

Guglielmo Camera

GUIDO MARIA CONFORTI

Bishop and Missionary

Founder of the Xaverian Missionaries



Profile of Blessed Guido Maria Conforti

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Introduction



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Guido Maria Conforti was Bishop of Parma and a Missionary for the entire world. The Second Vatican Council proclaimed that the Church is missionary by her very nature (AG 2) and that the Bishops «are consecrated not just for one diocese, but for the salvation of the entire world» (AG 38). This idea of the Church and the Bishops had long before been shared by Blessed Guido Maria Conforti, who was Archbishop of Ravenna first and, subsequently, Bishop of Parma and the Founder of the *Pia Società di San Francesco Saverio per le Missioni Estere* (Xaverian Missionaries). He sought to fulfill this ideal throughout his entire life, becoming a model for his own missionaries, the people of his dioceses and the priests and the bishops of the entire Church of God. Although he dedicated all his energy to caring for the two large and demanding dioceses of Ravenna and Parma, he also felt the «sollicitudo omnium ecclesiarum» (the daily preoccupation and concern for all the Churches) (2Cor 11:28). In commemorating the 25th anniversary of Conforti's death, Cardinal Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, Patriarch of Venice and future Pope John XXIII, defined him well as «Bishop of Parma, but a Missionary for the entire world».

Blessed Guido Maria Conforti.



Cardinal Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli with the Superior General, Fr. Giovanni Castelli.



Cardinal Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, the future Pope John XXIII.

Biographical notes

30 March 1865: Blessed Guido Maria Conforti was born at Casalora di Ravadese (a village a few miles from the town of Parma, in the diocese of Parma), the son of Rinaldo Conforti and Antonia Adorni and the eighth of ten children. He was trained in piety and the love of God by his mother and, although he was a lively child, he grew up pious, devout and obedient.

1876: Guido joined the diocesan seminary and completed high school and theology studies with distinction; he stood out among his fellow students for his diligence, observance of the norms and obedience.

1888: Conforti was ordained to the priesthood. He had already been appointed Vice-Rector of the Seminary before his ordination and he carried out this task for various years, demonstrating remarkable qualities as a formator; above all, he edified the students with his example of a holy life and with the persuasive words of faith.

1894: Conforti was appointed Vicar General of the Diocese of Parma.

1895: Conforti founded the Xaverian Institute for the Foreign Missions, after obtaining the consent of Propaganda Fide (currently the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples) and of his Bishop.

1902: Pope Leo XIII appointed the 37 year-old Conforti Archbishop of Ravenna, which was then a Cardinal See.

1904: Conforti resigned as Archbishop of Ravenna on health grounds.

1907: Pope Pius X appointed Conforti Coadjutor Bishop of Parma. Three months later, upon the death of Bishop Magani, Conforti became Bishop of Parma and governed the diocese for 24 years.

1928: Conforti visited his missionaries in China.

1931: On 5 November Conforti died a holy death at the age of 66.

Founder of the Xaverian Missionaries



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Since health problems prevented him from pursuing the missionary vocation he had felt since his high school years, Conforti conceived the idea of founding a missionary Institute. Thus, in agreement with the Congregation of Propaganda Fide and with the approval of his Bishop, Conforti founded a new missionary family in 1895.

The characteristics of the Xaverian Missionaries according to Conforti can be found in the personal documents he wrote: the Fundamental Rule, the Letter to mark the promulgation of the Constitutions approved by the Holy See (Testament Letter) and his addresses to departing missionaries. The following pages will outline the characteristics that were born in the missionary heart of the Father and Founder, and which generally go beyond the canonical norms for institutes of this kind.

The seminarian
Guido M. Conforti...
photographs of the period
1885-1890.



The house situated
in "Borgo Leon d'Oro 12".

Icon of the missionary according to Conforti



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Fr. Pietro Uccelli among the
Christians of Pechuang.



Bishop Conforti in China.

In an address to some of his missionaries who were leaving for China, Conforti offers us a definition of the missionary, which, given the mentality of those times, may seem somewhat romantic; nevertheless, it does contain some perennial values because it invites us to contemplate the missionary of all times and ages, namely, Jesus Christ: “The Missionary is the most beautiful and sublime personification of the ideal life. He has contemplated in the spirit Jesus Christ, who shows the Apostles the world they must conquer for the Gospel, not with the power of weapons, but through persuasion and love. The missionary is captivated by this ideal and has given up his family, country and dearest and most legitimate affections in order to pursue it. He travels into inhospitable jungles, crosses fiery deserts and the icy poles. He does not search for gold and jewels, ivory, rare furs, or precious woods, but only souls to win over to Faith in Christ. He carries no sword or rifle to face the difficulties he encounters along the way, or to strike down the enemies in his path; his only weapon is the cross of Christ and, if necessary, he is ready to shed his blood for the good



of his brothers. Indeed, his heartfelt desire is to seal his apostolate with martyrdom” (Address to departing missionaries, 16 Nov 1924).

The major seminary of Parma.

The task of the missionary is to continue the mission of Christ and he must therefore have the same project that Christ had, and use the same means that Christ used. Consequently, Christ must be the missionary’s absolute model and constant point of reference:

“Let the missionary be mindful that his behaviour must always be a convincing message confirmed by the eloquence of his deeds. This will be truly so if, in all his dealings with people, he strives to behave in the same way as Christ, his model, would behave in similar circumstances.” (Fundamental Rule 14).

It is for this reason that Conforti makes the following recommendation to the Master of novices:

“Having consolidated the foundation of Christian perfection, the novice Master must exhort the novices to keep Christ always before their eyes as an incomparable model of holiness for all but, in



Parma, Conforti with the departing missionaries: Fr. Pietro Ucelli (left), Fr. Leonardo Armelloni, Fr. Eugenio Pellerzi.



Parma, 9 Feb 1927:
Conforti welcomes
Mgr. Celso Costantini,
the Papal Delegate, to Parma.

a particular way, for the apostle. The novices are to conform their thoughts, affections and actions to this divine example in such a way that Christ becomes visible through them, as recommended by the Apostle. (Fundamental Rule 67).

The Missionary is deeply convinced and preaches that all men are brothers:

“The missionary is the most beautiful symbol, the most convinced and zealous apostle of this universal brotherhood to which humanity instinctively and necessarily aspires (Address to departing missionaries, 27 Sep 1931).

The Missionary is sent to all peoples:

“It is the duty of the Missionary to preach the Gospel to all peoples without distinction, whether they are freemen or slaves, white or black. This peaceful army, with no treasures other than its poverty, with no knowledge other than Jesus Christ crucified, without shedding any blood other than its own, if necessary, is the army called by God to proclaim the Kingdom to all nations” (Pastoral Letter, 1 Feb 1904).



Shuchow (Honan-China),
23 Nov 1928: Bishop Conforti
and Fr. Luigi Magnani outside
a Church.

Constitutive characteristics of the new missionary family



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The Xaverian missionaries consecrate themselves entirely to the mission

Bishop Conforti wanted his missionaries to be completely consecrated to the mission through the profession of the religious vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, together with the vow of mission ad Gentes. Bishop Conforti was convinced that “the apostolic life, combined with the profession of the religious vows, is in itself the most perfect life possible according to the Gospel. Through the profession of the religious vows we die to all earthly things in order to live a life hidden in God with Jesus Christ” (Testament Letter 2).

Since Christ is the missionary’s sole and supreme model, and since he must continue his mission in the world, the religious vows aim to express his intimacy with Christ, seeing in him the greatest treasure (vow of poverty), the love that makes him give his own life for all (vow of chastity) and the joy of total dependence on God (vow of obedience). The vows therefore intend to express a “mystical”

Conforti prepares his missionaries to take Christ to the very ends of the earth.



Bishop G. M. Conforti.



dimension, as a “sign” of profound identification with Christ.

The authentic Xavierian missionary must possess a rich human and Christian personality

“The missionary should be patient, kind and shrewd; he must not seek his self-interest, but only the glory of Christ: he endures all things, believes all things, hopes all things and rises above all things, persevering in this spirit until death; he should never neglect the ordinary means for maintaining and nourishing the interior life that leads him to think, judge, love, suffer and work with Jesus Christ, in Jesus Christ and for Jesus Christ” (Fundamental Rule 15 and 18).

The missionaries of Conforti live in community

“Considering that charity is the true characteristic of the followers of Christ, the missionaries should show each other a true mutual affection, assist each other in times of need and comfort each other in times of affliction. Should the need arise, they must exercise fraternal correction, mindful of the Gospel

Photograph of the 1930s. Missionaries of Conforti training for the journey to the mission.



Bishop Conforti in China.



admonition «corripe eum inter te et ipsum solum» (go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone) (Mt 18:15). They should diligently avoid anything that could disturb the peace and the harmony among the brothers” (Fundamental Rule 46).

The foundation of Xaverian spirituality: the contemplation of Christ, the missionary

Confortian missionary spirituality is solid, strong and profound and begins with the contemplation of Christ. Christ is the model that Conforti never tired of proposing as the goal of every formation journey. It is something of a refrain in the rules Conforti wrote for his missionaries, as the earlier quotations demonstrate. In his Testament Letter to his missionaries the Founder says:

“We should strive to always live that life of faith proper to the just in general, and more so to the priest and apostle in particular: a constant desire and quest for God’s will rather than our own. We will live in this way, if we make faith the absolute norm for our conduct and allow it to shape our thoughts, motives, sentiments, words and deeds. We will live

Four Xaverians assigned to China.
Parma, 18 Feb 1904:
Luigi Calza, Giovanni Bonardi,
Antonio Sartori,
Giuseppe Brambilla.



The Crucifix that inspired the young Guido Conforti’s heartfelt passion for the mission.



this way if in all circumstances we keep Christ in mind; he will always be with us, when we pray, at the altar, when we study, in the many activities of our ministry, in our dealings with others, in times of distress, sorrow and temptation. In all things we will draw inspiration from him, in such a way that our external behaviour will become the manifestation of the interior life of Christ within us. This intimate life of faith will protect us from the dangers of the ministry, multiply our strength and our merits, purify our intentions and give us the indescribable joy and consolations that will ease the burden of the apostolate... May Jesus, the Eucharistic Lord, in whose name we are priests and apostles, ever be the focus of our thoughts and affection. Each day, close to the Tabernacle, we must renew our strength to meet ever new challenges. We should also cultivate a tender devotion to the Immaculate Virgin, Queen of the Missions” (Testament Letter 7-8)

Guiding principles for the formation of the Xaverians to the mission

The goals of Xaverian formation are expressed in

The house where the first Chinese martyrs lived.



Bishop G. M. Conforti.



the Founder's instructions to the Master of Novices: "Novitiate is a time for training our missionary students to a habitual union with God, prayer, mortification, detachment from all earthly things and a burning zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. The novice should also be given an adequate understanding of the inevitable dangers and difficulties associated with apostolic life, so that he may convince himself of the need to lead a solid and profound life of virtue that will sustain him in any problem he encounters" (Fundamental Rule 63).

The missionary cannot improvise. First and foremost, he must commit himself to an ongoing conversion that implies a strict asceticism and the acquisition of extraordinary virtues, which will enable him to identify with the life and activity of Christ. Holiness consists in living the life of Christ: "The missionary must be attentive, first and foremost, to his own sanctification, that he may better work for the spiritual welfare of others. In order to avoid furthering the holiness of others to the detriment of his own, he should never neglect the ordinary means for maintaining and nourishing the interior life that leads him to think, judge, love, suf-

Mosaic in the
"Santuario G. M. Conforti".
Tomb of Blessed Guido Maria
Conforti.



Some mosaics depicting
the apostles in the
"Santuario G. M. Conforti"



fer and work with Jesus Christ, in Jesus Christ and for Jesus Christ” (Fundamental Rule 18).

“In order to carry out this great mission in a worthy manner, the missionary needs an extraordinary set of virtues which, with fraternal love and, even more, with a paternal heart, I implore God to grant you, for it is God Himself who has destined you to this great work” (Address to departing missionaries, 29 Dec 1914).

Inalienable characteristics of the Xaverians

In his “Testament Letter” the Founder lists some inalienable characteristics of his missionary family: “...the distinguishing characteristic of the present and future members of the society be the result of the following components: a spirit of living faith which enables us to see God, seek God, love God in all things, intensifying our desire to spread his kingdom everywhere; a spirit of prompt and ready obedience in everything, no matter how costly, in order to achieve the victories promised by God to those who are obedient; a spirit of intense love for our religious family, that we must look upon as a mother, and a spirit of intense love for all the members of our Society” (Testament Letter 10).

Fraternal moments in the Mother House, Parma.



Conforti and the Crucifix.

Archbishop of Ravenna and Bishop of Parma



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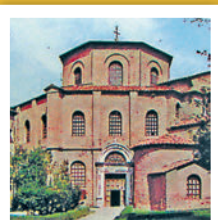
As we have already seen, Conforti was already the Vicar General of the Diocese of Parma, under Bishop Magani, before he was thirty years old.

In 1902, when Conforti was 37 years old, Pope Leo XIII appointed him to be the new Archbishop of Ravenna, which was then a Cardinal's See. For two years Conforti dedicated all his energy to the important and demanding diocese, but serious health problems forced him to present his resignation to Pope Pius X; he humbly implored the Pope to accept his resignation and find a more suitable bishop for the Archdiocese of Ravenna.

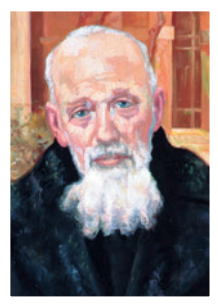
In the meantime, Bishop Conforti had gone back to the missionary Institute he had founded at Parma, where, despite his health problems, he was able to dedicate his efforts full-time to the formation of his missionaries. Worthy of note among the men he formed for the missions is Fr. Pietro Uccelli, who was a missionary, first in China and then at Vicenza, where he died in 1954 in the odor of sanctity and whose cause of canonization is now being processed at the Congregation for the Causes of Saints in Rome.

In 1907, the Servant of God was appointed coadjutor bishop of Bishop Magani with the right of succession. That same year, upon the sudden death of Bishop Magani, Conforti became Bishop of Parma and governed the diocese for 24 years.

The Cathedral of Ravenna.
Watercolor by A. Costalonga,
1981.



S. Vitale, an ancient church
of Ravenna.



Fr. Pietro Uccelli.



Bishop of all, with a special concern for lapsed Catholics

At Ravenna and Parma, the new bishop clearly said that he desired to love all his people, the rich and the poor, the sick and the marginalized, with the heart of a father; but the persons who were closest to his heart were those who were not present as he spoke these words and who did not have the privilege to know and love Jesus, or who had drifted far away from him:

“For the rich and the poor, for the just and sinners, for those who suffer and for those who weep, for all without distinction who belong to this noble portion of Christ’s flock, I must cultivate a father’s affection; indeed, to quote the Apostle, the deep love of a mother who holds her child to her breast” (Address upon taking possession of the Diocese of Parma, 25 Mar 1908).

Seeking out the lapsed was one of his constant preoccupations and his greatest concern at both Ravenna and Parma:

“I give everything especially for you who have abandoned the Lord’s ways” (Address upon taking possession of the Archdiocese of Ravenna, 6 Jan 1902).

“How could I forget the gentle figure of the divine Master who... in the guise of the merciful Samaritan takes care of the injured traveler, who in the person of the father of the prodigal son embraces the lost son and who as the good shepherd finds the lost sheep after searching in deep ravines and high peaks among thorns and bushes?” (Address upon taking possession of the

Bishop Conforti at Ravenna.



A portrait of Conforti preserved in the Curia at Ravenna.



Diocese of Parma, 25 Mar 1908).

Conforti's sole desire was to announce Christ and his Gospel to the people entrusted to his pastoral care:

"It is therefore necessary to restore everything in Christ and bring all under his rule against which modern iniquity rebels: we must ensure that his love, example and precepts govern our laws, schools, workplaces, fields and the houses of the rich and the hovels of the poor, renewing, ennobling and sanctifying all things. Therefore the Gospel will always be my policy, my party will defer only to Christ and, with its own head held high and with frank speech, it will inculcate and advocate his laws and reasons; my program of government will be the one drawn up by the Apostles" (Pastoral Letter-program, 4 Mar 1908).

Dedicated to the works of mercy

Not everyone listened to his words, but Conforti nevertheless spoke to all people through his constant practice of the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. He spoke to all people through the living eloquence of a life rooted in Christ. The missionary heart of Christ became visible in his unceasing proclamation of Christ, his solidarity with sinners and his predilection for the poor and the marginalized. Many sworn testimonies during the process of Beatification bear witness to Blessed Conforti's love for his neighbours. This following quotation sums up his love and his constant practice of the works of mercy: "All who saw his admirable practice of charity considered him to be a saint and said so openly... The Servant of God practiced both the corporal and spiritual works of

Bishop Conforti loved being among his seminarians (Piangipana-Ravenna). Summer residence of the diocesan Seminary, 1904.



Visit to the prisons.



mercy. He preached assiduously for the salvation of souls and I have been told by priests that he heard confessions, especially during his pastoral visits and, whenever he was called, he also went to the bedside of the sick. The Servant of God had a great compassion for the poor and the needy. He helped them whenever he could and was sorry whenever he was unable to give in proportion to someone's need. I believe he never sent anyone away empty-handed. His gentle and kind attitude towards the poor revealed the supernatural nature of his charity... He was always giving alms to the beggars he met in the street, or who came to the door of the Bishop's House. ... He often visited the sick and the wounded in the various hospitals, speaking words of comfort to them that were always appreciated... he habitually welcomed everyone with gentleness and charity and he was good at comforting afflicted hearts. This was a characteristic aspect of his temperament. Every year he visited the prison to distribute Easter Communion and on such occasions he would preach words of great comfort to the inmates”.

Master and Shepherd

The decree on the heroic nature of Conforti's virtues, which was issued by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, is the fruit of many years of studying documents about his life and activity and it provides us with an icon of Conforti, the Bishop. The following is a brief excerpt from the decree (published in 1982):

“He carefully watched over the purity of Christian doctrine and promoted the religious instruction of his

Bishop Conforti on a pastoral visit.



Bishop Conforti with a group of newly confirmed children.

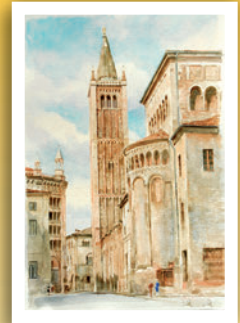


people, making it the priority of his pastoral ministry. He established schools of Christian Doctrine in all the parishes and prepared catechists with special courses on religious culture and the pedagogy of teaching. He was the first in Italy to celebrate a Catechetical Week.

He completed four pastoral visits, despite the countless difficulties and hardships he encountered along the way, traveling to the most distant villages in the mountains and in the valleys; a fifth pastoral visit was interrupted by his death. He celebrated two diocesan synods and established and promoted the Catholic Action movement in the diocese, especially its youth section. He devoted special attention to the formation of the Clergy in the Seminaries, he defended ecclesiastical discipline, he worked hard to restore unity wherever there was division and to bring the lapsed back to the fold. He exercised his pastoral zeal on behalf of every category of persons and institutions. He neglected nothing that was related to the religious life of his flock: the restoration and the construction of churches, the culture and the piety of the clergy, Catholic associations, good press, popular missions, Eucharistic Congresses, Marian Congresses, meetings of Catholic and religious action”.

On 5 November 1931, worn out by his labor and pastoral activity, Guido Maria Conforti devoutly received the Anointing of the Sick and Viaticum, he publicly professed his faith and implored God's help for his clergy and his people and, full of virtue and merits, he fell asleep in the Lord.

Major Seminary of Parma
(watercolor by A. Costalonga)
1981.



Baptistry and bell tower
of the Parma Cathedral.
Watercolor by A. Costalonga,
2009.

Missionary for the entire world



20

As the Founder of missionaries and a man consecrated to the mission, Conforti was a model of missionary pastoral activity for his own missionary sons, despite the fact that he never worked as a missionary beyond the borders of Italy. Conforti was, and remains, a great missionary because his heart was perfectly and totally a missionary heart.

Conforti was convinced that priests are consecrated for the entire world

Bishop Conforti can be considered a model “missionary” for Bishops and clergy. Not only did he found an exclusively missionary Institute, he also dedicated most of his time to the missionary animation of the Church in Italy. In numerous circular letters to the Italian dioceses, Conforti asked them to be generous in promoting missionary vocations among their own clergy too. He also gave a good example in this field in his two dioceses of Ravenna and Parma, both of which had a shortage of priests. Conforti was not afraid of broadening his own pastoral horizons to embrace the entire world, and he saw this as an integral dimension of his communion and apostolic responsibility. The continuation of Jesus’ mission until the very ends of the earth was not something optional for Conforti; indeed, he looked upon it as the grave duty of every Christian, as well as of Bishops, Priests and Religious.



St. Francis Xavier proclaims the Gospel.



Co-founder and first president of the Missionary Union of the Clergy (currently the Pontifical Missionary Union - PMU)

Blessed Paolo Manna, a PIME missionary, had been meditating at length on the idea of setting up an organization of the clergy to promote the mission ad Gentes. Fr. Manna was convinced that the missionary problem was a problem of the whole Church and, therefore, first and foremost of those that God had appointed as guides, the Bishops and priests; he also believed that through their ministry, and with the cooperation of all Christians, the peoples could be led to the faith in accordance with the Lord's will. Thus the *Missionary Union of the Clergy* was born. More than a cultural group or an efficient organization, the Missionary Union of the Clergy was founded to become a great spiritual force for the conversion of the world. Conforti fully shared this vision of Fr. Manna.

In 1915, Fr. Manna had already prepared a plan for launching the new missionary association of the clergy. It was certainly not an easy task. In order to catch the attention of the clergy, Fr. Manna had to engage the help of someone who had a true "authority" among the Catholic hierarchy. He therefore turned to the Bishop of Parma and Superior General of a missionary Institute, Bishop Conforti, who was highly esteemed at the Vati-



Blessed Paolo Manna.



Blessed Guido M. Conforti.

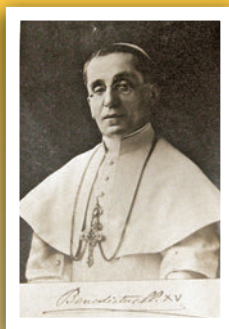


can and among the Italian bishops. At Conforti's process of Beatification, Fr. Manna offered this testimony: "I have never forgotten the courteous welcome he gave me on 25 February 1916 when I took to him the idea of founding the Union, and I have an indelible memory of the keen interest he immediately showed for the project. Bishop Conforti studied carefully the plans presented to him; he suggested that the statutes needed further completion and he agreed to present them to Rome for approval, which he sought and obtained on 31 October 1916. Once again, it was Bishop Conforti who accompanied the first steps of the Union; he was its first National President for Italy and it was under his direction that the Union was consolidated and reached a good degree of development ... It is difficult to follow the work of Bishop Conforti... he went personally to some places, without any thought for the hardships involved, when his presence was particularly necessary and desired, for example, on the occasions of national and regional congresses".

Purpose and relevance of the Missionary Union of the Clergy (Pontifical Missionary Union)

The goals of the Missionary Union of the Clergy were illustrated by the then president of the Union, Bishop Conforti, in the first International congress held in Rome in 1922 with the participation of Pope Benedict

Rome, 2 Oct 1925.
Bishop Conforti presides
at the week dedicated
to the Italian Missionary
Union of the Clergy.



Pope Benedict XV, who
approved and promoted
the Missionary Union of the
Clergy.



XV. These are the fundamental topics touched upon by Conforti in his own words:

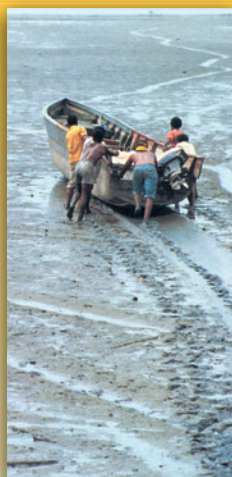
+ The first goal of the Union is to involve all the Priests to work zealously for the evangelization of the world so that, by word and example, they may promote a more exact knowledge and a keener interest in the Church's Apostolate among the pagans, and obtain their general, active and efficacious cooperation on behalf of all the missionary activities.

+ The Missionary Union of the Clergy aims to involve all the faithful in Christ's salvific plan... However, the harvest is rich and the workers are few: the Union therefore chooses as its priority task the promotion of Missionary vocations that are lacking everywhere.

+ The Missionary Union aims to stimulate the zeal of the faithful on behalf of the pagan world through celebrations and days and weeks dedicated to the Missions. ... Every parish should provide for an annual missionary celebration which, as experience shows us, always leaves a good impression in the people and is very beneficial for reviving the Faith.

Through his varied activities, Conforti was one of the greatest missionary animators of the Church in Italy, but also of the entire world, in the period after the First World War.

Prayer and study.



Working together in the same boat that is the Church.

Relevance of the figure of Bishop Conforti



24

In addition to his extraordinary zeal for missionary work and his ministry as a bishop, Conforti also practiced in a heroic manner the Christian, priestly and pastoral virtues, offering a shining example of apostolic, consecrated and contemplative life. He also offers an example of a holiness that does not consist of spectacular works, but in the humble, faithful and constant fulfilment of God's will at all times. In these modern times, when faith is continually besieged by rationalism, secularization, materialism and the quest for all of life's pleasures, Blessed Guido Conforti reminds us that Faith is our greatest treasure and that it must inspire us to think, judge and act as Christ would, because he is the distinguished Model we must imitate and he must be the heart of all our thoughts and affection. Finally, in the missionary re-birth of the Church, after Vatican II, Blessed Conforti reminds all, beginning with the Bishops, that it is the fundamental duty of the People of God to assume its own part in the missionary work of the Church, each one according to his own possibilities, means, charism and ministry (Cfr. AG 35 and 28). He taught with his life that it is possible for the Church to «extend the range of its charity to the ends of the earth, and devote the same care to those afar off as it does to those who are its own members» (Cfr. AG 37).



Statue of Blessed
G. M. Conforti at the entrance
of the Shrine in Parma.

The cause of Canonization

25



Group photograph at the end of the diocesan conference in connection with the alleged miracle in Brazil.

It is not surprising that the fame of so many virtues, which spread throughout the entire town of Parma, from the priests to the political and civil Authorities, convinced the Bishop of Parma, Evasio Colli, the first successor of Conforti, to set up the Informative Ordinary Process of Beatification and Canonization, «interpreting the mind of the entire Diocese».

The proclamation of the heroic nature of his virtues took place in 1982. He was beatified on 17 March 1996, in St. Peter's Basilica, Rome, in the presence of Pope John Paul II.

The Congregation for the Causes of Saints is now examining an alleged miracle, which took place in Brazil and was attributed to the intercession of Blessed Guido Conforti.



The miraculously cured child.



Beatification of Conforti, St. Peter's Basilica, Rome, 17 March 1996.

The Xaverian Missionaries in the world

Blessed Guido Conforti wanted his first missionaries to continue the work of St Francis

Xavier, the patron saint of the Missionary Family, in China at whose doors Xavier had died. Therefore, China was chosen as the first mission of the Xaverians, but all the missionaries were expelled from the country in 1954. The Xaverians then accepted the invitation of the Popes to announce the Gospel in many other nations.

Today, the Xaverians (who are roughly 850 in number) work in nineteen countries:

Asia: Bangladesh, China, Philippines, Japan, Indonesia;

Africa: Burundi, Cameroon, Mozambique, Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone, Chad;

America: Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, United States of America;

Europe: France, Great Britain, Italy, Spain.

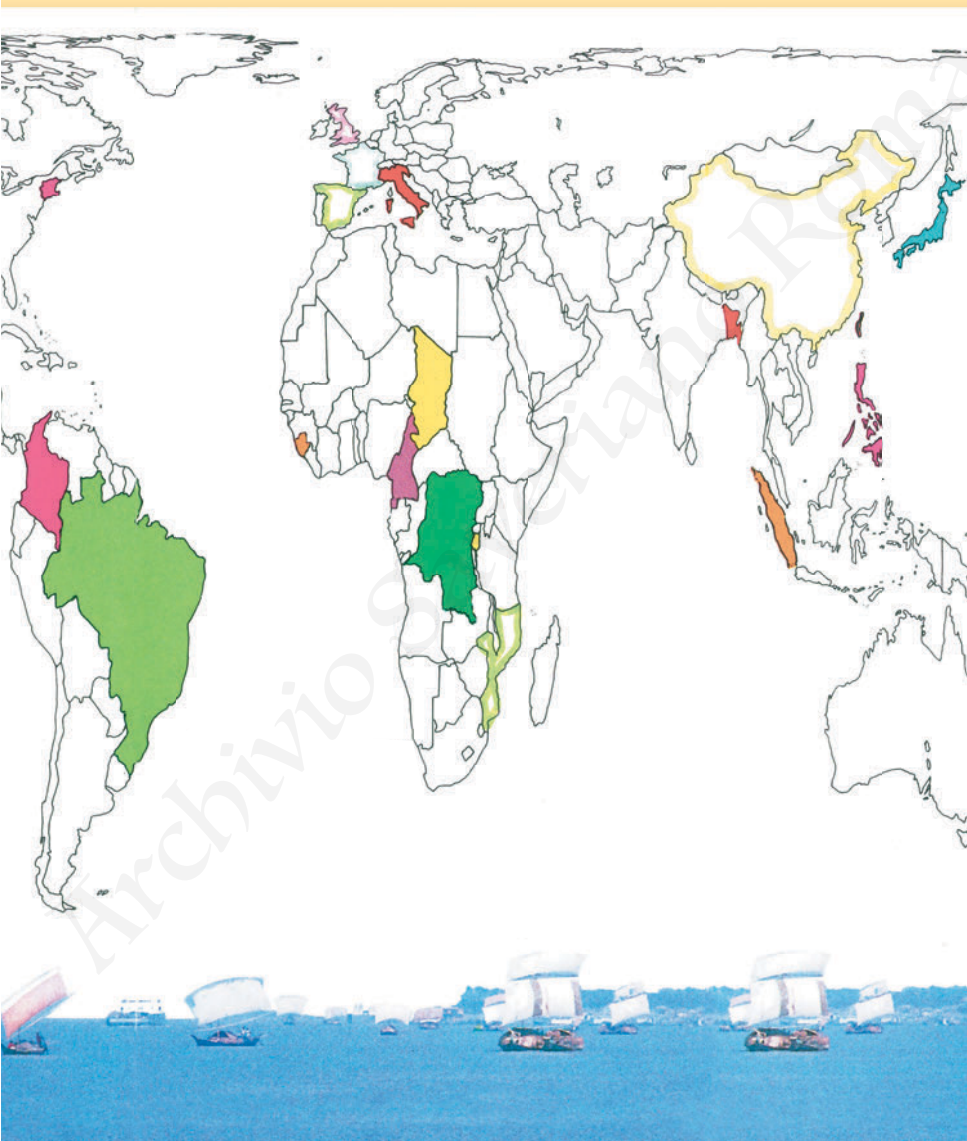


GUIDO MARIA CONFORTI



FRANCESCO SAVERIO

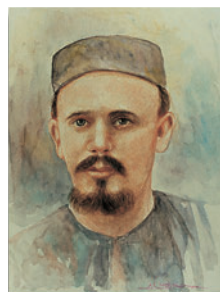




Missionary martyrs

Conforti wanted his missionaries, consecrated to Christ's mission, to be always prepared "to shed their blood, if necessary, for the good of the brothers, and even desire to seal their apostolate with martyrdom". Eleven of Conforti's sons have done so:

Fr. Caio Rastelli (1901) and **Fr. Giovanni Botton** (1944) in China;
Fr. Mario Veronesi (1971) and **Fr. Valeriano Cobbe** (1974) in Bangladesh;
Fr. Giovanni Didonè (1964), **Fr. Luigi Carrara** (1964), **Br. Vittorio Faccin** (1964) in Congo;
Fr. Ottorino Maule (1995) and **Fr. Aldo Marchiol** (1995) in Burundi;
Fr. Alberto Pierobon (1976) and **Fr. Salvatore Deiana** (1987) in Brazil.



CAIO RASTELLI

Ghiara di Fontanellato
(Parma-Italia) 1872
Taiyanfu (Cina) 1901



GIOVANNI BOTTON

Carmignano di Brenta
(Padova-Italia) 1908
Hsuehchang (Cina) 1944



LUIGI CARRARA

Cornale di Pradalunga
(Bergamo-Italia) 1933
Baraka (R.D. Congo) 1964



GIOVANNI DIDONÈ

Cusinati di Rosà
(Vicenza-Italia) 1930
Fizi (R.D. Congo) 1964



VITTORIO FACCIN

Villaverla
(Vicenza-Italia) 1934
Baraka (R.D. Congo) 1964



MARIO VERONESI

Rovereto
(Trento-Italia) 1912
Jessore (Bangladesh) 1971



VALERIANO COBBE

Camisano Vicentino
(Vicenza) 1932
Shimulia (Bangladesh) 1974



ALBERTO PIEROBON

Cittadella (Padova-Italia) 1927
Almirante Tamandaré
(Paraná - Brasile) 1976



SALVATORE DEIANA

Ardauli (Oristano - Italia) 1956
Transamazônica
(Altamira - Parà - Brasile) 1987



ALDO MARCHIOL

Udine (Italia) 1930
Buyengero (Burundi) 1995

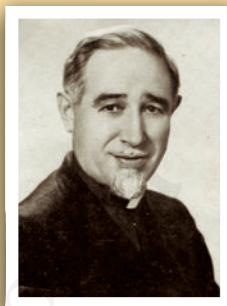


OTTORINO MAULE

Gambellara
(Vicenza-Italia) 1942
Buyengero (Burundi) 1995

The Missionaries of Mary (Xaverian Sisters)

Acting on a desire of Blessed Guido Conforti, one of his missionary sons, Fr. Giacomo Spagnolo, in collaboration with the Servant of God, Celestina Bottego, founded the Missionaries of Mary, an exclusively missionary Institute, which is formed in the missionary spirit of the Blessed Guido Conforti and is currently working in many countries: Italy, the United States of America, Mexico, Brazil, Thailand, Japan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Cameroon and Chad.



Fr. Giacomo Spagnolo
(1912-1978).



Celestina Bottego
(1895-1980).



Participants at the VII General
Chapter of the Missionaries
of Mary (Xaverian Sisters).

MISSIONARIE di MARIA

SAVERIANE

BRASILE - MESSICO - STATI UNITI - ITALIA - CAMERUN - CIAD - R.D. CONGO - GIAPPONE - THAILANDIA

www.saveriane.it

Anno LVII N.4 GIUGNO - LUGLIO 2009

Significato di una festa

Per noi missionarie di Maria saveriane, il 2 luglio è la festa principale della nostra Famiglia. È il giorno in cui si emettono i voti e si fa memoria del dono che il Signore ci ha fatto di consacrarci a lui chiamandoci alla realizzazione del suo Regno.

I Fondatori hanno scelto questa data per le nostre celebrazioni perché nella liturgia preconciliare di allora ricorreva in quel giorno il mistero mariano della Visitazione cui si sarebbe ispirata la nostra vita di missionarie.

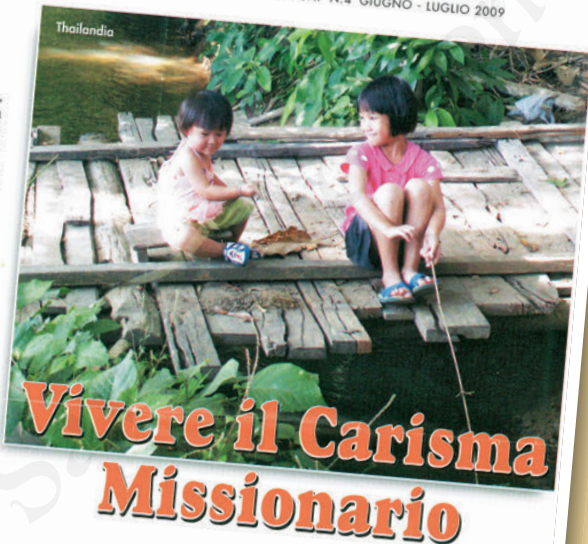
Con la stessa sollecitudine e disponibilità con cui la Vergine Maria corre dall'anziana cugina Elisabetta a prestare il suo servizio spinta da quel Figlio che ormai vive e prende forma nel suo seno, anche noi desideriamo essere accanto a chi ha bisogno, soprattutto agli ultimi e a chi ignora ancora l'amore del Padre.

Fatti per amare e per essere amati portiamo dentro un desiderio insopprimibile di amore che, da soli, si frantumerebbe contro gli scogli del nostro egoismo, in un'assurda mai appagata.

Ma Cristo Gesù, l'Amore fatto uomo, è venuto a sciogliere le nostre catene, a smascherare le nostre false sicurezze, a spalancare le nostre vite verso orizzonti nuovi di speranza, rivelandoci il vero volto di Dio: un volto di tenerezza e di perdono. È venuto a dirci che la vita nasce dall'Amore e ci chiede di testimoniare fino ai confini della terra.

Il 2 luglio festa della consegna totale di noi stesse al Signore, viene a rinnovare in ciascuna di noi l'adesione a quest'Amore esclusivo che ci permette di essere strumenti docili perché "venga presto il suo Regno per Maria".

A.S.



Eroismo e fede

Da Bangkok

Lek è una giovane donna thailandese di quasi trent'anni. La data di nascita non è certa, perché la mamma è morta poco dopo il parto e il papà un anno dopo. I fratelli accolgono la sorellina, ma il maggiore, con la scusa di prendersi cura di lei, la priva della sua parte di eredità. Non ha ancora dieci anni e solo la quarta elementare quando la mandano a servizio in una famiglia di stranieri che, per com-

passione, le permettono di frequentare ancora la scuola e le insegnano a cucinare, mentre aiuta nei lavori di casa e bada ai bambini, che le vogliono un gran bene. Va in chiesa con loro e per la prima volta conosce il Dio dei cristiani. La famiglia che l'ha accolta torna poi al Paese d'origine e invita anche Lek, che invece è costretta a rimanere con i parenti e a lavorare a turni in una fabbrica. Una notte, mentre torna dal lavoro, due giovani approfittano di lei con la forza. Non ha il coraggio di parlare dell'accaduto ai suoi e cerca una nuova occupazione per non trovarsi più di notte in strada da sola.

Cristo Signore chiama sempre dalla moltitudine dei suoi discepoli quelli che egli vuole per averli con sé e per inviarli alle genti.

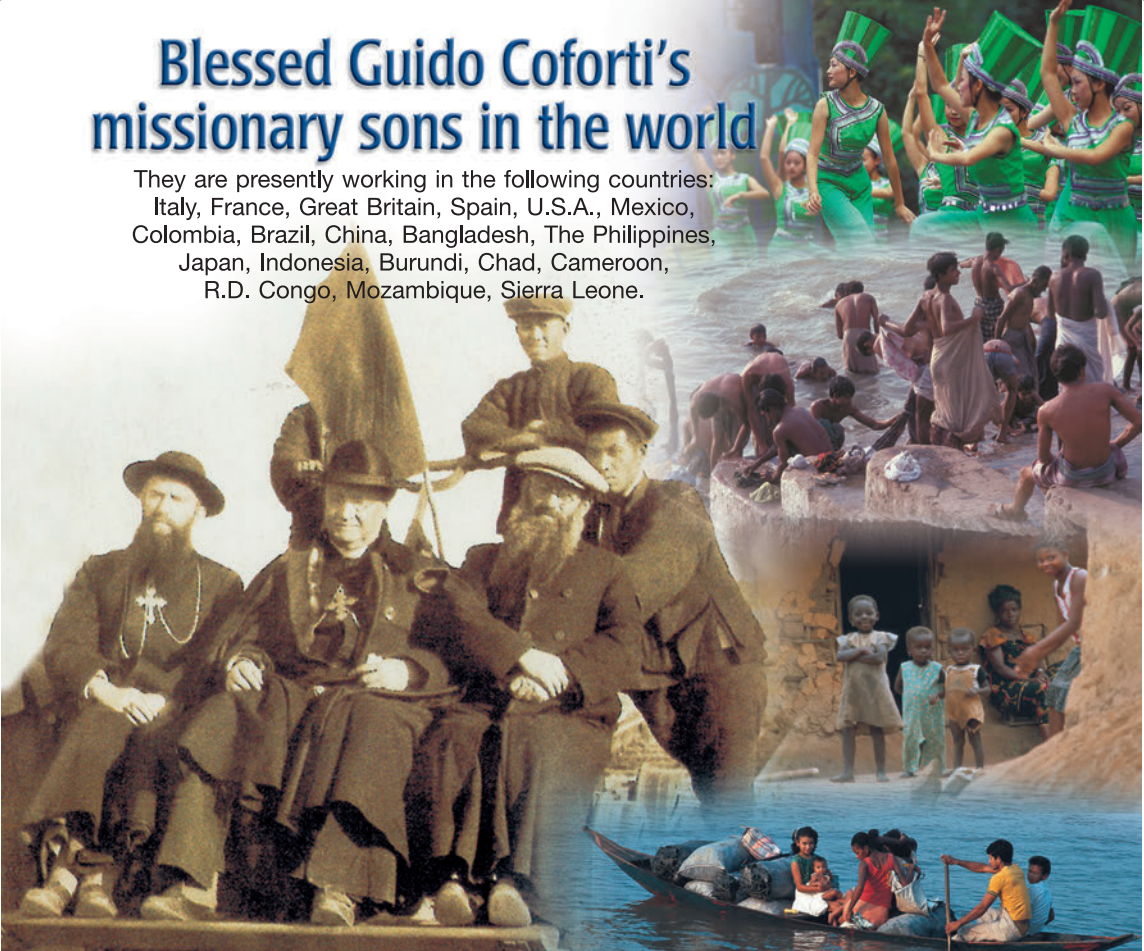
(Concilio Vaticano II n° 93)

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Aut. Trib. di Parma n. 207 del 5/4/1979 - Direkt. Resp. G. MEANA - Stamp. Ghidini - Parma
Le Missionarie di Maria assicurano che i dati in loro possesso verranno trattati secondo la legge 675/1996.
MISSIONARIE DI MARIA - VIA OMERO, 4 - 43100 PARMA
TEL. 0521.493841 - FAX 0521.243781 - E-mail: mimma.cmb@alice.it - C.C.P. 163436

Blessed Guido Coforti's missionary sons in the world

They are presently working in the following countries:

Italy, France, Great Britain, Spain, U.S.A., Mexico,
Colombia, Brazil, China, Bangladesh, The Philippines,
Japan, Indonesia, Burundi, Chad, Cameroon,
R.D. Congo, Mozambique, Sierra Leone.



The General Postulation of the Xaverian Missionaries for the Causes of Canonization of the Blessed Guido M. Coforti and of Beatification of Fr. Pietro Uccelli earnestly invites everybody to bring to our knowledge and attention the spiritual as well as physical graces obtained through their intercession. In order to pursue their causes and make known the message of both candidates, the same Postulation willingly welcomes all inquiries and/or proposals of spiritual retreats, talks or other similar suggestions, like requests of relics, holy pictures, books, leaflets, missionary rosary beads...

Address to:

POSTULAZIONE SAVERIANA

Via Aurelia, 287

00165 ROMA

Tel. 06.39366929 - Cell. 333 2902646

or to:

POSTULAZIONE SAVERIANA

V.le S. Martino, 8

43123 PARMA

Tel. 0521.920511

E-mail: padre.guglielmo@libero.it - postulazione@saveriani.org
gianniviola@email.it

N.B. For free donations for the causes of canonization or beatification c.c.p. 27152206

Un figlio
di mons. Guido M. Coforti
verso gli altari



Servo di Dio
Padre Pietro Uccelli
(1874 - 1954)

sacerdote a Reggio Emilia, missionario in Cina,
apostolo a Vicenza