

14/2016

# In memoriam

Xaverian biographical profiles



## Fr. Luigi Menegazzo

16 July 1952 ~ 18 December 2016



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## Fr. Luigi Menegazzo

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*Cittadella (PD – Italy)*  
16 July 1952

*Rome (Italy)*  
18 December 2016

«The *Calendario Saveriano* is a modest but valuable instrument. It guides us discretely towards holiness. It is the liturgical guide of our daily life with its references to the Word of God that we must read, meditate and put into practice.

The Scripture references that help us to prepare for the Eucharist are accompanied by the memorials of the Saints and the feasts and solemnities of the Lord and his Blessed Mother. They not only give us the contents of the faith, but also the concrete norms we should observe in order to live according to God's will. The Xaverians' journey to holiness is nourished by the words of the Founder, which give a sense of serenity and trust to the beginning of each day.

Furthermore, this *Calendario* keeps our Family united in remembering the birthdays of all the Xaverians, as well as keeping alive the memory of our deceased confreres and sisters. It also contains the living history of our Congregation with the dates and names that commemorate important Family events.

The *Calendario Saveriano* is undoubtedly a modest instrument, but without it we would not be well equipped to follow God's will properly.

We find it in the sacristy, close to the altar and in the common rooms of our houses. Let us keep it also on our desk and take it with us whenever we travel.

Have we ever realized that this small book contains our entire Family, with the names and surnames of all the confreres, from the very beginning of our Congregation? Our life journey will be made easier because we will feel united»: this is how the late Superior General, Luigi Menegazzo, presented the 2017 edition of the *Calendario Saveriano*.

Hence the persistent thread that ran through the crucial phases of the human and spiritual adventure of Luigi Menegazzo, a “good and faithful servant” (Lk 19:11–28). God is at work in all these phases and he shapes his apostles, purifying them and strengthening them for the very last phase which leads to Heaven.

Luigi Menegazzo was born on 16 July 1952, in Cittadella, “a splendid medieval walled city”, in the province of Padua in the Veneto region. His childhood was happy, thanks above all to the love of his mother and the company of his brother, Paolo, with whom he always shared a profound bond.

After primary school, Luigi began to experience the desire to make a crucial decision regarding the direction his life would take. In an interview with “Il Gazzettino” newspaper of Padua, on 14 August 2013, he said: «My missionary vocation was born while I was attending primary school and I was able to cultivate this vocation with the help of all the other seminarians and religious, among whom were many Xaverians from Cittadella [...]. I remember in a special way my teacher Rina Parolin, who taught art in Cittadella until the 1960s: she was a tireless and sensitive vocation animator and thanks to her dozens of Xaverians and other religious worked zealously in the missions».

On 26 September 1963, at the age of eleven, Luigi joined the Xaverian Institute. He attended junior high school in Vicenza (1963–66) and senior high school in Zelarino (1966–68). In November 2016, he wrote: «I think back to the first years of my vocation and I remember the Fathers telling us about China with simple words and suggestions, just like the ones I received from my mother, who used to always pray the Rosary (3 times a day), her small, threadbare book of prayers in her hands, and who bore her cross in a noble way. She always used to say to me: “May God’s Will be done”. All these examples helped me to embrace the heart of the “Xaverian identity” and to understand that our holy Founder was truly a man of God, a simple, profound and courageous man of God».

Although he encountered quite a few difficulties along the way, he overcame them all with sincerity and enthusiasm. On 24 March 1968, he wrote his application to make the apostolic Promise:

I make the apostolic promise serenely because I desire nothing more than to follow Jesus in the vocation that he has given me. I am therefore not motivated by sentiment, but by personal conviction.

I have placed all my trust in the Lord and I take this step with total serenity, certain that I am not deceiving myself, the superiors, or the Lord.

On 12 September 1968, Luigi began Novitiate in San Pietro in Vincoli (RA) and he made his First Profession one year later on 8 September 1969. On 4 October 2016, he thus remembered his Novitiate experience:

When I go to San Pietro in Vincoli I am given the same room I have been using for years: it is the smallest room, on the top floor, and it overlooks the inner courtyard. It is like a small cell and I am happy there. In September there was fog in the morning and in the evening and I really enjoyed this because it reminds me of the fog of my childhood. Now the fog has disappeared from San Pietro in Vincoli and from my home town too.

Our Novice Master was Fr. Pataconi, a man of great humanity, who filled us with enthusiasm for the mission by encouraging us to love God with all our heart.

Then there was the tree-lined avenue with pear trees on both sides. We were not allowed to touch the pears and this was a great penance because they were wonderful to behold and we had to pass among them often when we set out to pray the rosary.

In the evening, before going to bed, we went to the Lourdes grotto to sing the Salve Regina. Ours was a simple formation, entirely focused on the centrality of Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary and explained through the lives of the Saints and the Missionaries, who became our models.

By the end of Novitiate we had to learn by heart the entire *Testament Letter* and some chapters of a Gospel chosen by the Novice Master.

Nevio Spadoni writes: «I met Fr. Luigi during his Novitiate in San Pietro in Vincoli, where, upon the invitation of the late Novice Master, Fr. Alessandro Pataconi, I used to give introductory lessons in Philosophy to the Novices. [...] Fr. Luigi especially gave me an example of Christian heroism. I remember him as a young man who was enthusiastic about his vocation, very predisposed to study, but above all to devotional practices; he had a rich spirituality and, though apparently shy, he was unpretentious and cordial, sensitive and ironic in an innocent way».

After his First Profession, Luigi continued his studies in Tavernerio and Zelarino before moving to Parma for the Introductory year and Theology. Fr. Rino Benzoni thus remembers him:

We knew each other from our time in the Novitiate at San Pietro in Vincoli and our Lyceum and Theology studies [...]. As a student he wore contact lenses and a serious problem with his eyes forced him to be very careful and this probably contributed to the later development of some of his personal characteristics. For example, he could not practice any sport because a blow to his eyes would have dislodged his contact lenses. Television tired him and he often said that he had never seen a televised football game nor, I believe, even a film. He never loved the mountains because it was impossible for him to walk along the grueling paths. However, he was in his element on flat land where he could take long strides. He therefore had a lot of free time, especially for study, reading and the apostolate which he always prepared well.

He had a keen sense of humor and, along with Pini, he prepared sketches for the entertainment of the community on the various feast days. He never lost his sense of humor, which could sometimes be cutting. He was capable of perceiving the paradoxical and ridiculous aspect of any situation.

There is not much more I can say about that period because we frequented different parishes, different groups and had different interests.

On 3 December 1976, Luigi fulfilled his desire to belong to the Xaverian Family by making his Final Profession. In connection with this, he wrote to the Provincial Superior, Fr. Ettore Fasolini, on 28 September 1976:

Dear Father,

My faith in God and love for the Xaverian Family lead me to ask you to admit me to the Final Profession in our Institute.

I have reflected at length on the commitment I wish to take. I have been in the Institute for many years now and I have belonged to it as a religious since 1969. I am very familiar with the Xaverian life, its characteristics and commitments; I can assure you that I am aware of the difficulties and the joys that await me in the future.

I commit myself to accept the Institute as it is, with its Constitutions, and to use the means it offers me — and no others — to live within it as an active, constructive, efficacious and available member. A perpetual commitment in the consecrated life is an exclusive gift of God's love: no man on his own initiative would ever take such a step.

This is why I also experience great joy and serenity as I ask to be admitted to the Final Profession.

The words of St. Paul come to my mind: «He will continue to give you strength till the very end, so that you will be irreprouchable on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ: You can rely on God, who has called you to be partners with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord »<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> 1Cor 1:8–9.

I will never manage to completely grasp the depth of God's gift to me; his love for us is infinite and faithful. This gives me a very profound peace. We must always praise God who works such wonders. He «chose those who by human standards are common and contemptible — indeed those who count for nothing — to reduce to nothing all those that do count for something, so that no human being might feel boastful before God»<sup>2</sup>. I repeat once again my desire to belong to this Xaverian Family forever and I make myself available for whatever it asks of me.

*Luigi Menegazzo*

On 25 September 1977 Luigi was ordained priest «to commit himself entirely to serve the Kingdom of God within the Church, which is the seed and the sacrament of the Kingdom in the world»<sup>3</sup>. He continued his studies in Rome at the Faculty of Missiology of the Gregorian University, where he obtained a Masters in 1980. He then prepared to depart for Japan, his future mission field<sup>4</sup>, and he arrived there on 11 April 1981.



After an appropriate period of time in the Regional House in Kobe, where he studied the reality of Japan and its language, Fr. Luigi began his apostolic activity: he was assistant priest (1983–84) and parish priest (1984–89) at Nichinan / Aburatsu, where he also studied Shintoism in depth.

In connection with this, in the previously mentioned interview, Fr. Luigi was asked: “How did your experience as a missionary in Japan affect you?” He replied: “The study of the language and the local culture helped me to open up to vaster and more complex worlds than those I had known until then. The particular sensitivity of the Japanese inspired me to improve myself, to

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor 1:27–29.

<sup>3</sup> *Constitutions* 7.

<sup>4</sup> The first Xaverians arrived in Japan at the end of December 1949: the Regional Superior of China, Fr. Francesco Sinibaldi, fleeing from the communist persecution, was accompanied by Frs. Marco Ronzani and Gaetano Cocci. They were welcomed by Bishop Taguchi of Osaka, who immediately assigned to them the residence of Kishiwada, a few kilometers to the south of the large city of Osaka. Another two or three arrived from China and with them the first Chinese Xaverians, Frs. Agostino Yang, Simone Liu and Luigi Wang. Besides Kishiwada of Osaka, we were given the entire province of Miyazaki, on the island of Kyushu in the south of the country. In 1950 the first group arrived from Italy, made up of four Fathers who travelled for four months on a cargo ship to reach Japan. The last to arrive were Fr. Ulisse Benetti and myself. We were entrusted with a district both to look after the Christians and spread the faith among the people. (Augusto Luca, *Racconti dal Giappone*, Parma, Istituto Missionari Saveriani, 2015, p. 29). On the presence of the Xaverians in Japan, see: AA. VV., *I Missionari Saveriani*, Parma, Istituto Missionari Saveriani, 1996, pp. 209–217.

look at something thoroughly before judging, to think before speaking and to wait before reaching conclusions. From the examples of daily Christian lives I learned that faith should be nourished, preserved, protected and defended with joy and through a living witness [...]. The difficulties encountered by evangelization today are relativism, which tends to level down every search for God, and the little importance that is given to dialogue between religions and cultures. The secret of every true evangelization is a strong spirituality: the missionary must be a man of prayer, Faith and attachment to God. Otherwise what does he proclaim? He must have the courage to open himself to new and demanding fields of evangelization, such as the outskirts of the large cities in the countries in which we are working, to human misery, and the formation of consciences in countries that are at war or that have been affected by war”.

In 1989 he was called back to Italy to teach in the Parma Theology community (1989–94). He returned to Japan in November 1994, where he served as parish priest in Tamana (1994–98), Vice-Regional Superior (1996–98) and Regional Superior (1998–2001).

The confreres of Japan unanimously testify to the fact that «Fr. Luigi, before being our Superior General, was a very dear brother for us, with whom we shared a common enthusiasm for the proclamation of the Gospel. They were many moments of joy and difficulty spent together, and always his passionate missionary enthusiasm, faithful and creative, was an example and guide to us. They are witnesses to this the many faithful who in these days have expressed their sorrow and many non-Christian friends who were always grateful and close to him».

Fr. Rino Benzoni says: «[Fr. Luigi Menegazzo] spent seventeen years in Japan, which were interrupted by a period of teaching in Parma. He loved the mission and lived it intensely, studying and specializing in the local culture. He had also become a master of the tea ceremony. The mission in Japan left its mark on him; indeed, it allowed him to develop some characteristics that were already congenial to him, such as preciseness, order, respect for a life project, love for reading and beauty, a certain elegance and cleanliness, even when he used second hand clothing from his mother, who collected such things for the missions along with some friends. I went with him to Japan for at least a couple of visits and I was able to observe his profound love for that country, his appreciation of everything Japanese, as well as the friendships he had maintained with many people. Even after many years of absence, he continued to cultivate the language and I believe he spoke it quite well [...]. His Japanese experience had led him to a mission open to dialogue with religions and cultures. The Asian Study Center (and the other centers that were opened later) found in him an initiator and convinced supporter».



Fr. Filippo Rota Martir observes that «[...] in the Land of the Rising Sun, where Fr. Luigi spent seventeen years, fidelity, passion and creativity were the characteristics of his missionary activity, which was culturally lively and always sustained by a solid spiritual experience».



In the General Chapter of 2001, Fr. Luigi Menegazzo was elected Vicar General. He was put in charge of persons and internal publications; he was appointed procurator at the Holy See and interlocutor of Bangladesh, the Chinese Delegation, the Philippines Japan, Italy and Sierra Leone.

Fr. Rino Benzoni says: «During the twelve years we spent together in Rome in the General Direction, what I appreciated most about him was his honesty and fidelity. We were different in many ways, even though we agreed on basic values and policy. Sometimes he probably did not agree entirely with decisions we took, but once they had been decided he always played as a member of a team and this favored the unity of the General Direction. I would sometimes laugh and think to myself that there should have been a groove in the floor between his room and mine, so many were the times he came to speak to me about a problem or to ask for my opinion. In the group, he was the one who stressed the need for a more profound and regular spirituality, backed up by attitudes and positive and well-ordered life habits. Every form of secularism and conformity to the dominant secular mentality that he saw in the Congregation made him suffer, something that emerged later in the letters he wrote as Superior General. He loved the Church and he did not agree with the criticism levelled at it as an institution, which happens frequently among us. He appreciated the doctrinal clarity of Pope Benedict XVI and cordially agreed with his magisterium. He also loved the liturgy: he prepared it carefully and celebrated it “in the Japanese fashion”, giving very little space to choreography and anything superfluous [...]. He loved art and beautiful things: his after lunch break often saw him take a walk to admire the works of art in the churches of Rome. He was good at relating to the confreres and many would consult him in the belief that I was perhaps a little harsh. This helped us in our task of direction».

At the 2013 General Chapter, Fr. Luigi was elected Superior General. On 14 July 2013, he wrote to the Xaverian Sister, Maria Chiaro:

Dear Maria,

I have no words to thank you for your very kind telephone call on Sunday, 7 July. It was truly a great gift.

On that day I had no special commitments and I took the train to Citadella. The main purpose of my visit was to pray at the tomb of my parents, to ask them not to forget this son of theirs who has taken on a commitment that is greater than his capabilities.

I had left Rome with the certainty that I would return only for one or two days to collect my things and leave the room for the new Vicar General. From a human perspective, I no longer wanted to carry out this task: I was tired after twelve years.

When I was elected Superior General I felt a great anxiety and I was very tempted to refuse. However, at the same time, I was afraid of opposing the Will of God, which at that moment was revealing itself in a manner completely contrary to my own.

Now I must resolutely undertake this commitment and strive to do my best so that the Lord does not complain about me.

More than ever I feel the need to pray a lot, in a simple and constant manner: the Mass at the center of everything, Confession, the daily Breviary, the daily Rosary, meditation, the knowledge of the Church's Magisterium, personal study and a moderate lifestyle. These are the means that the Lord offers me in order to work for his vineyard, namely, my confreres and the Mission entrusted to our Family.

In an article dated 2013, on the eve of the General Chapter that elected him as Superior General, he wrote: «Our Congregation too experiences difficulties, fatigue and doubt and yet I have always been struck by the optimism that guides our work. I believe this is a gift from God, a grace that is given to us through the intercession of St. Guido, who never tired of starting anew, renewing his strength and looking ahead, even when everything seemed to justify surrender and discouragement. [...] On the occasion of his canonization, our missionary Family decided to make a gift to the Founder in the form of the new mission in Thailand. I saw in this event the fruits of our trust in God and our enthusiasm for the mission».

At the Meeting of Treasurers in October 2016, Fr. Luigi warned: «The Meeting of the treasurers will necessarily be dealing with many technical aspects. However, Christocentrism is the crucial nucleus of every aspect of our Consecration, including the vow of poverty. When we keep our eyes fixed on Christ, as faith teaches us to do, every other reality acquires its authentic identity and mission, fulfilling the purpose God had in mind when He placed it in our hands as a gift. In a Family of consecrated men, Christocentrism is the only way to holiness. Today more than ever, finances are rightly subject to laws that must be scrupulously obeyed. Money is dangerous and society itself is well aware of this; consequently, we need laws to help us use it in a proper way. However, how often money becomes for us a need, a hunger, an obsession. This gives rise to countless methods for bypassing the rectitude of the vow

we have professed: we must possess, buy, change, renew... and there is never enough money! Slowly but surely, it even becomes the discriminating criterion: why him and not I?, new problems appear among us: self-sustenance, occupations that produce salaries, etc. In the meantime, demands increase and enthusiasm for the mission diminishes. In our formation houses we want to have everything (food, clothing, furnishings, leisure, journeys, cars ...), if possible without dirtying our hands, even to the point that I believe we would be quite happy to have domestic staff to clean the house, rooms and garden. However, we do not speak very much about the mission... and this causes me great suffering. I ask the Lord to convert us: then our finances will be an instrument, we will be happy with what is necessary, perhaps even the fruit of our labors and the disappearance of the superfluous will focus us more on the mission. I always carry a great fear within me: that our Congregation will emphasize more and more comfort and financial security instead of the Charism!».

«It often happens that we live alongside people who are totally special, yet we realize this only after they have gone. My own experience of Fr. Luigi is that he was indeed a truly special person.

His timidity and absolute modesty did not help one to immediately perceive his value as a person, religious and Superior: but one only had to enter his 'vital space' to see immediately all the intensity, honesty, and enthusiasm that burned inside him for every confrere, the Mission and the Congregation! I must confess that I regret not having perceived immediately his true greatness.

His shyness highlighted even more his withering quips, his good-natured, but spot-on comments; his 'unexpected' and comical interpretations of things demonstrated his special ability to take a different stance on persons and events [...].

In my personal experience of him — we had a lot of time to dialogue, in the house, during the journeys we made together and the tiresome hours waiting in airports, the journeys we made here in Italy and also in the Council meetings — I was fascinated by his surprising ability to sum up his own experience, or the context or problem under examination [...].

His "paternity"! We said among ourselves that, after our Founder, Fr. Luigi is the first Superior General to die in office... The Founder was 66, Fr. Luigi was 64... There are many similarities or coincidences; however, perhaps the most singular aspect is his "paternity", which was imbued with an affection for the confreres and the entire Xaverian Family, yet something that he expressed in moderate, attentive and elegant gestures. How often I witnessed his sorrow, almost disappointment, when he had the impression that someone had gone away without perceiving his fraternal and paternal affection [...].

His letters, exhortations, visits, personal and community dialogues all aimed to be, first and foremost, a “paternal presence”, both encouraging and demanding, for every confrere; each one always received from his words a cordial invitation to give an enthusiastic response to the ideal to which we have freely consecrated ourselves [...].

In one of his last messages to the Rectors of our International theologies, last October, Fr. Luigi significantly formulated his intervention according to 3 elements: the fidelity of God towards me — my fidelity towards God — moral dignity... These 3 values are perhaps a fitting description of Fr. Luigi, who was called by God’s will to serve us as father and guide; perhaps this is also a message for each one of us, both Xaverians and non-Xaverians, who want to be a disciple of Christ to the very end» (p. *Mario Carmelo Mula*, Vicar General).



«There is a season for everything, a time for every occupation under heaven. A time for giving birth, a time for dying»<sup>5</sup>.

Fr. Luigi was aware that the whole of human life is in God’s hands, as can be seen from how he “read” the progress of the illness that unexpectedly befell him. It all began at the end of August 2016, with the first serious symptoms that resulted in the excessive swelling of his legs and abdomen.

He was admitted first to the San Raffaele hospital and later to the Santo Spirito hospital for tests. After being discharged from hospital, he awaited the results of the biopsy that had been done on 26 September. On 2 October 2016, Fr. Luigi wrote to the confreres:

Dear brothers,  
yesterday afternoon, 1 October 2016, I was discharged from hospital after 23 days. So far, the doctors have diagnosed heart failure and I am being treated for this; they also suspect a problem with my lymphatic system and I am awaiting the results of a biopsy.

I wish to thank all of you for your prayers and fraternity.

I continue to thank the Lord for making me a member of our Xaverian Family, which is very attentive and considerate, especially when a confrere is ill or weak.

O 26 October the doctors revealed the results of the biopsy: amyloidosis. Other tests were prescribed, along with the aspiration of bone marrow, which

<sup>5</sup> *Qo* 3:1–2.

would give the doctors an idea of how serious the illness was and initiate a suitable treatment.

In the meantime, some confreres suggested that he make an appointment at the medical center that is specialized in the study of amyloidosis (Policlinico San Matteo di Pavia), to which he replied: «I won't even hear of it. I am just like all the other Xaverians. I do not deserve any special treatment just because I am the Superior General. I will continue to trust the doctors here and do whatever they tell me. At the same time we must also reason as religious: we behave like ordinary people, don't we? Yet we will never be like ordinary people! I have the opportunity for convalescence, a car to take me to appointments with the doctor and the pharmacy. My meals are prepared for me and I am surrounded by care and attention. I imagine that if I lived in Pavia or nearby, I would certainly go there because I could continue to carry out my daily duties... but living in Rome makes this impossible. Not always is the best structure close to hand. I must be patient! [...] I ask the Lord to grant me the gift of patience. I must now practice the virtue of humility, even though I don't want to. Sometimes, as a religious and priest of little faith, I ask myself: Having done all that is humanly possible for a sick person, would I not perhaps deserve a special attention from the Lord? For example, that the diuretics give good results even in tablet form? Perhaps it is normal to think this way, but with a clear mind I realize that it is a temptation. It is important that we do everything that is possible and necessary and pray for the grace to follow God's will faithfully».

Treatment began on 9 November 2016, in an attempt to halt the progress of the deadly proteins, and it lasted until 18 December 2016, the day on which Fr. Luigi Menegazzo, the “servant and minister of the Word”, returned to the Father's House. The cause of death was cardio-respiratory failure.

The bureaucratic procedures for the release of Fr. Luigi's body were concluded on the morning of Tuesday, 20 December. At 10:30 on the same day, the Vicar General, Fr. Mario C. Mula, presided over the funeral Mass in the Generalate House.

On 21 December, the Xaverian Family took its leave of Fr. Luigi in the Conforti Sanctuary in Parma, the heart of the Mother House. His family was present along with a large group of people from his home town, very many confreres, Xaverian Sisters and many friends. For the Liturgy of the Word, the Vicar General, who presided over the celebration, chose the episode in Luke's Gospel of the disciples of Emmaus and he thus explained his choice:

For this Liturgy I chose the passage of the disciples of Emmaus in Luke's Gospel: it is somewhat unusual to hear it on an occasion such as this, but I believe the scene it describes is both suggestive and motivating: the fact

that Jesus sits at table with two disciples who are discouraged and tired: perhaps this was how Fr. Luigi sometimes felt regarding the current situation of our Family ... On the one hand, the hidden Jesus who is difficult to recognize, today, and, on the other hand, the broken dreams and all the difficulties the Congregation experiences at the “new beginning”! But, as we have seen, in the daily life of Fr. Luigi, just as for the two disciples of Emmaus, the strength that comes from the Word of God, and the Bread that is broken and shared, is essential if we are to be capable of taking back our own responsibilities and go out to proclaim.

This seems to me to be the key to interpreting the example and the teaching of Fr. Luigi, now that he has left us: the Good News – Fraternity – Proclamation! And the Paternity-Maternity of God that he always tried to guarantee to each one of us, willing to pay a high price, something that he sometimes actually had to do [...]. Fr. Luigi was truly tried and tested like gold in a furnace, this brother of ours was truly found worthy of God! Now we understand how inadequate were our words of encouragement, support and optimism, while he was enduring his hour of Gethsemane: “take heart — we said to him — all the confreres send their greetings, they are praying for you and they remember you ...”; he asked us: “pray for me that I might have faith ... My God, my Congregation ... my Congregation ...”.

*Then I heard a voice from heaven say to me: «Write down: Blessed are those who die in the Lord! Blessed indeed, the Spirit says; now they can rest for ever after their work, since their good deeds go with them»<sup>6</sup>.*

«The death of the just person is not like the estuary of a river that is swallowed up by the sea, nor is it a defeat or an annihilation. Instead, it is a threshold that immediately opens onto the infinity of God, His Kingdom and eternal peace»<sup>7</sup>.



The following testimonies give us an idea of who Fr. Luigi Menegazzo was:

«I hadn't known Fr. Luigi for very long, but I immediately perceived that we both had the same great enthusiasm for the communication of the Gospel, the same great love for the poor and those who suffer because of the great injustices and conflicts that mercilessly afflict the world, especially the weakest. We had the same “dreams” — I am thinking of China — and beyond the fact that we did not see each other very much due to our travels around the world, we felt that we would finally be able to give a concrete expression to those dreams in joint initiatives and works. We still remember

<sup>6</sup> Rev 14:13.

<sup>7</sup> Gianfranco Ravasi, *Apocalisse*, Casale Monferrato (AL), PIEMME, 1999, p. 138.

his testimony on 1 January of two years ago at the march for “Peace in every land”. It was the first moment of great communion and we were certain it would be followed by many others. This strange and implacable illness, whose name we struggle to remember even though he described it in the past weeks, has interrupted this promising relationship that was so full of hope; it has certainly not interrupted the friendship that will continue in mysterious ways, nor our faith in God’s goodness or our trust in the future. We, the members of the Sant’Egidio community, will continue to look to the future with all our dear Xaverian friends scattered throughout the world» (*Giancarlo Penza*, Community of the Sant’Egidio community).

«Since the Superior General was the contact person for our new mission in Thailand, I was often in touch with him via e-mail. Recently, in June 2016, he was here on a canonical visit to our small and newly-founded presence in Thailand. Ever since the decision was taken to open a new mission in Asia, Father Menegazzo always followed all the steps, all the decisions and all the contacts to ensure that we could open and fulfill this Xaverian mission in Thailand, and he continued to accompany it during these years with his constant guidance. I can say that, in spite of the current difficulties and the aspects that need to be improved, Father Menegazzo was very happy with this new mission and he never tired of reminding us of the characteristics he believed to be fundamental for remaining on the right path, characteristics that he, first and foremost, tried to make his own. *A simple mission*: here in Thailand the temptation and the invitations to build large houses, centers and schools have always been present. In the many meetings with the bishops and the local priests, Father Menegazzo always reasserted our desire to be free from structures so that we might live in a simple manner, with no desire to have all the material comforts, adapting to all the inconveniences, the Thai food and the houses that were not very well furnished. *A shared community life*: during the community meetings and personal conversations, this was the point that he always insisted upon. In his last visit too, he reminded us that, in order to build community, it is not enough to have just the spirit; we also need to see each other “physically”, to hold regular and frequent moments, if not daily moments, of fraternity, sharing and prayer. *A presence among the last*: it was wonderful to witness his joy when we went to visit the shanty towns here in Bangkok or when we went to the villages in the North. “This is our mission” he said to me one day as we were speaking about the first steps for the opening of the community in the capital city. “As missionaries we cannot refuse to rise to the challenge of such places, in these spaces that are offered to us for the proclamation of the Good News”. Thus, immediately after the visit, Father Menegazzo gave us the “ok” for our new presence in Bangkok» (*Fr. Alessandro Brai*).

«My last meetings with Fr. Luigi were at Goma and Bukavu during the visit of the General Direction to the Region of the Congo and during the last Regional Chapter in April 2016. He was very serene, affable, kind and attentive to everyone, not because of his role as the Superior General, but as an elder brother. He was not only interested in what we were “doing”, but above all attentive to the way in which we were doing things, to our motivations and the “health” of the confreres. With his courteous and kind manners, he listened, encouraged and exhorted us to give the best of ourselves by “remaining attached to Jesus, who inspires and guides our life [...] He was attentive and clear, discrete and effective. [...] I thank the Lord for “giving him to us” as our superior and elder brother» (*Fr. Roberto Salvadori*).

«We still remember fondly the presence of Fr. Luigi at our Regional Chapter in the Congo in April 2016. We still remember how, despite his health problems, he made the great effort to visit all our missions, even the ones that were the most difficult to reach, accepting any form of transport provided he could meet with all the confreres, encourage them in their difficulties, suggest necessary changes, looking to the future with courage and realism without being afraid to make courageous choices» (*Fr. Amato Sebastiano*).

«With great courage and awareness Fr. Luigi accepted God’s invitation to dedicate his life to the great adventure of the mission. He renewed his “yes” to the mission every day throughout his life and it animated his humble service to the missionary Church. He never drew back, not even when he saw death approaching to take him to the mission of eternity. Then too he said “here I am, I am ready”. Jesus will have certainly said to him: “Well done, good and trustworthy servant; you have shown you are trustworthy in small things; come and join in your master’s happiness”<sup>8</sup> (*Fr. Luigi Lo Stocco*).

«Fr. Menegazzo shows us the witness of a life entirely given to the proclamation of the Gospel, fragilities included; indeed, the Lord also uses these fragilities for his mission, so that His salvation might reach the ends of the earth! Fr. Luigi wanted to offer his life to God from a very young age: his only desire was to follow Jesus in the missionary vocation. He tried to embody this style of Christ in many ways and I draw your attention to three of them: 1. His love of culture as a way for the Gospel, made manifest in his interest in knowing the language, traditions, art, history and the way of living and thinking of the Japanese people. 2. his ability to suffer for the sufferings of others and to rejoice at their joys; his concrete attention to the poor, even when he was in Rome as Vicar General and was often an effective instrument for providing help (including financial help) to our

<sup>8</sup> Mt 25:21.



missions (even through the contributions of the local market for the missions that was managed by some ladies of Facca, among them his mother Vittoria).<sup>3</sup> his constant search for the will of God, as could be seen in the last weeks of his illness and suffering, when Fr. Menegazzo still wanted to live, get better and work for the mission. On his hospital bed he had to repeat with his entire being: Here I am, I come to do your will because, as he wrote to a confrere, it is important that we do all that is possible and dutiful and ask for the grace to follow God's will faithfully now, and not tomorrow" [...]. He leaves us a rich moral, spiritual and intellectual heritage» (*Fr. Eugenio Pulcini*).

*Fr. Domenico Calarco S.X.*

IN MEMORIAM: XAVERIAN BIOGRAPHICAL PROFILES

Direttore Responsabile: Mario Mula  
Redazione: Domenico Calarco  
Impostazione grafica: Gian Paolo Succu

Edizioni: CDSR  
(Centro Documentazione Saveriani Roma)

Pubblicazioni: Missionari Saveriani  
viale Vaticano 40 – 00165 Roma

Roma 2017

Digital Edition Only

EDITED / PUBLISHED: 18 DECEMBER 2017



Profili Biografici Saveriani 14/2016

**CDSR** Centro Documentazione  
Saveriani Roma