to the war, there is regular income.

5) The intention for the present is to focus all efforts on consolidating the Institute's financial status, foregoing, *for the time being*, any expansion that may be considered as burdensome.

With regard to the Institute's debts, as can be seen, these are not and should not be a cause for excessive concern: it is sufficient to mention that the sale of the property on Monte Mario alone, which has already been subdivided by Mr. Leonori, will be enough to meet all the mortgage debts on our various houses.

It should be noted that this sale of lots, which had already started, was interrupted due to the war and to the settlement of the succession following the Founder's death. However, it is encouraging to know that it will be able to continue regularly at the soonest convenient occasion.

The requested approval

1. *The steps taken so far*

Since the first years of the Institute, our venerable Founder, in the midst of the unspeakable hardships with which his path was strewn, received precious consolation, encouragement and praise, firstly from highly eminent bishops and cardinals, including the now deceased Cardinals Riboldi, Ferrata and Respighi, Cardinal Ferrari of Milan, who is still alive, Cardinal Maffi, Msgr.

Valfrè di Bonzo, the former bishop of Como, and the bishops of Chur, Adria, Rovigo, etc. However, the most outstanding of all, in terms of protection and kindness towards the Institute, was His Excellency Msgr. Alfonso Archi, Bishop of Como, where the Institute of the Servants of Charity began and where its mother house is located. As a true father and teacher, Msgr. Archi did everything a bishop could do to encourage the nascent Institute, and after the Founder's death his benevolence towards the orphaned children of Fr. Guanella seemed to double in capacity.

The most venerable encouragement of the Pope was soon added to that of the bishops, and already in 1890, the Holy Father, Leo XIII, blessed Fr. Guanella and his works. Pius X then not only blessed and encouraged Fr. Guanella, but placed no limit on his favours to the poor Institute of the Servants of Charity. Heartened and supported by such encouragement, in 1906 Fr. Guanella presented the Constitutions of the Servants of Charity to the Sacred Congregation for the Religious for the first time, so that they could be authoritatively reviewed, without yet daring to hope for their approval. The Sacred Congregation revised them carefully, clarified and established the purpose of the Institute, made the necessary corrections and changes to give them their final form and structure and then returned them, together with a favourable opinion of the good that the Institute was doing, so that they could be observed.

Some years later, in 1911 to be precise, the Sacred Congregation appointed a visitor, for the purpose of guiding the Servants of Charity from closer at hand, in the person of Msgr. Francesco Balconi, Archpriest of Milan Cathedral, who promptly began visiting the various houses of the Institute. Following the quite satisfactory outcome of these visits, Fr. Guanella thought the time had come to seek the much-desired approval. He therefore presented a thorough report on the Institute of the Servants of Charity, together with a request for provisional approval. The Sacred Congregation, after lengthy consideration, did not feel that the time appropriate to concede the approval, and instead granted a *decretum laudis* (decree of praise), in August 1912.

With regard to the approval, the Congregation replied: “*Dilata, et ad mentem*”, and the Sacred Congregation’s view was that the visitor should remain in office, recommending that he should oversee the material status of the Institute, and lead it to perfect observance of the separation from the Institute of the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence.

The venerable recommendations of the Holy See have been faithfully observed, in our opinion, as mentioned in the report on the disciplinary and economic state of the Institute. Proof of this, moreover, lies in the fact that in November 1915 the Sacred Congregation declared the office of the visitor to be terminated.

2. *The reasons for this request*

a) The sufficiently healthy state of the Institute, both morally and economically.

b) The state of the religious, whom, as shown in § 5. of this report, are fairly numerous.

c) The willing compliance with the specific orders from Rome, as mentioned and demonstrated.

d) The approval will lead to a more conscientious appreciation of the Rule by the individual members of the Institute, and thus contribute to their constantly improving formation.

e) The approval will give greater credit to the Institute, leading to an increase in vocations, including priestly vocations, so that the houses will be better staffed and therefore better equipped to respond to the various requests of bishops that call on the modest Servants of Charity to work in their dioceses, as was the case, for example, with the bishops of Taranto, Bergamo, Oppido Mamertino, etc.

f) We wish, in particular, to call the attention of the Congregation to the fact that, as the Institute is not yet approved, all the Servants of Charity are still incardinated in their various diocese of origin, with the risk of the bishops recalling their priests, with incalculable harm to the Institution. The only way to avoid this danger, which is becoming increasingly serious, is through approval.

3. *Our hopes*

It is hoped, therefore, that the much-desired approval will be granted through the kindness of the Church to an Institution which, particularly during and after this present war, is preparing, with the Lord's help, to bring relief to immense human sufferings. We cherish this hope, with confidence in the prayers of our Founder, to whom God did not grant this supreme comfort while on Earth.

We are not many in number, and still less in virtue, since we recognise our weakness, which makes us say with every step: "*Servants inutiles sumus*". However, trusting in God, in the Holy Father, his Vicar, in the Sacred Congregation, which has guided us to this point as a vigilant mother, we dare to consider ourselves quietly confident that this supreme decision will be granted, which, *albeit provisional*, would be for us like the comforting words of Jesus Christ to the Apostles: "*Nolite timere, pusillus grex*". In the words of the venerable Don Bosco, it would be for us: *the golden thread that binds the members to the Institute, the Institute to the Pope, and the Pope to God*.

Como, ... 1916

FR. AURELIO BACCIARINI
Superior of the Servants of Charity

3. Notes on reminiscences about Fr. Louis Guanella

(transcribed by Fr. Cesare Perego from a manuscript in the Guanellian archive in Como).

The text is by Msgr. Giovanni Tam, a native of Valtellina and archpriest of Traona, who was a friend of Fr. Guanella. In 1925, together with various priests from Valtellina, he became a promoter of the cause for the beatification of Fr. Nicolò Rusca, resuming Fr. Guanella's intention.

I met Fr. Louis for the first time in the spring of 1872. I was with my family in a field along the stony path that leads from Villa to Savogno, and my parents said: "Look, there goes Fr. Louis from Savogno," and a young priest with a ruddy complexion hurried by.

In those years, we spent the autumn and winter in Malaguardia, near San Cassiano, where we went to Mass on Sundays, and the parish priest there, Fr. Andrea Guanella, gave us the first booklet by Fr. Louis: "*Warnings to the people etc.*", which we would read in the evenings and in Villa we gave it to others to read. Later, after Fr. Louis' death, Fr. Mazzucchi persistently begged me to send it to him, being no longer able to find a copy for himself. However, I could no longer find it, so I wrote to Fr. Mazzucchi telling him to try the Salesian printing press in Turin, where it was printed; but it was no longer even listed in the Salesian catalogues.

When I was a seminarist, on several occasions I came across men from Savogno who criticised Fr. Louis, saying that he had sent several young girls to the nuns to die of starvation.

One day my Provost, Don Trussoni, told me: "*I went to Pianello and did everything possible to dissuade Fr. Louis from the utopia of becoming a second Don Bosco, but there was no way to make him see reason. He is an angel, another St. Louis, but he is obsessed with his idea*".

Fr. Giuseppe Romani, Provost of Caspano, told me: "*Fr. Louis was also shortlisted for Caspano, together with myself [Fr. Guanella was not actually considered as a candidate], and in the local meetings I come out on top, with a difference of one vote*".

When I went to the contest [*for the parish of Menarola*], as soon as Fr. Louis saw me, he wanted me to stay with him, and in the evening he asked me to hear confessions and give a few words to the sisters and residents.

Prof. Gobbi, the future archpriest of Morbegno, told me, as we were leaving Pianello together on the steamboat, "Fr. Guanella is just seeking attention through those pamphlets he has printed. He should be prohibited from degrading us priests in that way".

From Savogno, Fr. Louis had his eye on a block of houses in Mese that he would have liked to acquire. Having no means to purchase it, he knocked repeatedly at the door of a wealthy gentleman, Cavaliere Dolzino in Chiavenna, but was rudely turned away, as his estate manager, Giuseppe Succetti from Prosto, told me at the time.

While I was in Menarola [1888-1895], during a festival in Mese, some priests who were eating together there, including Prof. D. Eugenio Geronimi, were criticising Fr. Louis as a fanatic who wanted to become another Don Bosco, whereas even in Como he was plagued with debts, etc., due to his activities.

There were two orphan girls from Menarola (the Pedefferri sisters), one of whom was placed in Sommarovina as a housekeeper and nanny, and the other in the Tavasci inn, beside the barracks of the Finance Police in Vedescia, an infamous place that was later purchased by Fr. Louis. As soon as I heard about it, I immediately sought to remove her from there. When she was back in her village, she said to me: "Now see if you can find me another, better place". I turned to Fr. Louis, who told me to entrust her to him. He was then also entrusted with the other sister from Sommarovina. He accepted them both as residents, to be then placed as domestic servants. Sometime later, Fr. Louis told me that the older one was in service with the noble Somigliana family in Casanova, near Uggiate. A few years passed, and I saw Fr. Louis *smiling* at me almost condescendingly, as the two recommended girls were complaining because they had thought they would become nuns, and not be sent to serve, although this had not been the arrangement with me. I replied that I had sent them to the home as two orphans: if they then wished to become nuns, he should discuss it with them himself. The two of them became nuns, one in Roveredo and the other elsewhere.

What about the two De Giambattista sisters? They were very pious, with a great spirit of sacrifice. Both their parents had died and they were accepted in Como by Fr. L. Guanella, but were never able to untangle themselves from the matter of their inheritance, due to their only brother, who, incited up by a liberal-minded municipal secretary, insisted that they went away with just a meagre endowment. After some consider time, Fr. Louis asked: "Are they coming or not?" When he discovered why they were unable to leave, he smiled and said: "Come, and just bring what little you can; we'll see to the rest later." So, without saying a word to their brother, and only taking their own possessions with them, as instructed, the two sisters arrived in Como on foot, with their livestock and the few tools that they could carry. Shortly afterwards I went to see them: they were both with their cows in Binda. Fr. Louis then asked Ing. G. B. Zaboglio to settle the matter of their inheritance. He performed his role impartially and brought back to the house far more than was expected.

I have already described the events that occurred while he was living in Traona in other documents.

He came to Traona several times, as a guest in my house, and from there to the reverend fathers in the convent. On his return from the Holy land, he came to speak from the pulpit one evening in Lent, and told us of his journey.

On the morning of the feast of San Rocco, on the 19..., a votive feast in the town, Fr. Louis came to my house [*in Traona*] with three French Sacred Heart fathers of Betharram and the renowned Prof. Sichirollo: it was the first time those fathers entered the convent. After the pleasantries, I told them that the Father Superior could sing Mass at the altar of San Rocco and Fr. Louis, overjoyed,

introduced them to the people from the pulpit. Among other things, I remember him saying that just as San Rocco went from Italy to France for the good of his neighbour, and ended his days there, so the Reverend Fathers has come from France to benefit our towns, caring especially for the victims of spiritual plague.

After the Sacred Rites, Fr. Louis wanted everybody to go to the convent for breakfast, showing me a parcel containing cooked meat, salami, a little salt, and some wooden skewers, although I was already preparing a meal at my house: I still retain the skewers as a memento, but everything else was enjoyed in company. After breakfast we went back to the convent, where some beds owned by the Provost of Ponte Gusmeroli had already been prepared, and the Reverend Fathers began to live there. Fr. Louis set off again that evening and Prof. Sichirollo, who was staying in my house, left at his leisure the next day, embracing and kissing me at the point of departure.

He remained in correspondence with those good fathers during their stay there and often came to visit them. One day, when I happened to be at lunch with them and Fr. Louis, who was seated beside me, I said to him: "What a sad sight there is in your House in Ardenno! It is really awful to see those poor mentally handicapped people. Those nuns are truly heroic!" But he answered: "What are you talking about? Those are my dearest friends and the souls most dear to Jesus. I enjoy everything when I am there with them."

The noble Paravicini family in Traona was about to set up the children's home, and on their behalf I turned to Fr. Louis, who came with Ing. Sartirana. Upon seeing the premises and with the assurance of an offer of 40,000 Lire, he said that his sisters would be available. However, without even informing me, the Paravicinis brought the Cottolengo Sisters there. With regret, I wrote to Fr. Louis deploring what had happened and asking his forgiveness for the disturbance and for how he had been slighted. He told me in reply that the Cottolengo Sisters would do very good work there and that he wished them every success. It takes exceptional virtue to be able to respond in that way!

Fr. Lorenzo, his brother, died in his arms in Como, and he had his body taken to Ardenno. Some time later he said to me, when I was with him at Ardenno station: "What ungrateful, stubborn and heartless people! I had to pay personally for all the transport and the funeral expenses, and afterwards I took care of having his headstone put in place. Let us hope that someone thinks of reciting a Requiem for him, at least! This is the reward for all the good that he did there for so many years. The municipality was never even willing to provide the town's drinking for the houses that he acquired for me. In fact, they resent the presence of those residents, complaining that the most loathsome derelicts have been brought to the town.

Seven years later, when the Reverend Fathers were recalled to Rome, how much he did to make them stay! He promoted a petition in the town and in the nearby parishes, and appealed to the Holy Father through Msgr. Caccia

Dominioni. The fathers had said that they could not develop in Traona due to the inadequate premises, so he went with me and one of their priests to Ponte, to insist that Fr. Gusmerroli purchased the entire building with the adjoining estate. It should be noted that he too was forced to leave Traona, weighed down by sorrows and persecuted by the authorities.

My book: «Santi e Beati in Valtellina» («Saints and Blesseds in Valtellina») was suggested by him, as I mention in the introduction.

One day, while I was talking with Prof. Trussoni, the future Archbishop of Cosenza, about the new saints, he commented: “It would be no surprise if we also saw Fr. Louis elevated to the altars. Isn’t he a saint?”

Once, while I was together with Fr. Louis, Fr. Lucchinetti and Fr. Beniamino, his friend Fr. Lucchinetti was trying to persuade him to accept his institution and incorporate it with his own. “No,” replied Fr. Louis, “continue by yourself for now. I will be at your side and will help you in any way I can; when are no longer able to continue, we will make the incorporation.” Why then, after Fr. Primo’s death, did his work pass to other hands? There is a reason, which ought not to be told in writing.

I and others participated in the 15th Catholic Congress in Milan, as Fr. Louis’ guests at San Ambrogio ad Nemos. One evening, while having supper, we were talking about the speeches we had heard and the topics discussed in the various sections. Suddenly, Fr. Louis exclaimed: “Beautiful things, marvelous speeches, wonderful speakers, but the worst of it is that certain Catholic Action leaders do not go to Mass, not even at Easter.” We were stunned, but unfortunately it was true! At that time, Catholic Action was centred on politics, opportunism and power seeking, and no longer on the personal example of our leaders.

Fr. Louis was jubilant at the election of Pope Pius X, and he told me: “Marvellous! Canonists? Scientists? Our society needs a father, a pastor, a man with a great heart, and that is what Providence has given us.”

He complained about the Curia, and speaking of Vedescia (Nuova Olonio) he told me: “I promoted the reclamation of that putrid swamp, I built the church, I started a new parish, and the Curia not only refuses to help me, but looks upon me almost with pity and mocks me.

He wanted the priests of Villa to celebrate for the inauguration of the new altar and the church in Vicosoprano: Fr. Trussoni, the former provost, preached the Triduum, blessed the Church and the altar and celebrated the Holy Mass in the morning; High Mass was sung by Fr. Trussoni with Fr. Maraffio Cesare and Fr. Beniamino as ministers, and I gave the homily; and the Provost, Fr. Damiani presided over Vespers.

The following day all went by coach to Villa, where Fr. Louis said, “Who wants to come with me to Savogno? I’m going there for the last time”. “I’ll come,” I replied, “and I’m happy to go, also to visit the parish priest, Fr. Ba-

latti, who was my cleric and godson in Menarola.” So off we went to Savogno. Along the way, in the course of conversation, I told him: “Listen, everyone admires your institutions, like those of Cottolengo, Don Bosco, Fr. Casoria and others. It must be said, however, that they would not have been able to do anything without the goodwill of the people, who contribute generously, and so the credit should be shared.” “Yes, certainly,” he replied. “We are just instruments; the benefactors have the greater merit. I can’t stand those who see everything as bleak, with nothing but hostility towards decency and the Church, even saying that there have never been times worse than our own. No, there is great good, even today, and much more than people believe. Love for one’s neighbour is very prominent. And I appreciate and accept charity from wherever it comes, even from the Freemasons and Protestants: *charitas operit multitudinem peccatorum* (‘love covers a multitude of sins’)”.

When we arrived in Savogno, he went immediately in search of the oldest and most infirm people, and then we walked a few times around the cemetery together reciting the Miserere and De Profundis. He then had the bells rung to call people to the Rosary, which he himself led, and he addressed the people, reminiscing over his former times with them and speaking in particular of his sister Catherine, whose cause for beatification he had initiated. He encouraged the people to turn to her for any grace and to notify him of graces obtained. In regard to this, I know that Fr. Louis tried to persuade Msgr. Gianera to assume the task of promoting the cause, and Msgr. Gianera answered him, almost jokingly: “I’m also from the valley and a personal friend, so my task would be too biased and it could harm your sister’s future cause of beatification, dear Fr. Louis”. The next day, I went down with him to Chiavenna, and he came with me to the municipal representative to enquire about obtaining permission for a charity raffle in Chiavenna, which had previously been denied.

In the early days of the Work in Vedescia, he would often invite me to meetings and local festivals. For the inauguration of the Church, I promoted the offering of a large amount of wine in the town and added a new processional crucifix that I acquired from the Albasini company, which is still in use. As a token of gratitude, Fr. Louis sent me a parcel of leaflets on “The Month of May with our Lady of Lourdes” to be distributed to the people.

When he formed the “Madonna del Lavoro” art group, Fr. Louis wrote me explaining the idea of placing a farmer and a worker at the feet of the Blessed Virgin, and asked me to send him clothes that were used in Traona in olden times. I found them, Nardini copied them, and they were then returned to me.

He was unable to be present for my 25th anniversary as a priest, as he had returned tired and shaken from America, but through some of his priest friends he saw that I was awarded with the “Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice” cross.

The following year (1914) he wanted me to give the Spiritual Exercises to the young sisters in Ardenno.

When Fr. Louis fell seriously ill, Fr. Beniamino and I went to visit him. He asked me to request the old provost of Dubino, Fr. Sertorelli, to leave everything and come to end his days together with him. To Fr. Beniamino Giacomini he said: "Go to the Archpriest of Talamona and tell him to start building his church immediately, but it must be large and beautiful, and he mustn't skimp on the costs, because Providence will help him."

We then returned to Como for his funeral, and were present for his embalming on the vigil.

On the day of the funeral, there was a tall, elderly gentleman beside me in the cathedral, and a priest from Bergamo whispered in my ear: "Do you know that gentleman?" – "No" – "He is Count Medolago Albani, a great supporter of the farmers through his words and writings, but an authentic loan shark to his tenants and employees". Whether it was true or not, I remembered what Fr. Louis had told me in Milan: that the great scourge of Catholic Action was our leaders, whose actions were in great contradiction with their private behaviour, which, however, is no longer the case today.

For the rest, I refer you to my funeral homily for Fr. Louis, which is included with the homilies from the various funerals celebrated in his memory.

Uggiate, 14 July 1940

Msgr. GIOVANNI TAM

DECREES

1. DECREE FOR THE CONVERSION OF A RESIDENCE INTO HOME

Prot. n. 329/11-12

Comunità
“La posada del Buen Samaritano”
Rúa de la Iglesia 2
ARCA-O PINO (La Coruña - Spagna)

OBJECT: Erection of a new Religious House, Appointment of the Superior of the Community, the 1st Councillor and confirmation of the Treasurer.

Il Superiore generale, nella seduta di Consiglio tra il 19-20 novembre 2012, avendo letta la vostra richiesta, a tenore del CIC 115, 2 e delle C 138 e avendo avuto il voto deliberativo dei suoi consiglieri

erige

a Casa religiosa, la Comunità de “**La Posada del Buen Samaritano - Casa de acogida vocacional**” sita in Arca-O Pino (La Coruña-Spagna).

Oltre alla suddetta erezione della Casa come tale, il Superiore generale procede anche alla nomina di:

- Don Fabio Pallotta, come *Superiore di comunità*
- P. Teodoro García García, come *1º Consigliere*
- Don Ezio Canzi, riconfermato *Economo*

Resta ferma la dipendenza diretta dell'erigenda Casa dal Superiore generale.

Assicuriamo un particolare ricordo al Signore a ciascuno dei confratelli perché possano dare buona testimonianza della carità di Cristo in terra galiziana come comunità nucleo animatore per la gloria di Dio e per il bene di tutti quelli che gli si avvicinano.

Don ALFONSO CRIPPA
Superiore generale

P. Gustavo De Bonis
Segretario generale

Roma, 22 novembre 2012

2. DECREE FOR THE ERECTION OF NEW COMMUNITIES

Prot. n. 294/09-12

Rev. Superiore provinciale
Don Nino Minetti
Provincia Romana San Giuseppe
ROMA

OBJECT: *Erection of a religious community in Casa Matteo Torriani in Roma Bufalotta.*

Il Superiore generale, avendo ricevuto richiesta formale da parte del vostro Consiglio provinciale, confermata con lettera a firma del Segretario provinciale, don Alessandro Allegra, datata 20 settembre 2012, avendo avuto il voto deliberativo del suo Consiglio, su proposta del Superiore provinciale don Nino Minetti **delibera di erigere una Comunità religiosa che avrà luogo nella Casa Matteo Torriani in Roma-Bufalotta.**

Nell'erigere la suddetta Comunità il Consiglio generale si auspica che i confratelli che vi faranno parte possano veramente testimoniare la *vita communis* e così edificare tutti quelli che prendono contatto con loro.

Nella promessa di ricordarvi vivamente al Signore vi salutiamo *in Domino*

Don ALFONSO CRIPPA
Superiore generale

P. Gustavo De Bonis
Segretario generale

Roma, 24 settembre 2012

3. APPOINTMENTS

- **Prot. n. 275 of 22nd May 2012**

- Fr. Charlton Viray, Father Master in Quezon City

- **Prot. n. 283 of 31st May 2012**

- P. Jude Anamelechi, Father Master in the novitiate of Nnebukwu.
- P. François Mpunga, Superior and Rector of the Theological Seminary in Kinshasa

- **Prot. n. 309 of 29th September 2012**

- Don Nino Minetti, Provincial Superior (confirmed) - Prov. San Giuseppe
- Don Fabio Lorenzetti, 1st Councillor and Vicar Provincial (confirmed) - Prov. San Giuseppe
- Don Matteo Rinaldi, 2nd Provincial Councillor (confirmed) - Prov. San Giuseppe
- Don Aldo Mosca, 3rd Provincial Councillor (confirmed) - Prov. San Giuseppe
- Don Alessandro Allegra, 4th Provincial Councillor (riconfermato) - Prov. San Giuseppe

- **Prot. n. 310 of 29th September 2012**
 - Don Gabriele Cantaluppi, Vice-Rector of the Seminary Mons. Bacciarini in Rome

- **Prot. n. 324 of 26th October 2012**
 - Don Marco Grega, Provincial Superior - Prov. Sacred Heart
 - Don Domenico Scibetta, 1st Councillor and Vicar - Prov. Sacred Heart
 - Don Angelo Gottardi, 2nd Councillor - Prov. Sacred Heart
 - Don Cesare Perego, 3rd Councillor - Prov. Sacred Heart
 - Don Remigio Oprandi, 4th Councillor - Prov. Sacred Heart

- **Prot. n. 325 of 30th October 2012**
 - P. Enrico Colafemina, Provincial Superior (confirmed) - Prov. Our Lady of Guadalupe
 - P. Alfonso Martínez Herguedas, 1st Provincial Councillor and Vicar - Prov. Our Lady of Guadalupe
 - P. Leoncio García de la Cruz, 2nd Provincial Councillor - Prov. Our Lady of Guadalupe
 - P. Andrés García Velasco, 3rd Provincial Councillor - Prov. Our Lady of Guadalupe

- **Prot. n. 326 of 30th October 2012**
 - Fr. Soosai Rathinam Anthonisamy, Provincial - Prov. Divine Providence
 - Fr. Charlton Viray, 1st Councillor and Vicar Provincial - Prov. Divine Providence
 - Fr. Visuwasam, 2nd Provincial Councillor - Prov. Divine Providence
 - Fr. Dennis Weber, 3rd Provincial Councillor - Prov. Divine Providence
 - Fr. Kulaindaisamy, 4th Provincial Councillor - Prov. Divine Providence

- **Prot. n. 327 of 30th October 2012**
 - Pe. Mauro Vogt, Provincial Superior - Prov. Santa Cruz
 - Pe. Valdemar Alves Pereira, 1st Councillor and Vicar Provincial - Prov. Santa Cruz

- Ir. Arílson Bordignon; 2nd Provincial Councillor - Prov. Santa Cruz
 - Pe. Alcides José Vergütz, 3rd Provincial Councillor - Prov. Santa Cruz
 - Pe. Adelmo Luiz Maldaner, 4th Provincial Councillor - Prov. Santa Cruz
- **Prot. n. 328 of 30th October 2012**
 - P. Carlos D. Blanchoud, Provinciale Superior - Prov. Cruz del Sur
 - P. Eladio Adorno Orihuela, 1st Councillor and Vicar Provincial - Prov. Cruz del Sur
 - P. Cristian P. Sepúlveda Rodríguez, 2nd Councillor - Prov. Cruz del Sur
 - P. César A. Leiva, 3rd Councillor - Prov. Cruz del Sur
 - P. Jorge A. Domínguez, 4th Councillor - Prov. Cruz del Sur
- **Prot. 330 of 22nd November 2012**
 - P. Carlos A. Vargas Staper, Superior and Rector of the Theological Seminary in Bogotá
 - P. José de Jesús Fariña Osorio, 1st Councillor and Vice-Rector of the Theological Seminary in Bogotá
- **Prot. 331 of 22nd November 2012**
 - Don Remigio Oprandi, Provincial Secretary - Prov. Sacred Heart
 - Don Nando Giudici, Provincial Treasurer (confirmed) - Prov. Sacred Hearts
- **Prot. n. 332 of 22nd November 2012**
 - Fr. Dennis Weber, Provincial Secretary - Prov. Divine Providence
 - Fr. Joseph Rinaldo, Provincial Treasurer - Prov. Divine Providence
- **Prot. n. 333 of 22nd November 2012**
 - Ir. Arilson Bordignon, Provincial Secretary - Prov. Santa Cruz
 - Pe. Edenilson De Costa, Provincial Treasurer (confirmed) - Prov. Santa Cruz

- **Prot. n. 334 of 22nd November 2012**
 - P. Andrés García Velasco, Provincial Secretary - Prov. Our Lady of Guadalupe
 - P. José A. Villegas Vallejo, Provincial Treasurer (confirmed) - Prov. Our Lady of Guadalupe

- **Prot. n. 335 of 22nd November 2012**
 - P. César A. Leiva, Provincial Secretary - Prov. Cruz del Sur
 - P. Nelson Jerez Silva, Provincial Treasurer - Prov. Cruz del Sur

- **Prot. n. 338 of 22nd November 2012**
 - Don Ciro Attanasio, Director and Legal Representative Ed. Nuove Frontiere

4. "NULLA OSTA" FOR APPOINTMENTS

- **Prot. n. 249 of 16th February 2012**
 - Fr. Visuwasam, assistant to the two Provincial Councillors in India

- **Prot. n. 276 of 22nd May 2012**
 - Fr. Fr. A. Kulandai Samy, Superior of the Vatluru Community

- **Prot. n. 281 of 31st May 2012**
 - Fr. Silvio De Nard, Parish Priest of Sacred Heart Parish

- **Prot. n. 292 of 7th July 2012**
 - P. Fernando de la Torre, Superior and Parish Priest of S. Joaquín Parish

- **Prot. n. 295 of 24th September 2012**
 - Don Pino Venerito, Superior of Community “San Giuseppe”
 - Don Giacomo Panaro, Superior (for one more year) of the Community in Naro
 - Don Renato Ratti, Superior of Community of Roma-Bufalotta

- **Prot. n. 336 of 22nd November 2012**
 - Don Remigio Oprandi, Interim Superior of the Community in Como-Lora

- **Prot. n. 337 of 22nd November 2012**
 - Don Marco Grega, Interim Superiore of the Community in Genova

- **Prot. n. 339 of 22nd November 2012**
 - Pe. Deoclesio Danielli, Superior of the Community in Anchieta

- **Prot. n. 391 of 12th December 2012**
 - P. Bruno Tremolada, Superior of the Community in Amozoc (renewed for 3 years)
 - P. Alfonso Martínez Herguedas, Superior of the Community in Chapas
 - P. José Angel Villegas Vallejo., Superior of the Community in Mexico City
 - P. Leoncio García de la Cruz, Superior of the Community in Bucaramanga
 - P. Andrés García Velazco, Superior of the Community in Palencia
 - P. Cosmo Pedagna Stefanelli, Parish Priest of Corpus Christi Parish
 - P. Arturo Cano, Parish Priest of Inmaculada Concepción de María Parish
 - P. Leoncio García de la Cruz, Parish Priest of Santa Lucía Parish

- **Prot. n. 392 of 12th December 2012**
 - Fr. Joseph Rinaldi, Superior of the Community in Chelsea

5. CHANGE OF PROVINCE

- **Prot. n. 278 of 24th May 2012**

- Fr. K. Maria Paul, from the Divine Providence Province to the Province “San Giuseppe”

6. LEAVING THE CONGREGATION - EXCLAURATION PERMISSIONS

PEOPLE WHO HAVE PERMANENTLY LEFT THE CONGREGATION

- Torales Pacheco Ismael (*Temporary Seminarist - Province of Cruz del Sur*) on 7th February 2012
- Soares Caldeira Diogo (*Temporary Seminarist - Province of Santa Cruz*) on 3rd March 2012
- Paulino Gutiérrez Armando (*Priest - Our Lady of Guadalupe Province*) on 28th April 2012. Incardinated in the Arquidiócesis de México (Mexico)
- Gavilán Martínez Sergio (*Temporary Seminarist - Province of Cruz del Sur*) on 25th May 2012
- Estiller Cesar (*Temporary Seminarist - Divine Providence Province*) on 25th May 2012
- Kummari Sudhakar (*Temporary Seminarist - Divine Providence Province*) on 25th May 2012
- Selvarayer Xavier (*Temporary Seminarist - Divine Providence Province*) on 25th May 2012
- Vidhya Sagar Battu (*Novice - Divine Providence Province*) on 25th May 2012
- Anthonydoss Arivalagan (*Temporary Seminarist - Divine Providence Province*) on 26th May 2012
- Michael Okewu Peter (*Temporary Seminarist - Delegation Our Lady of Hope*) on 31st May 2012
- Franco Martínez Javier (*Temporary Seminarist - Province of Cruz del Sur*) on 31st May 2012
- Antony Don Joseph (*Priest - Divine Providence Province*) on 9th June 2012
- Rivera Luis Gerónimo (*Temporary Seminarist - Province of Cruz del Sur*) on 15th June 2012

- Diakiese Guy (*Temporary Seminarist - Delegation Our Lady of Hope*) on 28th June 2012
- Bampembe Ndomba Alex (*Temporary Seminarist - Delegation Our Lady of Hope*) on 30th June 2012
- Kulonga Kapay Toussaint (*Temporary Seminarist - Delegation Our Lady of Hope*) on 30th June 2012
- Borges Vânio (*Perpetual Brother - Province of Santa Cruz*) on 24th October 2012
- Maria Manickam Thanasekar (*Priest - Divine Providence Province*) on 21st November 2012 was incardined in the Tuticorin Diocese
- Yohan Jonnalagadda (*Temporary Seminarist - Divine Providence Province*) on 17th December 2012

EXCLAURATION PERMISSIONS

- Manganiello Don Aniello (*Priest - Province “San Giuseppe” in Rome*) on 24th March 2012 for three years
- Fuentes González P. Angel Gabriel (*Priest - Province of Cruz del Sur*) on 31st May 2012 for three years
- Julián P. Hugo (*Priest - Province of Cruz del Sur*) on 23rd June 2012 for three years, at the end of which he shall be incardinated in the Diocese of Río Cuarto (Argentine Republic)
- Mora Gelvez P. Pablo Emilio (*Priest - Our Lady of Guadalupe Province*) on 18th February 2012 for three years
- Sánchez Sánchez P. Benjamin (*Priest - Our Lady of Guadalupe Province*) on 30th August 2012 for one year
- Gallo Fr. Vincenzo (*Brother - Sacred Heart Province*) on 1st October 2012 for one year

DECEASED CONFRERES

1. Father Mario Latini
2. Father Antonio Nastro
3. Father Vittorio Mosca
4. Father Loreto Domenico Della Morte
5. Father Luigi Lazzaro Frangi
6. Brother Battista Nervi
7. Father Mario Gambuti

1. Father Mario Latini

Born in Valmontone (Rome) on 10 December 1935
Entered in Anzano del Parco on 1 September 1953
Novitiate in Barza d'Ispra from 12 September 1954
First Profession in Barza d'Ispra on 12 September 1956
Perpetual Profession in Barza d'Ispra on 24 September 1962
Ordained priest in Valmontone on 28 June 1964
Died in Ferentino on 15 January 2012
Buried in Valmontone Cemetery



May the Word of God offered for our meditation by today's liturgy provide us with a message of hope in this time of sorrow.

The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath! Therefore, the Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath.

To understand the revolutionary force of these Word of Jesus, we must remember that the Sabbath rest was of absolute importance to the Jews. It is sufficient to realise that those who violated it could be put to death. Moses himself pronounced such verdicts.

Jesus, however, out of love for God, the only Absolute, places the human person, loved by him, at the centre. His disciples, who were passing through a cornfield, were hungry. They picked a few ears and ate them, even though the Sabbath law, which was exceedingly harsh, would never have allowed this.

David also did the same when faced with the hunger of his soldiers, and took the bread reserved as an offering to God to feed them. It follows, then, that Jesus knew that this absolute law, considered intangible and laid down by God, could be broken, because he himself is greater than it. He is, because he is God himself.

We can never say enough about the dignity of the human person and the primacy of persons over things. Especially today, when we have constant occasions to observe precisely the opposite. Humans becomes the slave of objects, they becomes objects, manipulated by other humans. Who can free them? Jesus Christ and his Gospel (JOHN PAUL II).

The Lord said to Samuel: "Do not look at his appearance or at his stature. I have rejected him, because I do not see as man sees. Man looks at the outward appearance; the Lord looks at the heart."

The content of this biblical passage brings us to the highest peak of the Old Testament and of all the great religious revelations to the most ancient peoples. The context regards Samuel. God ordered him to go to Jesse's house in Bethlehem. The Lord has chosen one of his sons as king to replace Saul, who has "disobeyed". And so, Samuel enters Jesse's house and asks him to call his sons. Seven of them arrive, each more handsome and striking than the next. Samuel is impressed by the imposing figure and good looks of the first born and asks God if he is the chosen one. The Lord warns him that he must change his criteria: he must not judge according to appearances but by what comes from the deepest roots of a person: the heart. God looks at the heart. Unlike humans, he is not enticed by external appearance. David, the youngest, was not even summoned. He was a small boy and of little or no account in the eyes of his own father. And yet, God's choice had fallen precisely on this little one. David was immediately anointed king. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* defines man in his search for truth and happiness as "a beggar before God".

I would now like to highlight three aspects of his life and mission as a Guanellian priest that we can share with one another today as his spiritual legacy. These three components are an accurate reflection of the Guanellian charism: God at the centre of his life and mission, the poor in his heart and Mary as his mother and teacher in life. These three characteristics distinguished the life of St. Louis Guanella since the beginnings in Gualdera, on the day of his First Communion. They also sum up the life and mission of every Guanellian very well.

1. A man in love with his identity and mission as consecrated to the Lord and happy to be a priest, like the prophet Samuel. Of course, he was also humanly weak, he was fragile in front of an often violent and vengeful world, where there is little respect for the human person. Because he was a man of God, however, and belonged to God, Fr. Mario was always faithful to his

Lord, ready to proclaim his word even in difficult times. He was a staunch defender, bold and totally unwilling to compromise in matters of faith, the church, and Christian morality. He was always ready to do the will of his God, obediently accepting his plans, even those that were unexpected and which he had not foreseen. This can also be seen in the phrase he had printed on his mother Emma's funeral image when she died: "*We accept everything from the Lord*", not simply as a eulogy to his mother, but exalting the importance of doing the God's will in our lives, following the example of Mary and Jesus.

He was an exemplary son of St. Louis Guanella, who always considered himself blessed from on high whenever he managed to silence his resentments and personal opinions and place himself in the hands of Divine Providence, of that benevolent Father who stoops down while you are sleeping to count the beats of your heart.

2. An amiable, sensitive and appreciative man, particularly with those most vulnerable, fragile and sick.

The testimonies that have been given in his memory these last few days highlight this quality. The 13 years he spent in our institutes for troubled youth and the 29 spent in parish ministry in Naples, Messina, Naro and Ferentino confirm this Guanellian attention towards the least, the sick and the disabled. It is centred on care, respect and defence of the person, of every person, particularly those that count for little in the eyes of society and have no voice, are not productive, are merely tolerated or even eliminated; these are the types of people that attracted his attention and care. With some he built up such a strong and effective network of relationships that, even after he had obediently transferred elsewhere, they continued over time by phone, letters and occasional meetings. These are now the very ones mourning this simple priest and father, who wore his heart on his sleeve and always had a word of hope in any situation. He was a positive man whose optimism always enabled him to see the best and least negative side of any situation.

Like his Founder, St. Louis Guanella, he saw the poor as the truest and most eloquent image of the incarnation of Christ. He was attracted to the poor not only through sensitivity to their condition, but out of the desire to meet, love and serve the Lord himself in them. He never saw himself as a philanthropist, but always as someone sent by God to his beloved children to bring them his fatherly love.

3. Fr. Mario was a man inspired by a deep and sincere Marian spirituality. He was known in the congregation as the "Marian" priest. How many pilgrimages he led to the principle Marian Shrines in Italy and the world. How many rosaries he recited! In all his homilies, almost like a regular and distinctive feature, there was always a thought or a practical reference about Mary,

her life as a woman and mother, her sufferings or her being the first follower of her Son. All the images to commemorate his religious and priestly anniversaries bear this mark of confidence in the Virgin Mary. The small image for his 40th priestly anniversary has the following words: “O holy Mary, Mother of the eternal priest, accept our humble prayer of perennial thanks to the most Holy Trinity for the gift of the Eucharist and the Catholic priesthood”.

His mother Emma had instilled this certainty in him, which over time became solid faith: on the day you were born, your father found work in the factory in Colleferro; three years later he was killed in an explosion and terrible fire, together with 80 other people. And so a door closed in our family life, but later Our Lady opened a large door for us when she called you to follow Jesus as a priest.

You see: his mother Emma had a genuine, simple faith, without theological or biblical references, but flowing from the heart of a loving mother. The peaceful and precious life of Fr. Mario was nourished by this faith, so pure and genuine.

His earthly journey of waiting and hope has now ended and the time of communion, of feast and of love that knows no end has begun.

Thank you, Fr. Mario, Servant of Charity, for your precious and shining witness. We are proud to have had you as our confrere in the journey of these years spent together. Together with our holy Founder, Fr. Guanella, help and guide us now from heaven towards that blessed destination you have reached, where you are alive in the Lord forever. Amen.

(From the homily given by Fr. Umberto Brugnoli at his funeral)

2. Father Antonio Nastro

Born in Amalfi (Salerno) on 17 November 1927
Entered in Fara Novarese on 2 October 1938
Novitiate in Barza d’Ispra from 12 September 1943
First Profession in Barza d’Ispra on 12 September 1945
Perpetual Profession in Barza d’Ispra on 12 September 1951
Ordained priest in Milan on 19 March 1952
Died in the Nursing Home in Barza d’Ispra
on 1 February 2012
Buried in Ispra Cemetery



“Our homeland is in heaven”

“Whoever eats of this bread will live forever”

The memory of the urn with the holy remains of our Founder, right where you are now, dear Fr. Antonio, is still alive. You too came here, like all of us,

to venerate him and pray to him. What was it that you asked from him? To allow you to join him in the heavenly homeland, perhaps?

The Apostle Paul consoled the Philippians, telling them: “Brethren, our homeland is in heaven... where the Lord will change our mortal body to the image of his own glorious body”.

Despite our present sadness, the celebration of this Eucharist in memory of our dear brother Antonio calls us to raise our eyes on high and firmly believe that our true homeland is in heaven, where we will live happily forever in the Father’s house. This is what the Word of God assures us and the Church confirms; this is what we believe and hope!

One of the realities that most sadden us when we think about death is the fragility and poverty of our own mortal body. Fr. Antonio was once so full of life and constantly active, never allowing himself a moment’s rest; he was then weakened by a car accident and impaired by sickness and old age; and now his inert remains lie here in this wooden box, which we will entrust to the earth, where it will dissolve in the necessary and perpetual cycle of natural transformation.

However, it does not all end there, thanks be to God!

Jesus Christ assumed a mortal body, to transform it into a glorious body in his resurrection and ascension into heaven. Our body is the instrument of our sanctification: it is purified by the Father in Baptism, anointed by the Spirit in Confirmation and nourished by the body of Christ in the Eucharist. The body of Fr. Antonio was also consecrated as a priest and religious for a ministry of apostolate and evangelical charity.

And so our body together with our soul, which, united, identify us as a person, is called to enjoy that happiness that the Eternal Father has promised us in Christ.

Fr. Antonio was born in Amalfi on 17th November 1927. His parents died at an early age and he and his beloved sister, Nunzia, were left alone. To your relatives, dear Fr. Antonio, we express our condolences, especially to your niece, Preziosi Marisa, who unfortunately was unable to be present, but who participates with great sadness and devout prayer.

Fr. Antonio entered our Institute for boys in Fara Novarese in 1938. He was 11 years old, and would never leave the work of Fr. Guanella. He died at 84 years of age, in this very house in Barza d’Ispra, where he made his novitiate in 1943, his first religious profession with the Servants of Charity in 1945, and his perpetual profession in 1951.

He was ordained priest in Milan on 29 March 1952. He would have celebrated the 60th anniversary of priesthood this year.

His Guanellian religious life has been very eventful, due to personal facts and also for reasons of obedience. From Milan to Anzano del Parco (Como), from Cassago Brianza (Lecco) to Ceglie Massapica (Brindisi); from Ferentino (Frosinone) to Civita-Itri (Latina); once more to Ferentino, then to Fara Novarese (Novara); then to Castano Primo (Milan), then he returned to our house in Milan and was then sent to Vellai di Feltre (Belluno), where we were together for three years. He then went to Chiavenna (Sondrio) and Albizzate (Varese). He arrived in Barza in 1997, where he remained, in silence and prayer, until now. The Lord was waiting for him once more here in Barza, where he began his journey of friendship with Jesus, to give him time to reflect and sanctify himself in preparation to meet the Eternal Father, who would ask him to give an account of his whole life.

His activity in the “Opera Don Guanella” was manifold and varied: ranging from the pastoral ministry, to which he felt more suited, to the education of boys and young men in our various Institutes. He was also active in teaching, as he had a degree in languages, specialising in French. His passion, however, was begging, as it used to be called: going from door to door to ask for anything that could help those in need.

We are here today, confreres and faithful, not only to bid him farewell and tell him that we have loved him, just as he was, but also to entrust him through our prayers to the mercy of the Father, whom St. Louis Guanella always told us to call “Papa”.

To God the Father, therefore, we lift up the Eucharistic prayer in thanksgiving for the lively and animated life granted to Fr. Antonio and to intercede for him through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

“I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever.” So Jesus tells us in the Gospel we have read.

The Christ that we make present, through his words, under the species of bread and wine, is not a corpse, but is the risen Christ, alive and glorious. By eating his body, with purity of spirit, we too have the guarantee of eternal life.

Fr. Antonio not only ate this holy bread, but was its minister. He celebrated the Eucharist every day throughout the entire course of his long life. In his priestly ministry he also encouraged, advised and preached these great truths of our faith to many of the faithful. God will certainly be grateful to him, and, for the good he has done, will also place a veil of mercy over any shortcomings that he may have committed.

The Holy Scriptures say that charity covers a multitude of sins, and Fr. Antonio spread his charity by the handful, practically everywhere, putting into practice the words of the Gospel: “let your right hand not know what your left hand is doing”. He sought out those who had, in order to give to those who had not.

Fr. Antonio is surely looking down on us with kindness from Paradise, smiling at what we are saying and grateful for what we have not mentioned.

Fr. Antonio, now that you are close to our new Saint and Founder, pray for the Congregation, for the Sacred Heart Province, for the House of Barza and for us all.

We pray for you and we bid you farewell!

*(From the homily by Fr. Remigio Oprandi
at his funeral on 3 Feb. 2012)*

3. Father Vittorio Mosca

Born in Cassano Irpino (Avellino) on 28 March 1937
Admitted in Gatteo on 1 October 1950
Novitiate in Barza d'Ispra from 12 September 1955
First Profession in Barza d'Ispra on 12 September 1957
Perpetual Profession in Barza d'Ispra
on 24 September 1963
Ordained priest in Como on 25 April 1965
Died on 14 February 2012 in Agrigento (Parish house)
Buried in Agrigento Cemetery



“Listen, my dear brethren: has not God chosen the poor in the world to be rich and heirs of the kingdom which he has promised?”

The teachings of St. James remind us today that the one who is often on the margins of our society is in fact our centre. We are strongly encouraged, in the name of Jesus, to prefer those who are excluded, to give our full attention to the poor and to welcome the stranger. No one should feel rejected or discarded, since Christ himself, “the stone which the builders rejected”, has become the “head of the corner”, a “precious stone” (cf. 1 Peter 2:6-11).

The Holy Spirit imparts to the soul a deep love for humanity and compassion for all who go astray. Judgement is not a task assigned to humans (this work will be done by the angels, on the last day, at the time of the harvest. Cf. Matt 13:41-42). History is the time of the mercy and patience of God, who does not want the sinner to die, but to be converted and live (cf. 2 Pet 3:9).

Dear Fr. Vittorio, in bidding you a final farewell in this Eucharist, in the presence of your relatives, your confreres, your bishop, the clergy of this dio-

cese and your beloved parishioners and friends, we can see that these words of St. James were authentically reflected in your life. No one is born into this world by chance; everyone has a project to fulfil, a divine plan that comes from God. As a spiritual son of St. Louis Guanella, you desired and made visible this preferential choice, this fatherly compassion and brotherly solidarity towards the least through your own life. We certainly see the strong and provocative words that were spoken a few years ago in one of our Chapter meetings as being fulfilled in your ministry: we must take care that the poor are not only at the centre of our homes and our pedagogical care, but that they also have a place at the centre of our hearts!

Just last night, when I learned that I had been chosen to express this final salutation and gratitude to you on behalf of the Congregation, I re-read all your letters and those of this people of Agrigento to our General Curia. It confirmed everything I have just said. You people wrote these words in their petition to the Father General to prevent your transfer from Agrigento: “Fr. Vittorio, with his zeal and charism, has attracted thousands of faithful to our huge parish, and with his kindness and affection he has established a continuous relationship of friendship with the poor, the sick and the marginalised. His lasting concern for our entire community can never be erased.”

There is also an SOS sent to the superiors after Fr. Arcangelo’s transfer, when there were only two of you left. You wrote: “In recent years our parish has extended the tent of charity to many other fields; our work has increased enormously. Providence has become even more a pastoral, recreational, cultural and, above all, charitable centre, far beyond its boundaries. My great desire is to not allow anything we have undertaken with God’s grace to decline, but I absolutely need the help of a third confrere.”

I also remember that trip made together in our missions in India, when I saw how enthusiastic and at home you were among those who showed the most visible signs of poverty, suffering and exclusion. You told me that you once returned from a trip to Africa with only the clothes you were wearing; all the rest you had left for those who needed it more than you. You were very generous, Father Vittorio! This Christian community, in which you and other confreres instilled awareness, still supports over 40 sponsorships of children and poor people in India.

You courageously and willingly applied what St. Louis Guanella taught us to see and live: “You must welcome the most abandoned ones, those that others reject. Place them at table with you, because they are Jesus Christ.”

The Gospel also poses us the fundamental question for every Christian life: “Who is Jesus Christ for you?” In the Gospel of Mark, this question is of such importance that it is placed at the central point of the narrative. We could say that it is a central, vital question. Our generation must once more hear the question that Jesus asked the twelve: “Who do you say that I am?”

Jesus is still in Galilee, and the evangelist indicates that this is the starting point of his journey to Jerusalem. Peter's proclamation of faith, on behalf of all the others, is clear: You are the Christ! Which means the Messiah, the one consecrated by God. Peter has done well to confess his faith. It is the right way to start that journey. However, his faith is still fragile and needs to be nourished by the Gospel. Jesus even has to harshly rebuke him immediately afterwards. Faced with the prophecy of the passion and of a kingdom that also involves death, Peter becomes an impediment. Struck by the necessity of the passion, he fails to hear the reassuring announcement of the resurrection, although this was included in the Master's words. Then Jesus, with unprecedented harshness, compares him to the prince of evil: "Get behind me, Satan! You are thinking not as God thinks, but as human beings do."

Dear Fr. Vittorio, our second reason for thanking you today is this: you have been a joyful priest who has shown confidence, serenity and joy in belonging to Jesus Christ and his church. Like Peter, during these long years of priesthood you too have told us of the importance of the Son of God and the great wisdom and truth contained in his Word and his way of life. Even in times of suffering, you applied what is described in the document on consecrated life, no. 22, as the perfect identity of a religious person: *"The consecrated life truly constitutes a living memorial of Jesus' way of living and acting as the Incarnate Word in relation to the Father and in relation to the brethren. It is a living tradition of the Saviour's life and message."*

It struck me last night how loving God has been with Fr. Vittorio. He called him to be with him forever on the day that is traditionally devoted to lovers: Valentine's Day. Love, affection, friendship, closeness and remembering anniversaries with a phone call were all characteristics that distinguished your priestly ministry. You were not a priest of the sacristy, but an evangelist in the streets with the people. How much care you always showed to families and young couples preparing for marriage! With how much care and attention you prepared and sought expert help, so that the young people in your marriage preparation courses could receive sufficient and convincing guidance to live marriage as a call from God, a vocation to reveal something of Him to the entire world. Indeed, life is a vocation! While going through your folder last night, I came across two handwritten letters: one from your mother Filomena and one from you as a boy ready to leave the nest and go off to the seminary. The two letters share the same essence: living life as a vocation willed by God. Your mother Filomena, presenting you to the rector of the seminary, wrote: "I, Filomena Roberto, declare that I leave my son, Vittorio, absolutely free to pursue his priestly vocation with the Servants of Charity and I fully entrust him to the care and discretion of his superiors so that his vocation can continue to grow and be strengthened."

These words of a mother, willing to give at the moment of separation, are marvellous, and entering the seminary in those days really meant a prolonged separation from one's family.

Your own application for admission to the Congregation, dear Fr. Vittorio, shows the same attitude: "...I ask to be accepted as an aspirant by the Sons of the Servant of God, Fr. Guanella, and I am confident that the dear father will increase the spirit of this vocation in me, together with love for Jesus."

Dear friends, as we bid farewell to Father Vittorio with certain sorrow at his departure for eternity, let us all make a sincere commitment here before his mortal remains, so that his mission may continue through us: we must have even more love for the poor, because whoever gives to the poor gives to God. Let us also rejoice because of what we are: "God's children" and because of what we possess, wonderful gifts he has given us to make this world of ours more joyful and beautiful.

Just imagine if Vittorio could make one of his typical remarks right now: he would surely say to us with a smile: come on, take courage, we are the most beautiful of all!

May Jesus Christ be praised!

(From the homily given by Fr. Umberto Brugnoli at his funeral)

4. Father Loreto Domenico Della Morte

Born in Castel Sant'Angelo (Rieti) on 26 January 1927
Entered in Fara Novarese on 9 October 1940
Novitiate in Barza d'Ispra on 12 September 1945
First Profession in Barza d'Ispra on 12 September 1947
Perpetual Profession in Barza d'Ispra
on 12 September 1950
Ordained priest in Milan on 5 March 1955
Died in Serrita on 31 May 2012
Buried in Serrita Cemetery



Fr. Loreto, known to the Congregation as Fr. Lino, was born in Castel Sant'Angelo in the province of Rieti (Region of Lazio) on 26th January 1927. He was baptised on 30th January of the same year and was confirmed in the Parish of San Giuseppe al Trionfale (Rome) on 30th April 1938.

He attended the Oratory of San Giuseppe run by the Guanellians in our parish in Rome, where he always felt perfectly at home. He would later often recall the confreres who had left a deep impression on him. The Oratory became his second home, and after mass he would go there to play football. He made new friends there and became involved with the theatre, together with his two brothers who were born after him, Renato in 1932 and Mauro in 1937. His admiration for the Guanellians in San Giuseppe, with their hospitality and simplicity, and his good upbringing at home and in the parish, gradually led the question of a vocation to arise in the boy's mind. He accepted it with courage and serenity!

He entered the seminary in Fara Novarese in September 1940, then the novitiate in Barza d'Ispra in 1945, and made his first religious vows on 12th September 1947. He was ordained a priest in Milan by Cardinal Giovanni Battista Montini, the future Pope Paul VI, on 5th March 1955.

Fr. Lino never worked in Italy as a priest of the Servants of Charity, because in April 1955, one month after ordination, he began his priestly ministry in Brazil, in Cidade dos Meninos (Boys Town) to be precise, the first mission accepted by the Servants of Charity in Brazil, on 24th October 1947. In this house the Guanellians provided assistance and education to street children, who were considered delinquents at the time, and the police would bring them to us from all parts of the State of Rio Grande do Sul.

Fr. Lino spent his first years in Brazil exercising his ministry as a Guanellian priest among the poor, particularly among the children and teenagers housed in our institutes. For 10 years, from June 1966 until 1976, he was parish priest in the parish of Nossa Senhora de Nazaré in the Anchieta district of Rio de Janeiro. This is a poor area still referred to as a "dormitory district" today, because in order to survive, most of its inhabitants leave early in the morning, with much sacrifice, to go to work in the city in Rio, and only return to their homes at night time. Fr. Lino took over from Fr. Mario Versé and accepted his new mission courageously. He was not an office type or a diplomat: he had a great practical common sense and was joyful, poor and open to the needs of the people. He bought some land and built a new wing for the school, the parish house and the adjoining rooms. The people of this parish, who were poor but very religious, loved Fr. Lino so much that a lane in the "favela" was named after him for many years, while he was still alive.

He arrived in the capital, Brasilia, in 1976. What did Fr. Lino find there? His home was a hut infested by rats, cockroaches, mosquitoes and bats. The parish facilities were just a wooden hall and a few chairs, tables and cupboards. It was a densely populated area, with no cultural traditions: Brasilia had only been founded on 21st April 1960. As parish priest, Fr. Lino took up the challenge to build a parish church to replace the small chapel and, above all, to organise the people of God. He lived in a shack for four years. He built the church and

organised the pastoral work but did not build the parish house. Even in this his kindness and good nature, as well as his simplicity and poverty, can be seen. First the house for God and for the poor, and then the priest's house!

Fr. Mario Tarani writes in his history of the Province of Santa Cruz: "I was impressed by Fr. Lino's simplicity and serenity whenever I had the opportunity to visit him in Brasilia: the hat on his head, his ever-present cigarette and his friendly and aggressive little dog, his only personal defence. He always lived calmly in the hands of Providence, ever present on the construction site, encouraging the lay volunteers, and often skipping lunches and dinners, without any thought for himself: the description of an authentic Guanellian."

Fr. Lino organised many pastoral activities in the parish. He gave special attention to young people, couples and catechesis.

He left Brasilia in February 1984 and was assigned to São Paulo, where, as head of the religious community, he began the construction of the Recanto Nossa Senhora de Lourdes, a home for the disabled, the true loved ones of the Lord and of our Holy Founder, Fr. Louis Guanella. After just two years, on 5th May 1986, together with Fr. Remigio de Vettor, Fr. Lino set off on a four-day journey to a new mission in the north-east of Brazil, driving there in a "Fusca" (the famous Beetle). After a visit to the bishop, Msgr. Paulo Cardoso, in the city of Petrolina, they continued to the city of Serrita, where he remained as a priest for ten years, first as parochial vicar and then as parish priest. In 1998 he was transferred to the city of Cedro as parish priest of *Nossa Senhora do Perpetuo Socorro* parish, where he remained almost until the end of his life, at least with his heart. Two years before his departure from this world, he gave up parish work and was taken to *Serrita* for treatment and rest, in the very house where, 23 years earlier, he had begun his pastoral ministry in the north-east of Brazil. He was greatly loved by the people and by his faithful, who always cared for him, served him and helped him with true evangelical devotion.

The presence of the Guanellian priests in the north-east of Brazil has been and is still a prophetic presence in the midst of God's people, due to their commitment to transforming an individualistic and sentimental faith into a community faith, open to the transformation of life. I heard Fr. Lino say on several occasions, both in homilies and in personal conversations, that "faith and life" must go together, in other words, faith must be lived authentically through the practice of charity. The Guanellian presence in the north-east has changed the mentality of this people, and this is due to the commitment of the confreres who have been assigned there, especially Fr. Lino, who was passionate about that region and wanted to remain there until his last breath.

In the end, how can we describe this true Servant of Charity? He was not highly educated, a scholar or widely read, but was a very practical man. He was not a mystic, but a man who lived with great trust in Divine Providence, and he would often say this to his parishioners. He was not was a man of great

plans or a methodical person, but someone who lived the charism of charity day by day, perhaps without worrying about tomorrow, as the Gospel says. He was not a man with great thoughts to share with others, but, in his simplicity, he made himself understood by all, especially by humble and simple people. A man formed in a spirit of sacrifice, he gave no thought to himself and was able to devote his entire life to others.

In the end we can say that he was a priest who loved and allowed himself to be loved, exactly as St. Louis Guanella said: “The servant of charity should love and allow himself to be loved”.

Who didn't recognise the Toyota that Fr. Lino drove? Everyone did! Only God knows how many kilometres he drove in that car, through streets often dusty and full of potholes, to go and say mass in the communities (called “*sítios*”, where there is not even a chapel and the people gather either in homes or under trees or to attend mass).

It cannot be forgotten that Fr. Lino, in his simple manner, was a great promoter of vocations, evangelising with his life. Many young women have joined the ranks of the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence through Fr. Lino's guidance, and various young Servants of Charity, some still in formation, have entered our ranks through his work. Each time I went to visit him in Cedro, he would ask me for news of various seminarians whom he had sent to the seminary. We can truly say that Father Lino took the trouble to look for someone to replace him, now that the Lord has called him to live at his side in the Kingdom of Love.

Fr. Lino had a true, old-style missionary heart, with the knowledge that when you left your own country for the missions, you left it forever, with no thought of returning or retracing your steps, because, as Fr. Louis Guanella always taught us, “the whole world is your homeland”. The first time Fr. Lino returned to Italy to see his relatives once more was after about 10 years, and the second time was 9 years later. In Brazil he gave everything of himself for no less than 57 years of difficult mission. Fr. Remigio de Vettor, writing about Fr. Lino in a wonderful article for the magazine “*Servire*” in December 2012, says: “It is fitting to shine the spotlight on these heroes of charity, unknown in Italy, but admired and loved in Brazil”. The precious days of his life ended there, on 31st May 2012, in that barren land of the *Sertão*, where he had given the last 26 years of his missionary life, in the midst of his people, as he had wished, and he asked to remain there forever. His funeral was celebrated in Serrita. Fr. Lino departed from this world after a long illness, but we never heard a single word of complaint from him. When he was asked: “How are you?” he replied: “Everything's fine, joy!” He left us on 31st May 2012, in Salgueiro hospital. They brought his body to the parish of Cedro, where a huge crowd was waiting for him and remained the entire night after the funeral rites until the next day, for another celebration requested in the cathedral of

Salgueiro, presided over by the bishop, Msgr. Magnus Henrique Lopes. On the afternoon of 1st June he was brought to Serrita, where by 5.00 pm a crowd of about 3,000 people had gathered in the church square. The Mass was presided by Msgr. Magnus. Concelebrants: Msgr. Paulo Cardoso, bishop emeritus of Petrolina; Msgr. Manoel dos Reis de Farias, bishop of Petrolina; Fr. Ciro Attanasio, provincial of the Servants of Charity; Fr. Lourival José Taveira, parish priest of Nossa Senhora do Perpetuo Socorro parish in Salgueiro; Fr. Antonio Pizzuto, parish priest of Nossa Senhora do Perpetuo Socorro parish in Verdante and many other diocesan priests.

The diocesan bishop gave the homily, with some comments from the bishop emeritus of Petrolina, who held a “conversation” with Fr. Lino. The Father Provincial also spoke a few words at the end. The Mass lasted about two hours and after the blessing all the people accompanied the coffin to the cemetery.

It was a fitting tribute to a priest who had given his entire life in the service of God and his brothers in Brazil.

Thank you, Fr. Lino, for having been with us. We know for sure that, thanks to your presence here, the world is a better place, because you have sown love and charity, seeds born from the heart of God and destined to make people’s hearts beautiful and good.

Fr. CIRO ATTANASIO

5. Father Luigi Lazzaro Frangi

Born in Cernobbio (Como) on 30 March 1924
Entered in Fara Novarese on 3 November 1935
Novitiate in Barza d’Ispra from 12 September 1940
First Profession in Barza d’Ispra on 12 September 1942
Perpetual Profession in Barza d’Ispra on 24 September 1946
Ordained priest in Ferentino on 31 May 2012
Died on 14 February 2012 in Caidate
Buried in the Monumental Cemetery in Como



Thank you, fr. Luigi, for your courage!

You arrived from Nuova Olonio back in mid-December 2009, to enjoy the beauty of the Monte Rosa mountain chain. You were still alert and attentive to the initiatives that the San Gaetano house offered you: firstly, a community of confreres who already knew you due to the testimony of faith you shared in Italy and in North America. There were people beside you who immediately appreciated your story, told with your watchful and piercing gaze.

You were born in Cernobbio (Como) on 30th March 1924. Seven days later, you were baptised and become part of the great Christian family, which was to welcome you 16 years later in Barza d'Ispra, to get to know the rule of life of the Servants of Charity more closely in the period called the novitiate.

Learning about the Founder fired up your soul and prepared you for the extraordinary adventure of your first profession (on 12th September 1942).

You consecrated your life in the Guanellian family freely and forever with perpetual profession, on 12th September 1946.

On 22nd May 1948, the community in Ferentino gave thanks with you to Divine Providence for the gift of your priesthood. Awe, wonder and enthusiasm prepared you for the great decisions that religious and priestly life held in store for you.

In mid-September 1959, you were welcomed to North America, first as a counsellor and then as superior in educational centres that took in children and young people open to receiving experiences and values that were 'transferred' from your heart. Your passion as an educator led you to graduate in literature back in 1974. The young people assigned to you found not only a teacher but above all a witness, who spoke clearly about his certainties, as well as about his own doubts and fears regarding the daily personal risks in environments that were not always friendly.

Fr. Luigi, these were the best years of your priesthood.

Educating in the Guanellian style, with the discovery of each person as unique and unrepeatable, allowed you also to share with your young Americans the human poverty present in each of our lives.

It was not easy in those years to take personal risks, while remaining consistent and sharing the fundamental values of loyalty and transparency. Thank you, Fr Luigi, for your courage.

Twenty-three years on American soil is not a short time. As an expert in relations, Providence called you to a Marian shrine in Tirano to 'educate hearts' to listen to the Word, with the celebration of the sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist.

As willing as ever, you shared our Founder's programme, "Give them bread and the Lord", with our sisters for six years (2000-2006).

Your courage brought you to accept sickness as a gift in order to 'participate in' the conversion of hearts. Nuova Olonio and Caidate were two residences in which attention to each individual became a primary value, while respecting the dignity of each one.

The 'Gregorian chant' music therapy programme allowed you to have a foretaste of the beauty of that meeting which occurred on 31st May 2012.

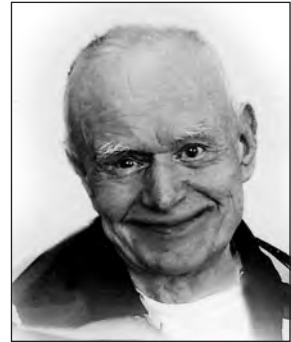
Fr. Luigi, as we thank you for your joyful participation in the family of St. Louis Guanella, give us some of that 'courage' that allowed you to say:

*“You are a little flock,
but there is no need to fear,
because it has pleased your heavenly Father
to give you a kingdom.
And what is this kingdom? It is the kingdom of hearts.”*

The confreres of “San Gaetano” in Caidate

6. Brother Battista Nervi

Born in Verolavecchia (Brescia) on 29 June 1920
Entered in Milan in 1937
Novitiate in Barza d’Ispra on 12 September 1938
First Profession in Barza d’Ispra on 12 September 1940
Perpetual Profession in Barza d’Ispra on 12 September 1943
Died in Como on 28 August 2012
Buried in the Monumental Cemetery in Como



The serenity and patience with which Br. Battista lived the final period of his illness in the rest home in Como corresponded perfectly to the confidence with which he abandoned himself into the Lord’s hands, on the invitation of the responsorial psalm, to which we answered *“The Lord is my shepherd, there is nothing I shall want”*. When we are certain that the Lord himself watches over us, even if our health and strength fail us, we lack nothing, because he is with us.

Br. Battista Nervi had quite a long life: he was born on 29th June 1920, and had therefore reached 92 years of age. He was born in the town of Verolavecchia, in the Province of Brescia, his parents were called Elia and Anna Albini, and Br. Battista always remembered them with fondness. Now he can embrace them once more and tell them how much he prayed for them and longed for this meeting.

Already at 18 years of age, on 12th September 1938, after some time spent in our San Gaetano Institute in Milan, Br. Battista entered the Congregation’s novitiate in Barza d’Ispra, where he made his first religious profession on 12th September 1940 and his perpetual profession as a Servant of Charity on 12th September 1943.

He remained in Barza for another year, serving in the cloakroom and the kitchen, a service which he continued in this house in Como from 1944 to 1947. He thereby perfected his tailoring and culinary skills, which he was to practice for some time, and for several years professionally, wherever obedi-

ence led him. Many of us remember the delicious cakes that he baked and the tasty food that he prepared for our elderly residents in Sormano, just to mention a few instances.

Now he can enjoy the banquet prepared in Paradise, as we heard in the first reading from the prophet Isaiah: *“The Lord will prepare a banquet... he will wipe away the tears from every face... and they will say on that day, this is our God, the Lord in whom we hoped.”*

Our Founder, St. Louis Guanella, used to say that the whole world is your homeland. And so, in 1947, the Superiors sent Br. Battista to Argentina, where he first served in the San Jose Institute in Buenos Aires for 20 years, and then for two more years in the home for the elderly in Santa Fe. He remained there until 1969, when he returned to Italy and continued his service as housekeeper and cook in Barza d’Ispra for five years.

From 1974 to 1995 he was here once more in Como, where he took patient and attentive care of the elderly in our nursing home. For over 21 years he was in charge of a ward in our nursing home. His calm and attentive manner with people was his most admirable characteristic, for which he was loved by all who knew him. He was a man of few words, but many deeds. He did not waste much time in small talk, even though he enjoyed conversations that were beneficial to people and relevant to the needs of the house.

From 1995 to 2011, when he was in charge of the cloakroom in this house, he always loved his work and the people he worked with. So when the management of the laundry and the cloakroom was entrusted to the cooperative, it was a great trial for him, because, although he saw the benefits, he also understood the difficulties of the people with whom he had worked, and continued to help them as best he could.

His exquisite Guanellian charity towards our workers, as well as towards the elderly, was a constant feature of his life, and his industriousness was a great example to all.

In this last year of his life, Br. Battista proved himself capable of taking the cross upon his own shoulders and following Jesus his Master: *“Whoever does not take up his cross and come after me is not worthy of me”*. Br. Battista had offered his entire life to God, first and foremost with his religious consecration: he was a man of great faith and intense prayer, and although taking up his cross was not easy for him, he was helped by his religious conviction and his love for Jesus Christ.

The moment of separation from a loved one is always sad, even for those who have faith in God as a good and merciful Father, but the certainty of Jesus’ words, which we heard in the Gospel, give us hope: *“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Have faith in God and have faith also in me... I am going to prepare a place for you... and then I will return to take you with me, so that where I am, you also may be”*.

The place in heaven was ready for you, dear Br. Battista, and the Lord Jesus came to call you, silently, at 9.30 in the evening, without disturbing anyone. It was 28th August, the eve of the martyrdom of St. John the Baptist, the great precursor, whose name you felt honoured to bear.

Now the Angels and Martyrs welcome you in Heaven, and we, your confreres, relatives and friends, ask you to remember us and pray for us.

Here on earth, we present you to the Holy Trinity, through the Eucharistic Sacrifice, the “*living bread that comes down from heaven, and pledge of eternal life*”. The Eucharist, with which you nourished your spiritual life, is a sure guarantee of your eternal life in Christ.

St. Louis Guanella, whom you have now joined up there, has granted you the privilege of your mortal remains meeting his own, here in this sanctuary, before he continues on his pilgrimage to the communities of the Guanellian family. His urn will depart right after your funeral, at 12.00 noon, for our house in Gatteo.

Meanwhile, we lovingly bid you farewell, dear Br. Battista, until we meet again!

From the homily of Fr. Remigio Oprandi on 1 September 2012

7. Father Mario Gambuti

Born in Borghi (Forlì-Cesena) on 18 May 1931
Entered in Milan in 1937
Novitiate in Barza d’Ispra on 12 September 1947
First Profession in Barza d’Ispra on 12 September 1949
Perpetual Profession in Barza d’Ispra
on 12 September 1955
Ordained priest in Sant’Arcangelo (Forlì) on 29 June 1957
Died on 15 November 2012 in Castano Primo
Buried in the Monumental Cemetery in Como



The aeroplane had brought him back to Italy for an urgent operation (a brain tumour). Fr. Mario, however, always remained there, in “his” Paraguay, which he dreamed of every night, reliving exciting moments of his life. It began on 18th May 1931 in Borghi di Sant’Arcangelo, Romagna, which always remained in his heart. Orphaned at six years of age, he had to leave his village with his siblings to enter the Don Ghinelli Institute in Gatteo. In recent years,

he would return there in May with great affection, and was warmly welcomed by the confreres. He spent joyful times there with his loved ones, enjoying some good meals, which, as a true Romagnolo, he blessed with a good San-giovese. He always remembered them all, nephews and nieces, brothers and sisters, and especially Catherine, whose brief biography has been written.

He always greeted you with a warm “hola”, the Spanish equivalent of our familiar “hi”, to make personal contact. When casually asked if he was well, he would always surprise you by saying: “No... I’m very well!” which, in a certain sense was reassuring, even though you knew that had quite a few problems.

He took his turn to preside over the celebration of the Eucharist each week with great devotion. In his little homilies (which he sometimes had to be reminded to shorten) he was often moved to tears, especially when speaking of the love and forgiveness of God, and he communicated these feelings to those present. He spoke of the gift of life, and it was clear that he was convinced of this, even when seeing him confined to his wheelchair. He frequently repeated this in his homilies and you always felt that he was convinced of what he said.

He received frequent visitors to his room, where he shared his faith, gave abundant spiritual thoughts and advice, exchanged experiences, offered friendship and often received, with gratitude, the excellent chocolates that he then shared or gave as gifts.

He read a lot and spent a many hours listening to “Radio Maria”, which he recommended to others, together with devotion to Our Lady of Medjugorje.

We had pleasant and “battled” times at table, talking about his Paraguay (people would “pull his leg” and he would fall for it, teasing him with tall stories about drugs he had supposedly hidden in the columns of the altar.) He was teased about constant reading the writings of Valdata. Sometimes he would apologise for his vehemence and he often asked about the health of the confreres that he knew were sick.

He had absolute loyalty to the Congregation, and in a certain sense had felt this ever since the time he entered in Gatteo. He made his first religious profession on 12th September 1949 and was ordained priest in Sant’Arcangelo on 29th June 1957. He had a brief experience as an assistant educator for boys in Riva San Vitale, and then left for Paraguay as a missionary in 1960. He always considered himself a missionary, even in everyday life, when confined to a wheelchair or bedridden. He had Christ within him, and so he gave him always, to everyone.

He never stopped dreaming about returning on mission to Paraguay. He was convinced that he would, because someone had suggested that he had not been given the best types of treatment in Rome and that there were alternatives he could have been given. Naturally, this made him suffer, despite the fact that several specialists continued to assure him that he was receiving the most ap-

propriate medical treatment and that, since he was unable to maintain an upright position, he would remain confined to a wheelchair, unless a miracle occurred, which he always hoped for.

He received many phone calls from Paraguay and had several friendly visits from Paraguayans living in Italy or who came to Italy to visit him and express their gratitude to him.

To know him better, however, it would be necessary to have seen him at work in Paraguay, where he was awarded solemn recognition for his merits shortly before his death.

FR. VINCENZO SIMION

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