

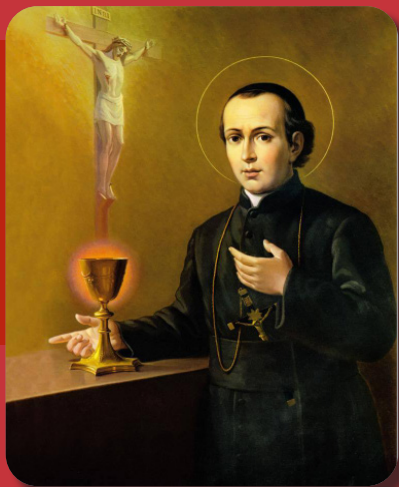
VOLUME 32 • ISSUE 1 • MARCH 2025

THE PRECIOUS BLOOD FAMILY



BLESSED GIOVANNI MERLINI
(1795-1873)

LENT • EASTER



THE PRECIOUS BLOOD FAMILY

is published triannually
(Lent-Easter, July, and
Advent-Christmas)
by the Congregation of
Missionaries of the Precious
Blood, Atlantic Province.

EDITOR

Fr. John Colacino C.PP.S.

GRAPHIC DESIGNER

Gino Marcuzzi

For submissions,
including questions, articles,
story ideas, news,
and suggestions,
please email
cppspublications@gmail.com.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 3** *Editorial*
Fr. John Colacino C.PP.S.
- 4** *Merlini in His Own Words*
Blessed Giovanni Merlini C.PP.S.
- 5** *Collect for the Memorial of
Blessed Giovanni Merlini*
- 6** *Scenes from a Beatification*
C.PP.S. Missionaries
- 9** *Beatification Homily*
Marcello Cardinal Semeraro
- 12** *Mass of Thanksgiving Homily*
Mons. Renato Boccoardo
- 15** *The Missionary who Spoke to
the Pope and the Bandits*
Fabio Beretta
- 17** *Merlini the Spiritual Director*
Fr. John Colacino C.PP.S.
- 24** *Pietà*
Antonio Selvaggi

EDITORIAL

Welcome to the first digital edition of *The Precious Blood Family*.

After a thirty-year run in its print formats, our magazine will now be available on the website of its ecclesiastical sponsor, the Missionaries of the Precious Blood of the Atlantic Province.

It is a special joy to dedicate this inaugural issue to the recently beatified Blessed Giovanni Merlini, the third Moderator General of the Missionaries and the second successor to their founder, St. Gaspar del Bufalo.

You will find a variety of perspectives on the new Blessed, from those who attended his beatification on January 12, 2025, to historical and pastoral appreciations of his life and work. The Missionaries now await his canonization for further confirmation of his sanctity. To that end, we invite our readers to pray and to forward to us any notifications of favors received through his intercession.

As always, you are invited to view additional offerings at these resources:

- Atlantic Province (<https://preciousbloodatlantic.org/>)
- Atlantic Province on Facebook (cpps missionary)
- Catholic Calling app (Android and Apple platforms)
- Sanguis Christi website (sanguischristi.com)

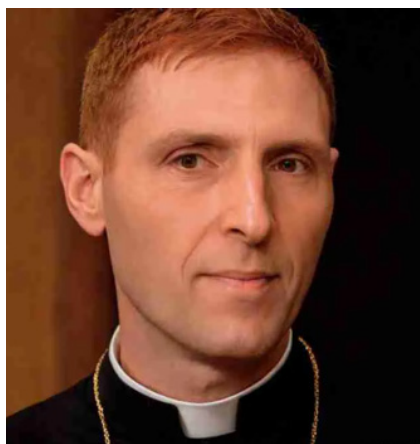
In the meantime, best wishes for a fruitful Lenten and Paschal season as we celebrate our redemption in the Blood of the Lamb.

FR. JOHN COLACINO C.P.P.S.

Merlini in His Own Words

Introduction to the deposition by Blessed Giovanni Merlini during the process for the canonization of St. Gaspar del Bufalo

My name is Giovanni Merlini and I was born in Spoleto. I am around forty-seven years old. I am the son of Luigi Merlini and Antonia Claudia Arcangeli, both still living. I am a missionary father of the Congregation of the Most Precious Blood and, at present, the vice general and general secretary of our beloved Society.



A youthful depiction of Blessed Giovanni Merlini, reimaged with AI.

With the grace of God, I have always frequented the sacraments of confession and communion and I have not failed to fulfill, each year at the prescribed time, my Easter duty. I always ordinarily celebrate holy Mass, and I celebrated it

again this very morning. The last time that I went to confession was this past Wednesday.

To answer your question, nothing has occurred in my life, by the grace of God, that called for an interrogation, nor was I ever accused of or processed for any crime. By the grace of God, I have never been excommunicated or laden with any sort of ecclesiastical censure.

I have not been coached by anyone with regard to the manner of making my deposition nor on how I am to conduct myself during this examination.

Before I actually got acquainted with Canon del Bufalo, I had heard his name mentioned by Father Antonio Lipparelli, my friend and schoolmate, and presently my colleague in the ministry. That took

place in the year 1820 on the occasion when the Servant of God was located in San Felice in Giano, the first house of his institute. He was there to give a retreat for priests. Moved by reports describing the blessing that God showered on his work in the ministry, especially in the Marche, where he was considered to be a saint, according to what Lipparelli told me, I got together with Lipparelli in order to take advantage of the opportunity of meeting Gaspar and of making the retreat, as was my usual custom. That is why the two of us decided to go to San Felice in Giano.

There, after our arrival, we met with Canon del Bufalo in his room. He received us very courteously and warmly, so characteristic of him. I confess that I was overwhelmed by his acts of kindness. He then asked us whether we were tied down by duties of residence, and later added that I, along with Lipparelli, should become missionaries. He concluded by saying: "In the meantime, let us make the retreat," which we then proceeded to do. Canon del Bufalo preached very convincingly and reviewed the basic principles to live by.

Once the retreat was concluded, he asked me to remain in San Felice to conduct a retreat for the seculars since he was due to go elsewhere for the ministry, and he assured me of the imminent arrival of Father Gaetano Bonanni, then a missionary and now the bishop of Norcia. I agreed to his request, and as soon as Father Bonanni got there, I returned to Spoleto. When Canon del Bufalo returned to San Felice in Giano, since he had an assignment of a mission to Monte Martano, he quickly sent word to me in Spoleto, urgently begging me to be there with him as a help or, if I should not be able, to please ask Lipparelli.

Since Lipparelli was unable to accept, and I had learned that the Servant of God was going to have to handle that mission alone, I, trusting always in God's help, decided to go. I arrived in Monte

Martano a bit earlier than he did. In the course of that mission, he spoke more than once of my vocation to the Institute. Since he assured me that this was God's call, on the day of the Assumption of that same year 1820, I made my decision. Having returned then to Giano, I remained in the Institute. I have had the blessing and the consolation of having him close to me often and of speaking with him as well as working with him in the ministry.

My admiration for the Servant of God began already from the time when Lipparelli spoke to me of him in such glowing terms, as I stated previously. My esteem and veneration increased as soon as I got to know him and speak to him. On one particular day, I admired something in him, I just do not know exactly how to explain it, but it was while he was passing by the area of the porter's lodge and I was watching him attentively from a window. Later, I continued to study his actions and bearing with somewhat of a critical attitude, thus solidifying the good impressions that I had already formed of him.

Indeed, upon rereading something that I had written in Giano in 1830 or 1831, I discovered that I had looked upon him as a soul truly belonging to God and that the Lord, one day, would highly honor him. After his death, that devotion toward him grew in me. I still retain it and I recommend myself to his special intercession for my needs, since he had been a spiritual director for me, as well as for the needs of the Institute.

Officially, since I am vice general and general secretary, as I mentioned before, I have, for the glory of God, planned for the promotion of the cause of the Servant of God, while adhering to due form and observing the required precautions. I am presently encouraging it and expressing my desire to see him beatified and canonized, always safeguarding the will of God and whatever God is pleased to do. I have nothing else in mind than the glory of the Lord who is honored in his saints. I am ready, as I have always been, to accept nothing other than what the Church will decide in this cause.

I shall answer and I shall speak, insofar as I am capable, with sincerity and fidelity, knowing full well that in a matter such as the one being considered here, it is not lawful to omit anything,

even though I may not have been asked a question, that would be applicable either to the advantage or disadvantage of the cause. From every aspect, it is required that full knowledge be submitted concerning the person whose beatification and canonization is being requested.

This excerpt is from the full deposition published under the title 'A Saint Scrutinizes a Saint', translated by Fr. Jerome Stack C.P.P.S. of the United States Province of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood.

**Collect for the Memorial of
Blessed Giovanni Merlini, presbyter
(January 12)**

O GOD,
who granted to the presbyter
Blessed Giovanni Merlini
to draw from contemplating the mystery
of the Blood of Christ
wise discernment for leading your people
along the path that leads to you,
grant that we too, conformed to your Son,
the Lamb of sacrifice,
may become wise witnesses of your love.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, forever and ever. Amen.

*This is an unofficial translation for private use
pending approval from the Holy See
of an official version for use in the liturgy.*



The reliquary containing the remains of Blessed Giovanni Merlini, enshrined at S. Maria in Trivio (Crociferi) in Rome, across from St. Gaspar's resting place.

Scenes From A Beatification

T*he following reflections are from Missionaries of the Precious Blood of the Atlantic Province who were in attendance at the beatification of Blessed Giovanni Merlini on January 12, 2025.*

January 12, 2025, was a day of great joy as our hearts swelled with gratitude and thanksgiving for the many years of answered prayers, blessings, and favours we have received. Blessed Giovanni Merlini's ultimate goal was to surrender everything to God and to live according to God's will, and he did so with unwavering devotion. The Church recognizes and celebrates Don Giovanni as a holy and prudent man.

Though he was a simple and ordinary man, Don Giovanni had many friends who sought his advice and prayers. Even Pope Pius IX turned to him. His actions and words were always grounded in deep reflection and prayer, earning him a reputation for his discernment. Don Giovanni Merlini listened attentively to God's voice and to those who came to him. He never compromised his morals. Welcoming everyone with an open heart, his patience in walking alongside others through their struggles—offering direction and clarity—came naturally. His presence was life-giving, both to him and to those he encountered. He was an ordinary man who lived in an extraordinary way.

He was approachable, kind, and exemplified the true spirit of a missionary. While we can teach about faith, it is through living it out in our lives that we give the most powerful witness. The deep and committed faith of this missionary priest modeled what he prayed. Merlini often shared with his confreres that God does not always give us what we want, but what He knows is truly best for us. Giovanni's missionary vocation, marked by his welcoming spirit, presence, and listening heart, affirms him as a holy and prudent servant of God.

The three days of celebration—the Vigil Prayer Service at the Church of the Twelve Holy Apostles,

the Beatification at St. John Lateran, and the Mass of Thanksgiving at St. Gaspar's Church—were filled with hymns, prayer, reflection, and tears of thanksgiving. An estimated 3,000 people attended the festivities, including CPPS Missionaries, ASC Sisters, and USC members from around the world. I am deeply honoured and grateful to have participated in this joyful and transformative week. My time in Rome renewed my missionary spirit and strengthened my commitment to serve my confreres, the community, and the Church. Don Giovanni Merlini's example has reaffirmed my own vocation and inspires me to serve with even greater devotion.

• **VERY REV. LUIGINO SANTI C.P.P.S.**

The place is St. John Lateran Basilica in Rome, Italy. The date is January 12, 2025. It was here on a cold winter day that people from all walks of life gathered in person and online to celebrate the first beatification of the Year of the Jubilee of Hope. By decree of Pope Francis, Venerable John Merlini, a Missionary of the Precious Blood who died on January 12, 1873, was declared Blessed. It is significant that the Church declares the blessedness of Merlini on the day he passed from this world, as it is seen as his entrance into the life to come.

The religious event drew attention to John Merlini's virtues, his ministerial outreach, and his lifetime of accomplishments. Cardinal Marcello Semeraro, Prefect of the Dicastery for the Cause of Saints, presided over the beatification in the name of Pope Francis. Six other bishops and hundreds of priests were also present. It was truly inspiring to see so many of my brother missionaries—around 200—all drawn together from disparate parts of the globe because of the life of this active and determined man. The gathering showed that the Holy Spirit is still calling vibrant and talented men to join us in proclaiming the redeeming power of the Precious Blood of Christ.

Merlini's life challenges me personally to be aware of the privilege God has given me to minister in His name as a Missionary of the Precious Blood, to continue to find ways to be an instrument of God's mercy and compassion, especially to the sick and the aging, and to have the boldness to proclaim that no one is beyond the scope of God's redeeming love. Like Merlini, it takes an organized

mind to accomplish a lot for the Kingdom. May we strive to be as organized and service-driven as he was and to share our love of God with all people everywhere.

● **REV. SAMUEL D'ANGELO C.P.P.S.**

As I sat in the glorious Basilica of St. John Lateran, surrounded by hundreds of pilgrims from across the world, I was overcome by the sheer beauty of the moment. The heavenly music, worthy of such a profound occasion, filled the ancient walls, uplifting our hearts as we celebrated the beatification of Venerable John Merlini, a true giant of faith.

Looking around, I saw joy and reverence etched into the faces of the faithful. Some had traveled thousands of miles, bearing the marks of sacrifice, yet their eyes reflected hope and gratitude. It was a divine presence that connected us all in that sacred space. God made a dwelling with us and I felt it with every fibre of my being. It was during the climactic moment of the liturgy, as the proclamation of John Merlini's beatification echoed through the cathedral, that tears welled up in my eyes. I noticed the same emotion mirrored in the faces of others. It was as if the holiness of Blessed John Merlini, his legacy of love and dedication, reached across time to embrace us.

I realized then that holiness, indeed, never loses its power to inspire. It does not fade into obscurity or become outdated. On the contrary, with the passage of time, it shines ever more brightly, calling us to the depths of our own hearts. Reflecting on the life of John Merlini, I could not help but draw parallels to our current efforts to reform our congregation, our ministries, and the Church as a whole. So often, we focus on external strategies—good preaching, dynamic programs, investments in resources, or the charisma of leaders. Yet we often neglect the foundation upon which everything should rest: the call to holiness. Without this, our communities risk becoming fractured and superficial.

Holiness is the foundation of a healthy community where love, mutual respect, and Christ-centered ministry thrive. It ensures that our lives bear authentic witness to our spirituality and that our ministries genuinely seek the salvation of all

people. Without holiness, the bonds of charity in our communities are weakened, reducing us to mere roommates or toleration of one another. Without holiness, evangelization becomes a quest for personal power, with ministries turned into isolated kingdoms and leadership positions into tools of control, comfort, or self-interest. John Merlini's life is a radiant reminder that these paths lead to ruin. They leave hearts empty and communities fragmented because God does not dwell in contradiction or division. Instead, he teaches us that the true reform of our congregation, Church, and ministries begins with the reform of our hearts. Holiness is not a lofty ideal reserved for a few; it is the very essence of our call as Christians. As I left St. John Lateran, my prayer was simple yet profound: that we might all desire to become saints. For it is only through holiness that we can be true missionaries, carrying the love of Christ to a world desperately in need of hope and redemption. Blessed John Merlini, pray for us.

● **REV. JEROME HOLOGA C.P.P.S.**

Precious Blood Missionaries Rev. Laguartilla, Very Rev. Santi, Rev. Hologa, and Rev. D'Angelo in the Parrocchia Missionaria San Gaspare del Bufalo, Arco di Travertino, Rome, following the Mass of Thanksgiving for the Beatification of Don Giovanni Merlini.



"The day has 24 hours. Use them all for God."

What a great joy it was for me as a member of the Congregation of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood and for the universal Church, to participate in the beatification of Don Giovanni Merlini on January 12, 2025, at the beautiful and solemn celebration at the Papal Basilica of St. John Lateran in Rome. Indeed, it was a great gift for all of us as we began the Jubilee Year.

The solemn Mass was presided over by Cardinal Marcello Semeraro, Prefect of the Dicastery of the Causes of Saints, with cardinals, bishops, and priests concelebrating. In his homily, the Cardinal said that the new Blessed was a man of both contemplation and action, inviting us all to follow the examples of Martha and Mary. He emphasized that prayer and loving service, which compel us to reach out to others, are two fundamental virtues in our lives as Christians.

What a blessing it was for me to concelebrate this solemn Mass of beatification and meet the diverse brothers and sisters of the Congregation from around the world. Indeed, Jesus in the Eucharist gathered us all together, feeding us with His Body and Blood as a sign of God's love for us.

May Blessed Don Giovanni Merlini pray for us, our families, our communities, and for peace in our troubled world as a sign of hope in our pilgrimage here on earth.

• **REV. GERARDO LAGUARTILLA C.PP.S.**

The moon was in full bloom and shone on the gathering throughout our stay. Like the moon, which reflects the light of the sun, Giovanni Merlini reflected the light of his master, Gaspar del Bufalo. As the light of the moon shone on all of us inside the Basilica of San Giovanni Laterano, so too did it shine upon the person of the hour, Giovanni Merlini. It appeared that the whole church reflected that light and was dancing.

We were over 200 priests from central and eastern Europe, and North America—all eager to begin the evening vigil service on Saturday and then the beatification on Sunday morning, January 12, the day Giovanni died and which now is his feast day for us. It was a wonderful moment when the Cardinal declared that Giovanni was now to be known as "Blessed" or "Blest." The decree was signed by Pope Francis.

Afterwards, we gathered, CPPS and close friends, at Via Narni, beside the Italian

provincial house, for a nice dinner. What impressed me was the fact that there were so many of us speaking so many different languages, young and old, yet united for the same reason: to celebrate the beatification of Giovanni Merlini. This reminds me of the famous quote of the newly Blessed: "The day has 24 hours. Use them all for God." The moon continues to wax and wane, continues to shine or not, but it is in its light that we learn about the glory of God.

• **REV. PHILIP SMITH C.PP.S.**



Homily at the Beatification of the Venerable Giovanni Merlini

Marcello Cardinal Semeraro

JOINING CONTEMPLATION AND ACTION

Today the Church celebrates the feast of the Baptism of the Lord, "in which he is wonderfully declared the Son of God, the beloved; the waters are sanctified, man is purified and all creation rejoices": these are the words with which the Roman Martyrology describes this Sunday that closes the Christmas season. Today, the Lord shows himself to us not with works and words, with miracles and parables, but with a gesture full of silence that is, however, the most eloquent of all: prayer! As we have just heard during the proclamation of the Gospel, while all the people were coming to be baptized, Jesus, once he too had received baptism, was in prayer (cf. Lk 3:21).

From the Gospel accounts and especially from the Gospel according to Luke, we know that, for Jesus, prayer is an habitual attitude, the privileged place in which he lives the mystery of his person and his mission, the vital space in which he places his relationships with the Father and with the disciples. Jesus always prays to his Father; and finally, in Gethsemane and on the cross. He prays for his disciples when he chooses them and when he teaches them to pray... All this tells us that Jesus is a master of prayer; indeed, as we read in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, he, «when he prays... already teaches us to pray» (n. 2607)

In this—today we recognize with joy—Blessed Giovanni Merlini was his excellent disciple. The testimonies collected in the Process for his beatification and canonization are unanimous in telling us that the Lord had enriched him with the gift of prayer: a prayer that, in him, habitually

became contemplation.

A witness declared: «I cried out, asking permission to enter and he did not even answer me. I entered the room, approached him as he was saying the Office and found him as if ecstatic, without him noticing anything, and therefore, I was forced to leave the room in admiration without being able to speak to him. I note that his face was as if smiling, and beautiful in an

extraordinary way» (*Summ.* §129, p. 45). I think that of our blessed one we can repeat in some way what Thomas of Celano wrote about Saint Francis, that is, that he was a man who became a prayer (*Vita seconda* 61, 95: FF 682).

He, however, was also a man of action and the apostolate, particularly in missionary preaching (for which he was highly esteemed by Saint Gaspar), and he was also a man with excellent governance skills and, above all, enriched by the virtue of prudence. This is, in fact, the cardinal virtue that is most necessary in those who have leadership responsibilities: this aspect, which Saint Thomas Aquinas particularly emphasized since—he said—a prudent person is one who knows how to decide what to do concretely and knows how to do it with wisdom.



In his homily, Cardinal Semeraro emphasized that the new Blessed embodied both contemplation and action, urging us to emulate the examples of Martha and Mary.

Of Blessed Giovanni Merlini, the witnesses of the beatification process say that he exercised the virtue of prudence in a truly extraordinary way: he studied situations, consulted and intervened in appropriate ways, and this, especially in decisions that were difficult for people, with charity (cf. *Summ.* §492-495, pp. 191-192).

Among the testimonies, I read with surprise this one: that «the Servant of God joined together the lives of Martha and Magdalene in such a way as to appear heroic in both.» (Ibid. §924, p. 370). At the time (we are in the ordinary trial held in Albano between 1880 and 1905) it was usual to equate Mary, sister of Martha and Lazarus, with Mary Magdalene; however, my surprise does not come from this; rather, it is in the recognition of the link between the two traditional forms of life: the one called «contemplative» and the other called «active». There are those who still speak of them as alternative forms of life, when instead they are complimentary, indeed consequential. Giuliano Pomerio—a spiritual master of the fifth century—wrote that «with the active life one



An assembly of 200 priests, six bishops, and Cardinal Semeraro files into St. John Lateran as Mons. Marco Frisina's entrance hymn, 'O Signore Nostro Dio,' echoes—a testament to the grandeur of God's creation.

progresses and with the contemplative one reaches the heights» (*La vita contemplativa* XII, 1). Today, Pope Francis teaches that "the wisdom of the heart lies precisely in knowing how to combine these two elements: contemplation and action. Martha and Mary show us the way. If we want to savor life with joy, we must combine these two attitudes: on the one hand, "staying at the feet" of Jesus, to



Ubi est caritas et dilectio, ibi est sanctorum congregatio.



Rev. Valerio Volpi, CPPS (F), accompanied by a confrere and Sisters Adorers of the Blood of Christ, solemnly processes towards the altar, bearing the reliquary of the Blessed.

listen to him as he reveals the secret of everything; on the other, being thoughtful and ready in hospitality, when He passes by and knocks on our door, with the face of a friend who needs a moment of refreshment and fraternity" (Angelus of July 21, 2019). Blessed Merlini also practiced this "hospitality." "In every need and necessity," a witness declares, "it was enough to turn to him to be sure of all his care and interest in helping them as if it were his own thing, and even better" (*Summ.* §583, p. 228).

These, dearest ones, are some aspects of the life and spirituality of the new Blessed that the Church proposes to us today to invoke and imitate in our lives. There is, however, another that I do not want to fail to recall, and it is the friendship he lived, especially with his brothers in the religious family and with the people entrusted to him for spiritual guidance and accompaniment. The names of Saint Gaspar del Bufalo and Saint Maria de Mattias are emblematic for their special bond with Blessed Giovanni Merlini.

There is a medieval saying that goes like this: *Ubi est caritas et dilectio, ibi est sanctorum congregatio*, "where people love and care for one another, there the saints meet." It makes me think: if it is true that saints make friends with one another, it must also be true that there is a friendship (one united with charity) that makes saints. May the Lord grant it to us, perhaps in the appropriate time of this "holy year," for which the Pope also wrote to us that "we need to 'abound in hope' to bear credible and attractive witness to the faith and love we carry in our hearts; so that faith may be joyful, charity enthusiastic; so that everyone may be able to give, even just a smile, a gesture of friendship, a fraternal look, a sincere ear, a free service, knowing that, in the Spirit of Jesus, this can become a fruitful seed of hope for those who receive it" (*Spes non confundit*, n. 18). Amen.

Cardinal Semeraro is the Prefect of the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints. The homily was preached in the Archbasilica of St. John Lateran on January 12, 2025.

The Cefalo family with Cardinal Crescenzio Sepe (F), Sr. Nicla Spezzati ASC, Postulator of Don Merlini's cause (FR), and Very Rev. Emanuele Lupi CPPS, Vice Moderator General and Vice Postulator of Don Merlini's cause (B). Ciriaco Cefalo, standing in front of Rev. Lupi, is the recipient of the miracle approved by Pope Francis that led to the beatification of Giovanni Merlini.



Homily at the Mass of Thanksgiving for the Beatification of Blessed Giovanni Merlini

Archbishop Renato Boccardo

The scene that the evangelist Luke has described in the Gospel page just proclaimed is set in the context of the Last Supper. The words of Jesus announcing His passion, death, and resurrection are jarringly contrasted by the apostles' discussion about which of them should be considered greater... The more Jesus tries to come down in order to serve, the more they try to come up in order to lead. All indications are that they do not understand what is going on, which is why they continue with their personal ambitions (because pride blinds and does not allow them to see and be moved). They have not grasped the logic that the Master testifies to, the logic that should characterize the disciple in spirit and action. This always happens, because it is not easy to think according to the Gospel (cf. Mk 8:33) and abandon the ambition for power and success.

This episode gives Jesus a chance to address all those who want to follow him and to point out the “formula” for attaining true glory: “The greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules, like the one who serves.” There

is no doubt about the path chosen by Jesus: He does not merely indicate it in words to the disciples then and now, but lives it in his own flesh, offering himself as a model to be imitated. Indeed, he explains, “I stand among you as the one who serves.”

Here then is the true “constitution” given to the Church: the solid foundation on which this community is to be built is the event in which the Son of God gave his life “for you and for all.” Jesus did not dominate but served always, even to the point of washing the feet of the apostles, even to the point of accepting an ignominious death, assimilated to the evildoers. In this, we immediately recall the expression so dear to the Missionaries, “You are worth the Blood of Christ, it is He who made you His own by giving you His Blood.” This is the glory of the Messiah, thus the glory of the Christian: not worldly accolades, not positions or places of success and triumph, but service of the brethren and life given in freedom and out of love, following Jesus.



Mons. Renato Boccardo's homily highlighted that true greatness is found in humility and service, as exemplified by Jesus Christ, who came to serve rather than to be served.

St. Paul also told us that there is the wisdom “of this world” that is based on having more, on being more powerful, on prevailing; and there is the divine wisdom that is based on poverty, humility, service, even to the cross. The former produces evil, evil that destroys everything and destroys us; the latter—which seems absolute powerlessness—actually takes evil upon itself and

overcomes it at its root, putting life right into death. This is what all those who, breaking the mold of common sense, set out on the path of Christian experience discover. And this is the Gospel impetus, which paradoxically overturns human categories. Indeed Christ's death, so infamous and miserable, a real failure for common feeling, is transformed into the heavenly “zenith” of salvation and glory.

Don Giovanni Merlini, a son of Spoleto, whose diocesan Church is honored to have transmitted to him, together with his good parents, the gift of faith and to have enjoyed the first fruits of his priesthood, understood this well. At the same time, she rejoices and is proud today to see him gathered to the glorious ranks of its sons already inscribed in the roll of the Saints and Blessed and venerates him as an intercessor before God. And I, called to serve this Church in episcopal ministry, thank the Moderator General and the Postulation because, in inviting me to preside over

today's celebration, they wished to emphasize the bond of Spoleto with the new Blessed, a bond that, from today, becomes deeper and more solid, even though it is already consolidated by the fruitful and much appreciated presence of the Missionaries at the Abbey of Giano and in some parishes.

And it is precisely from Don Giovanni Merlini that we would like to underline one more message for our Christian life: “Let us pray fervently and insistently,” he said, “to our most loving Jesus to want to apply to us the fruit of his divine Blood. Thus we would be made partakers of the same spirit of him: the spirit of perfection for us, spirit of zeal for the honor of God, the spirit of charity for the health of souls; the spirit, to summarize, that makes us irrefutable ministers in the divine presence... Jesus assist us; Jesus guide us; and Jesus lead us to the acquisition of his holy spirit and make us persevere in it.” (*Circular Letter of 1862*).

Decisive holiness, in fact, is in letting oneself be led by God's grace and His love, knowing that therein lies the precious treasure that illuminates and gives value and meaning to all existence (cf. Mt 13:44-45). In one of his prayers, the Blessed says, “You have detached me from my homeland, from my relatives, from my friends, from temporal goods and whatever else may allure this wretched humanity, to take possession of my whole heart, my whole soul... My God, I realize that you want me holy. Be a thousand times blessed! My life is yours: I consecrate it to you entirely and without reservation. I no longer want to live to my desires, but I want to be yours, all yours and always yours. Dispose of me as you please.”

Before the saint, there is always the narrow door and the narrow way of which Jesus speaks (cf. Mt 7:13-14). This is the road the saint travels and this is the door through which he passes, ignoring the comfortable spacious ways of pride

and pleasure or the triumphal gates of success and injustice. Holiness demands serious and constant commitment, in the service of the Lord and with the vigilance of faithful servants. For this reason, to easy compromises, Giovanni Merlini opposes consistency, to indifference attention, to the dullness of habit the fire of passion; and from the assiduous contemplation of the mystery of the Blood of Christ, he draws the wisdom of discernment to accompany men on the path that leads to the Father. Kneeling “before the great book of the Crucifix,” he prays, “Give me only your holy love: this is enough for me. Yes, my God, by love may I live, by pure love may I die, by love may I be pastured for all eternity.”

However, no one can be “made” or self-proclaimed a saint. Holiness arises from an effective dialogue in which the first line, the one that breaks the silence and creates the beauty of the discourse, is spoken by God: blessedness

“Give me only your holy love: this is enough for me. Yes, my God, by love may I live, by pure love may I die, by love may I be pastured for all eternity.”

floods into our hearts because He infuses it into us. As the apostle John states, “It was not we who loved God but he who loved us” (1 John 4:10). This is a prevenient love that succeeds in making “children of God” fragile and limited creatures such as we are. To be holy is thus to welcome a gift rather than to conquer it. And once welcomed, the gift must be bestowed on others, because love is answered by loving, by loving God and our brothers and sisters.

“For the present

times,” Merlini wrote in his *Circular Letter of 1868*, “we need to acquire new spirit, in order to fulfill the sacred duties of our vocation with that perfection which God wants of us and to be of benefit to so many lost sheep, to so many prodigal children, to so many souls who run blindly to perdition. Oh! given there was to lead back so many who regard with indifference and sometimes even with contempt the things of God. Oh! given that there were to lead back so many led astray to the good path! Let us pray and pray much, especially in the time of holy exercises, that the ministry and holy missions in particular, of which there is an extreme need, may be a blessing and that we may see the spirit of Jesus Christ rise up in the peoples.”

The beatification of Don Giovanni Merlini renews his spiritual presence so that our faith may be revived and our hope become more fervent and deeper. For the Lord's servants leave in people's lives a trace of goodness that does not die and a furrow of light that does not fade. Traces of goodness and a furrow of light that solicit not only our gratitude but stimulates our imitation, called as we are, yes, to remember what his life was, but above all, to believe that the example and fruitfulness of this life can still be alive, meaningful and precious today.

It is as if the Blessed repeated to us from the ambo of this church, the words of Pope Francis: “Do not be afraid of holiness. It will not take away your strength, life, and joy. Quite the opposite, for you will come to be what the Father intended when he created you and you will be faithful to your own being... Don't be afraid to aim higher, to let God love and deliver you. Don't be afraid to let the Holy Spirit guide you. Holiness does not make you less human, because it is the encounter of your weakness with the power of grace. After all, as Leon Bloy said, in life 'there is but one sadness, ... that of not being holy.' ” (*Gaudete et exsultate*, 32. 34).

Mons. Renato Boccardo is the Archbishop of Spoleto-Norcia, Italy. The homily was preached at St. Gaspar del Bufalo Church, Rome, on the day after the Beatification.

Blessed Giovanni Merlini: The Missionary Who Spoke to the Pope and the Bandits

Fabio Beretta

"There is someone who loves you even before you deserve it." Disobeying the orders of the papal legate, Father Giovanni Merlini did not condemn or attack anyone in his homilies. Not even the bandits who, with their misdeeds, disturbed the order and internal peace of the Papal State.

According to him, violent repression was not the right way to resolve the problems of the lands of central Italy that had seen the invasion of Napoleonic French troops. His words also pierced like a bullet the hearts of the hardened criminals who sowed terror in the countryside. Thus, some bandits, through Father Giovanni, wrote a letter to the Pope asking for forgiveness.

Exactly two centuries after writing this letter, dated 1825, Father Giovanni Merlini, missionary of the Precious Blood, is proclaimed blessed. The beatification liturgy, which will be presided over on Sunday, January 12, by Cardinal Marcello Semeraro, Prefect of the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints, will not take place in Spoleto, his hometown, nor in Albano, a town in the Castelli Romani where Father Merlini lived, but in the Cathedral of Rome, the Lateran, where he will be elevated to the honors of the altars. A missionary in the lands of the Papal States, he was accused several times of collusion with bandits and of disobedience to the Church he served. He was also the advisor to a Pope, Blessed Pius IX.

And his holiness lies precisely in his way of living in the world with what Father Valerio Volpi, director of the Pastoral Office for Youth and Vocations of the Italian Province of the Congregation of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, co-author of the latest biography of Father Merlini, defines in an interview with Fides as "a disconcerting inner freedom".

"In a Church that sometimes pursues pastoral success, that questions itself, saying: 'If people don't come, we fail,' the example of Father Giovanni is enlightening. He trusted that God would do the rest", adds Father Valerio, recalling the words that Blessed Merlini addressed to his spiritual daughter, Maria de Mattias, today a saint: "You worry about many things, I worry only about the will of God. Always remember that we are channels and not sources".

The source of his work "is all there". And this freedom of action led him to embark on great projects, sometimes crazy, such as telling the Pope, who had then left Rome because of the insurrection of 1848: "Your Holiness, if you want to return to Rome, extend the feast of the Precious Blood to the entire universal Church. If you do so, you will have the possibility of returning to Rome before the feast (at the time fixed on July 1, ed.).

Pius IX did not make a vow but a simple promise", recounts Father Valerio. And in fact, on June 30, on the eve of the feast of the Precious Blood, the battle that, de facto, sanctioned the end of the Roman Republic took place. On 10 August 1849, faithful to the promise made in Gaeta, Pius IX issued the bull *Redempti sumus* with which the feast of the Precious Blood was extended to the entire Church, fixing it on the first Sunday of July (today it has been merged with the solemnity of Corpus Christi, ed.).

Father Merlini, the 'biographer' continues, acted in this way because he was convinced that it was God's will. If God wanted it that way, he would have had the means and ways to carry out his will". This way of doing things also won over Pius IX.

"Father Merlini's reputation as a spiritual director preceded him. Like all the initiatives he took in the context of his mission to "retransmit the love of God in the lands of the Papal States, where large sections of the population live," explains Father Valerio. "They did not need to know Jesus by name. Everyone knew who he was and what he had done. What they lacked was to experience that this Jesus loved them so much that he gave his life for each one of them, even if they were bandits or poor people."

And Merlini was listened to by these people because, as Father Volpi points out, "he used dialogue." With Saint Gaspare del Bufalo, he undertook the construction of several mission houses in the territories of the Papal States. Saint Gaspare chose Father Merlini because he was very practical and because he was an architect. Many of these houses were built outside the inhabited areas to facilitate the encounter and dialogue with the bandits.

Father Giovanni spoke to them and the bandits listened to him. Often, in the evening, when everyone returned to the camps after working in the countryside, he offered water to everyone, without distinction. He never used an armed escort".

And it was precisely this way of doing things that led Pius IX to want him as an advisor. And the Pope, in order to listen to him, did not bring him to Rome: "It was the Pontiff who went to Albano to speak to Father Giovanni. It was not unusual for the Pope to arrive while he was in the chicken coop feeding the animals. Tasks that, in the congregation, certainly did not belong to a high-ranking member", explains Father Valerio to Fides. Merlini, in fact, was elected third Moderator General of the Congregation of the Precious Blood in 1847, a position he held until his death. Under his leadership, the Congregation founded by Saint Gaspar del Bufalo took on the structural aspect that we know today.

Father Merlini, a missionary in the lands of the Pope, is also the first blessed of the Jubilee 2025, dedicated to the theme of hope. This too, concludes Father Valerio Volpi, "is a strong message. As Christians, we sometimes take ourselves a little for granted, while Father Giovanni tells us that we must not take anything for granted. Father Giovanni also helps us to experience Rome, a city with a thousand-year-old tradition of faith, through his desire to follow God's will. He helps us to recognize that there is no situation in which we live where God cannot teach us something."

Fabio Beretta writes for Agenzia Fides. The article appeared on January 11, 2025. The contents of the site are licensed under Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

Merlini the Spiritual Director 'A Man with Heart'

John Colacino CPPS

A lesser-known aspect of the charism of St. Gaspar del Bufalo was his great interest in the spiritual progress of others and his hope that the members of his Congregation would distinguish themselves as competent spiritual directors as well as able ministers of the Word of God. To that end, the founder authored a brief instruction manual for priests engaged in this work, the *Direttore Diretto nella guida delle anime alla perfezione* [The Guided Director in Leading Souls to Perfection], the original manuscript of which is found in the *Scritti del Fondatore* [Writings of the Founder] XIII, fol. 85-108. Appended to the published edition (Rome: *Presso Lino Contadini*, 1825) is a short work by one of Gaspar's spiritual confidantes, Serafino Campano, entitled *Nozioni della Via Mistica, ossia Scala Mistica* [Notes on the Mystic Way, or Ladder].

In his deposition during the canonical process for Gaspar's canonization, Giovanni

Merlini relates how this treatise was based on outlines found in the manuscripts of the late Bishop Francesco Albertini, Gaspar's own spiritual director, and that the founder learned his methods for direction from Albertini himself. (cf. *Un Santo Scruta un Santo*, 127, 270). The subtitle of the work explicitly states it was "produced and compiled by the Missionaries of the Archconfraternity of the Most Precious Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ, based on outlines found in the manuscripts of Mons. Albertini, founder of the aforesaid Archconfraternity." The *Direttore* itself recommends that the first resources directors should consult should be "the complete works of the expert [Francis] de Sales" along with the "work on holy humility" by Albertini and the Jesuit Alphonsus Rodriguez' *Practice of Christian Perfection* (55).

It should come as no surprise then that Merlini, Gaspar's great emulator, would take to heart the founder's wishes and embrace the ministry of spiritual direction faithful to the guidance found in these works. And there is no clearer proof than the spiritual accompaniment he assiduously provided to the foundress of the Adorers of the Blood of Christ, St. Maria de Mattias.

**“God is calling you to live in a far-away town,
and the way there is long and hard.”
When she asked, “What town?”
he told her “Holiness”
and that she was ready to travel.**

As Michele Colagiovanni noted in his biography of Maria, *Obedient Rebel*, Merlini entered Maria's life when “she was more restless than ever. She did not know how to put together in a definitive plan of life the suggestions which came to her from so many counselors.” But when she heard Merlini, we are told he “seemed to her to be a secure person, the very kind she needed” despite his youth. After she decided to consult him, his first words to her were “God is calling you to live in a far-away town, and the way there is long and hard.” When she asked, “What town?” he told her “Holiness” and that she was ready to travel. “Now you can start traveling,” he said. Thus began her long journey assisted by Merlini in the role of guide. What follows are representative selections from their correspondence reminiscent of the letters of direction that have been preserved between St. Francis de Sales and St. Jane Frances de Chantal and demonstrate the Salesian influence on his approach to direction.

SELECTION 1.

Father, I can't pray peacefully. There is nothing I can do, it is all a heart activity. I try to hide, but I can't, it would disturb the stillness of my soul, which then wants to be as it pleases: it doesn't even want the words that I have learned or read in books and so many times impatience takes over me, that impatience that takes away my peace. It is there that the soul cries because humanity would like to enter, it cries like a little girl when she sees a beast that wants to take away what she has in her hands and does not know how to get out of it, so she remains in silence abandoned in the hands of God and Most Holy Mary. She stays

in this silence and then bursts into tears because of the turmoil of her affections and would cry out if she didn't do it... since I began to pray, I can never hope to prepare myself: if I prepared for meditation, my soul would go somewhere else and do something different: that's why it is like a child. There must be some strong deception in all this... Oh my God help me! (Maria de Mattias, Lettere, vol. III, n. 650, vol. III).

My daughter, let the soul go where it is pulled towards. The rules indicated for preparation are for the time when there is no such pull. In time you will know whether the soul remains as in an enchantment, or whether it is present to itself, and what affections nourish it. So also, whether the soul goes to the virtues of God or even to other thoughts, such as the Institute, and how the soul remains after such prayer. I do not see the illusion you fear. Live calmly! (Giovanni Merlini, Lettere, vol. II, n. 344).

SELECTION 2.

*Dear Father, as soon as I read your last letter **my mind was crowded with so many things**: that I had deceived myself, that I had deceived you and everyone; I would run to the Crucifix without being able to hold back my tears and I would feel my spirit comforted at times, but I could not persuade myself otherwise, only **resign myself**... Is it true that between me and the Direction willed by God a wall of division is put up? How it hurts me to say that between me and the Crucified Jesus there is this **painful division**; I am content to die a thousand and one times rather than be separated from Crucified Jesus, and **I don't want anything to stand between me and Him!***

Never will I be happy if my heart is not all of Jesus, but great is my fear, that as soon as I remember all that I must do I will be stunned. **Thoughts crowd in on me from all sides...** (Maria de Mattias, *Lettere*, vol. II, n. 426).

My dearest daughter, internal and external travails are a hedge to the soul like in a vineyard; cutting it out hard but necessary. Consider them this way and accept them in peace and humbly: resignation, hence trust in God. Let them not delay the works of your call, but be to you as of a good Umbrella when it rains, or when the sun burns. Think how good God is, who by making us fearful makes us more watchful and draws us more to Himself. One day we will understand the order God has maintained to lead us to salvation, and we will not cease thanking Him. (Giovanni Merlini, *Lettere*, vol. I, n. 42).

SELECTION 3.

Dear Father, I find myself in darkness and desolation, how can I free myself? I wish to offer these pains to Jesus, but when I cannot find Jesus, how can I find him? I receive no human comforts and must support the Work without devotion. I am weary... (Maria de Mattias, *Lettere*, vol. III, n. 668).

Dearest daughter, why are you frightened? Don't be surprised if desolation moments are always longer and more painful, God is there and allows it for the good of your soul... Continue to face the Enemy and defeat him with the Divine Blood! Discover the deceptions the devil plots and do not fall into his suggestions (sense of abandonment); he shouts and spites, but he is powerless because Jesus has defeated him! If your soul cannot find Jesus, just stay with Jesus. Those who are in a dark room

do not see the companion, but they know he is there and that is enough for them not to be afraid! (Giovanni Merlini, *Lettere*, vol. I, n. 79 and 92).

In each of these excerpts one notes how Merlini, following the counsels of the *Direttore*, seeks to resolve misjudgments over Maria's spiritual state causing her restlessness and undue anxiety; he does so by inculcating Salesian confidence in the face of inner trials. He also emphasizes Salesian abandonment to the dispositions of providence, above all in moments of spiritual desolation by helping Maria recognize how it is through tribulation that God purifies the spirit, and that she will not lose her equilibrium of spirit and peace of heart when facing experiences of darkness, aridity, or desolation. If, in the ways of providence, such trials are designed to bring her to love the will of God purely and for its own sake, then "indifference"—taken over from Ignatian doctrine—will serve to bring about the desired end imbued with Salesian optimism that disavows despondency. One might add here an echo of del Bufalo's own advice to directors: "To remove evil, encourage good; relax what is rigid, and make firm what is lax; elevate what is depressed, subdue what is overly-elated. And to do all in the correct manner: this is a true director of souls." (*Scritti del Fondatore* vol. XVA, fol. 351).

A MAN WITH HEART

One might summarize Merlini's demeanor toward Maria with Linda Leonard's description of "the man with heart": "He is caring, warm, and strong. He is not afraid of anger, nor is he afraid of intimacy and love. He can see beyond the bewitchment, beyond the artificial defensive appearance to the essential me within. He stays by me and is patient. But he initiates, confronts, and moves on as well. He is stable and enduring... He is the soul-mate, the inner friend... who accompanies a woman on the journey and adventure of life" (*The Wounded Woman*, 113-4).

Among other things, this led Merlini to counsel Maria to avoid false humility and obedience—the kind associated with downcast eyes and subservience. Thus, he writes to her, "God wants us to be humble, yes, but confident; hence do not neglect to speak out. It is cowardice to recognize God's will and then be silent through weakness of spirit... with a holy liberty the prophets uttered what God desired of them... Certain fears and the like are specters" (*Lettere*, I, no. 38).

Nor did Merlini exhibit toward Maria the kind of paternalism which would have choked her development as seen by his addressing her formally in Italian and not with the familiar form. More than politeness or reserve, this showed a desire on his part to promote her freedom and dignity. He tells her, "in many things God works directly in your soul and that my direction for now is limited to discerning where God is working and where God wants to make use of the director" (*Lettere*, I, no. 24). Once again, this is the Salesian preference for a "non-directive" type of direction that emphasizes liberty of spirit with reminders that, "If I did not trust you I would not leave the conclusion of all things to you and would not let everything pass through your hands... I repeat, dissipate as a temptation the thought that I do not believe in you." Such continual encouragement thus guided the emergence of a creativity whose ultimate fruit, of course, was the Adorers of the Blood of Christ. Here too we find Merlini encouraging Maria in her office of foundress to

have an expansive vision: "Extend your thought as far as you can" (*Lettere*, I, n. 82) was his advice. This was true, even if at times his counsel might have been more than he envisioned causing him to exclaim "This is something new in the world" (*Lettere*, I, n. 13) in reference to Maria's innovations in some aspects of her school policies.

In the end, Maria's passionate love for Jesus was certainly shaped to some extent by her encounter with his friend, Giovanni Merlini. When I hear her say of Christ, for example, "What moves me most to love our Lord is his great love shown me in having borne with me for so long a time, and because I see in him a Being so beautiful" (*Lettere*, II, no. 438), I cannot help but think how Merlini stands in the background, decreasing for sure, like the Baptist, but still someone who prepared the way for the Lord, an image, if you will, of the Beloved. Such relationships are hardly lacking in the history of the church, including its celibate saints. The sacred pairings of Francis and Clare of Assisi, John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila, Catherine of Siena and Raymond of Capua, and especially Francis de Sales and Jane Frances de Chantal all point us in the direction of such celibate love.

At this point, one might well ask if this was a one-sided relationship as if Maria did not influence Merlini in any decisive way. That is, of course, not true. I have focused in this article on Merlini's skill as a spiritual director. Anyone who has engaged in this ministry knows well that the director is also a recipient in this graced relationship. That other side of the coin, so to speak, has been treated by Adorer Sr. Anna Grazia di Liddo in her article, "Giovanni Merlini and Maria de Mattias: Two Stories, One Encounter, One Project" in the volume *Giovanni Merlini... Along the Way of the Blood* (Rome: 2023). Suffice it to note here how both protagonists "complemented one another without one intending to prevail over the other... they exchanged the human and moral riches each carried" (p. 63).

"In a word, you will find in her a mingling of qualities that will delight and charm you."

ARRIVING AT THE DESTINATION

I close with something that might not be provable by strict historical standards, but which makes perfect sense to me in light of what I have described as Maria's own journey to human and spiritual maturity: namely, an alleged apparition she had toward the end of her life. Sister Filomena Lauretti spoke of it at her beatification process when she testified to seeing Maria, after knocking at her door with no response, absorbed in prayer before a child of extraordinary beauty who was all surrounded by light. Angela Di Spirito refers to this in her treatment of *Maria the Mystic* under the heading "Transforming Union or Spiritual Marriage" (p. 87).

Now something like this might leave us wondering if some hagiographical license might be present. But from a psychological perspective, at least, that the vision of a luminous, male "Divine Child" should present itself at the end of Maria's long and hard journey toward "the town of holiness" is telling for several reasons.

Let us suppose for a moment that the "Christ living in her" did indeed appear in this form in what was a genuine mystical experience. At the very least, we could assume this was a sign that, at the end of her journey, Maria had finally attained inner transformation and rebirth. As the living image of Christ, she had been changed into his likeness and in a moment of intense prayer, a reflection of their union appeared in a distinct form, in which she saw both him and herself. This luminous image being that of a child.

Now the child, according to Carl Jung, can represent just such a synthesis of the Self, or the total personality. It is what he would call a "reconciling symbol." Maria's vision is a wonderful testimony to her embrace of the "other"

after a very long plunge into the dark night when the Bridegroom seemed absent. The apparition of the masculine principle ("animus") points to Maria's own fullness, her integration of what she had throughout her life experienced in conflict. For the "child" means "all that is abandoned and exposed, and at the same time divinely powerful; the insignificant, dubious beginning, and the triumphal end" (*Collected Works 9i: 300*).

Hence, she seems to have achieved at this point an integration of the opposites which she struggled with, for example, liberty versus obedience; self-confidence versus self-doubt; hope versus despair, initiative versus dependence, courage versus anxiety, strength versus weakness, and many others. All those things her "man with heart" guided her to resolve and imaged himself, but which ultimately only her relationship with the Beloved could completely unite—as, of course, is true with us all.

Finally, Merlini's own encomium is enshrined in the oration he preached on the occasion of Maria's funeral. He spoke of her as a strong woman, a tireless worker, a mirror of Christian virtues, an ornament of the Church... a woman of talent and genius, of charity and sweetness, strong and kind, wise and alert, joyous, friendly and lively, compassionate, affectionate and loving; simple as a dove, prudent as a serpent, accurate in judgment; sensible, just in her principles, beautiful. In a word, you will find in her a mingling of qualities that will delight and charm you." (Cf. Merlini's *Lettere*, II, n. 400). To which I might add, "mingling" is exactly the right word.

Fr. John Colacino C.P.P.S. serves as provincial secretary of the Atlantic Province of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood and director of the Giano Mission House, Rochester, NY.

OUR APOSTOLATE



C.PP.S. MISSION PROJECTS has been deeply rooted in specific localities, above all by a significant presence in Tanzania for the past 50 years. Our projects have provided essential services such as clean water, education, healthcare, and sustainable development, focusing on marginalized communities.

The call to missionary discipleship, however, goes beyond geographical boundaries. We are being called to new horizons in response to the urgent needs of the Church. Rooted in the spirituality of the Precious Blood, C.PP.S. Mission Projects is now prioritizing evangelization, formation, and social development in underserved communities worldwide.

As we entrust the Tanzanian initiatives to local leadership, we remain committed to fostering new missionary endeavors that bring Christ's reconciling love to the margins of society.

Find us at
cppsmissionprojects.ngo.

WISE COUNSEL FROM BLESSED GIOVANNI MERLINI

"If we are still alive, it is by the grace of a kindly God who gives us a new opportunity to prepare ourselves for the great rendering of accounts."

"Internal and external travails are a hedge to the soul, like in a vineyard... Consider them this way and accept them in peace and humility: resignation, hence trust in God."

"One day we will understand the order God has maintained to lead us to salvation, and we will not cease thanking Him!"

"If your soul cannot find Jesus, just stay with Jesus. Those who are in a dark room do not see the companion, but they know he is there and that is enough for them not to be afraid!"

"One should abandon oneself totally to the divine will, not wanting to do anything if it is not what God wants. The afflictions, the perplexities, the agitations, and everything else, as long as they come with peace and are directed to the foot of the cross, it will go well..."

"As much as you can, promote mercy with its companions: **pitying, consoling, comforting, encouraging, helping, foreseeing...** and with this exercise say:
My God, deal with me mercifully as I strive to show mercy to others. In this, we will experience great comfort, and while examining ourselves, we will find that we have a heart for our neighbors."



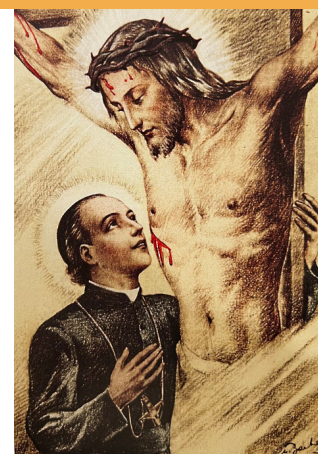
Unio Sanguis Christi

The Union of the Blood of Christ (Unio Sanguis Christi, USC) is the spiritual family fostered by the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, founded by St. Gaspar del Bufalo. Established by Fr. Francesco Albertini,

its aim is to promote devotion to the Blood of Christ. Members commit themselves to live and promote the spirituality of the Blood of Christ.

RULE OF LIFE Members follow a program of spirituality solidly based on the traditions of the Catholic Church. Motivated by the love of Christ, who died for us, rather than by any moral obligation, members practice a rule of life inspired by Christ's unselfish love. Conversion and reconciliation are ongoing processes fostered by an appreciation for the Word of God, nurtured by the Eucharist, and wrapped in a life of prayer.

HOW TO ENROLL Any practicing Catholic may become a member of the Union upon completion of a period of formation. For information on joining or starting the USC in your parish, please contact Fr. Gerardo Laguartilla, C.P.P.S., at uscatlanticprovince@gmail.com.



Mass Association

Since 1883, with the approval of Pope Leo XIII, the Missionaries of the Precious Blood throughout the world have offered 4,000 Masses annually for those enrolled in their Mass Association. Enrollments can be made on behalf of both the living and the deceased.

HOW TO ENROLL

In Person or by Mail: Shrine of St. Gaspar
540 St. Clair Avenue West, Toronto, ON M6C 1A4

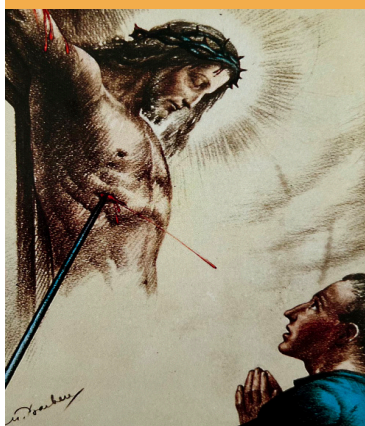
By Telephone: 416.653.4486

Online: Visit preciousbloodatlantic.org and click on 'Donations'.

Suggested Offering: \$25.00, plus \$4.00 postage if the Certificate is mailed.



Additionally, you can request a single Mass or make a donation to support the spirituality of the Precious Blood and the work of the Missionaries by completing the required fields on the website.



Vocations

The Missionaries of the Precious Blood continue St. Gaspar's Ministry of the Word by preaching renewal and conversion through missions and retreats. We bring the love of God to parishes, schools, hospitals, and prisons.

As missionaries, we work where the Church needs us most and where the Good News has not been heard. We walk with Jesus by sharing the joys and sufferings of the people with whom we work.

For more information, please contact Precious Blood Vocations at 705.507.4288 or email preciousvocations@gmail.com.

THE PRECIOUS BLOOD FAMILY

100 Pelmo Crescent

North York, ON M9N 2Y1 Canada

info@preciousbloodatlantic.ca

www.preciousbloodatlantic.org

416.656.3054



PIETÀ

BY ANTONIO SELVAGGI

Hail Mary, from where does your grace come?
Transfigure my marble heart, transfixed as I am in you.
Overwhelmed am I by your mysteries,
I fail to comprehend:

He who is Mighty, you swaddled in your womb.

He who created you, you bore unto death.

He who is the first fruit of your womb, you let slip from your fingers.

He who did his Father's work in the temple perplexed you.

He who obeyed father and mother you pondered over.

He who took on the scourge of our sins no evil could harm.

When smeared with his own blood, you retreated anonymously.

When he spoke to you of adoption, you stood in silence.

When he cried out with a loud voice, you cried not.

He who was laid in a manger lay dead on your lap.

He who assumed your body into heaven,
his body you offered in sacrifice.

He who was crowned King with jagged thorns
gently crowned you Heavenly Queen.

Mother of all graces, how can this be?

Mystified am I by your melancholy eyes divine.

She replied:

He who is mighty has done great things for me,
and holy is his name. (Lk 1.49)

ANTONIO SELVAGGI RESIDES IN TORONTO, CANADA