14/2017

In memoriam

Xaverian biographical profiles

Fr. Giannino Calderaro

30 January 1941 ~ 26 December 2017

Fr. Giannino Calderaro

Cittadella (PD – ITA)
30 January 1941

Londrina (SOUTH BRAZIL)
26 December 2017

Fr. Giannino Calderaro died on 26 December 2017, his "dies natalis", the day of his birth to eternal life. He now lives with the God for whom he spent his entire life "according to the truth that is in Jesus" (*Ep* 4:21). Everyone who knew him could say something about this man who has left us a great heritage of love, wisdom and industriousness.

He was born in Cittadella, Padua, on 30 January 1941. At the end of elementary school, Giannino wrote to the Superior of the Xaverian house in Vicenza, on 7 July 1952:

> For a long time I have desired to become a missionary and I now ask to be admitted to this missionary community with the hope of becoming a good and holy missionary.
> I ask for your blessing and send you my sincere best wishes.

In connection with this, he acknowledged his debt of gratitude to professor Rina Parolin, who played a crucial role in guiding him in his vocational growth.

Giannino attended junior high school in Vicenza (1952–55) and senior high school in Zelarino (1955–58).

He joined the Xaverian Institute on 14 October 1958, in the novitiate community of San Pietro in Vincoli (RA). He made his First Profession in Parma on 25 October 1959. During the previous month he had written to the Superior General, Fr. Giovanni Castelli:

> Dear Father,
> my heart is bursting with joy at being finally able to consecrate myself to God and become a definitive member of the Xaverian Family; with the consent of the Novice Master and my confessor, I hereby ask to be admitted to the Final Profession, in view of becoming a missionary priest, in order to dedicate my life in the missions to the glory of God and the salvation of souls.
> I am confident that you will accept me in spite of my unworthiness.
> As I await your reply, I ask for your blessing.
> *Gianni Calderaro*.

He then went to Desio, where he attended senior high school (1959–63). He did the Introductory Year and Theology studies in Parma, where he made his Final Profession on 12 September 1965 and where he was also ordained priest on 13 October 1968.

After a year in Alzano Lombardo (BG), he was assigned to the community of Cremona as a teacher (1970–76), and where he also served as vice-rector (1970–73). From 1976 until 1978 he was in Rome, where he obtained a Masters in Missiology at the Urbaniana University.

In September 1979 Fr. Calderaro was assigned to the Xaverian Region of South Brazil.

«The Xaverians arrived in South Brazil on 27 July 1953 in compliance with the wishes of Pope Pius XII, who had asked for priests from missionary congregations to go to Latin America. Like every event that comes from God, the arrival of the Xaverians in Brazil took place without any kind of fanfare".

The newly-arrived missionaries' first contact with the social, religious and ecclesial reality saw them taking on a huge amount of work and they also had to face many difficulties.

The first Xaverian house was opened on 24 July 1954 in the city of Londrina. They began to work in the north of the State of Paranà. In 1950 the

forests had been burned in order to transform them into coffee plantations. People from every part of the country had come in search of a better future for themselves and for their children.

The presence of the Xaverians therefore aimed at proclaiming the Gospel and making a contribution towards the material, economic and social progress of the region.

The Christian communities were formed and they slowly matured, producing missionary vocations. The Xaverians opened seminaries in Jaguapità, in Londrina and, later, in Laranjeiras do Sul, in Santa Mariana, Diadema, Curitiba and São Paulo.

From the end of the 1970s onwards, the Xaverians took on the great challenge of the outskirts of the large cities, where many residential complexes has sprung up. After closing some houses in Paranà, they opened others in order to work on the outskirts of the satellite cities of São Paulo, Curitiba, Belo Horizonte and Melo Viana. There they dedicated themselves to the formation of small Christian communities and to the pastoral ministry among the people (especially to caring for street children, people without land and homeless families).

As they lived within the local Church on the side of the poor, the Xaverians also offered their own charism to the local Church, especially in missionary animation, the formation of young people and of future missionaries, and in the accompaniment of the Christian communities».

In Brazil the Xaverians made themselves available to the bishops without any condition, because their desire was to be sent to the most difficult geographical and human situations. This made them feel that they were true missionaries.

Yet some began to ask themselves: «In a Catholic country like Brazil, how can we reconcile parish ministry with the Congregation's specific missionary charism?». The question was pertinent and it was answered by the VI General Chapter in 1956: «The presence of our exclusively missionary Congregation in Brazil is only justified if the work of the ministry is combined with a Xaverian recruitment and formation of missionary vocations».

Fr. Calderaro studied Portuguese in São Paulo for one year (1979–80). From 1980 until 2017, he worked in the pastoral ministry: as assistant priest in Santa Mariana (1980–81), parish priest in Londrina (1981–87), assistant priest (1987–88) and parish priest (1988–96) in Laranjeiras do Sul, parish priest in Piraju and Tejupa (1996–2008) and parish priest of "Nossa Senhora de Fátima" in Londrina (2008–17).

An article in the Bollettino del Vicariato di Cittadella thus described him: «Fr. Giannino identified so much with the faithful of his communities that he looked upon Brazil as his native country, although he was happy to return to Italy every so often to relax with his family. When he returned home, he was very happy to share his experiences with the Brazilian people with his family.

With the simplicity and the humility that made him benevolent, he tried to bring to the people something of God's light, serenity and peace in knowing that they were loved by God. His communities looked upon him as one of the family.

He was never alone during his last illness, despite the fact that he did not wish to be a burden to anyone. His entire life had been spent in the service of others and he was equally loved and served by those who were close to him until the end.

With his hard work, Fr. Giannino built churches and other structures for the communities; above all, he had guided people to the Word of God, directing their life towards goodness and Christian values.

Every choice, word, smile or gesture aimed to unite, console and encourage others. He taught us that every moment has meaning; nothing is useless in God's eyes if we live it with faith and with love.

He was sensitive to the feelings of each person and left his mark on the heart of those who knew him and frequented him. His example, words and values remain a wonderful memory for those who shared his life experience, which was founded upon Jesus».

Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini used to say: «Death is just an obstacle to overcome, if possible with elegance, so that we may be projected into the Kingdom of God». Fr. Giannino Calderaro accepted his illness in preparation for death as «the only thing that allows us to abandon ourselves totally into God's hands, without any other form of security ».

After a short illness, Fr. Giannino Calderaro died, aged 75, on 26 December 2017, in the hospital of Londrina (South Brazil). Thanks to his work of guidance in the Church of Londrina (1981–87; 2008–17), he is looked upon as one of the great religious leaders of the Paraná.

Fr. Domenico Calarco SX

IN MEMORIAM: PROFILI BIOGRAFICI SAVERIANI

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