







FR. LUIGI GUANELLA
THE MOUNTAIN PRIEST
FATHER OF THE POOR



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FR. LUIGI GUANELLA
A PRIEST FROM THE MOUNTAIN
FATHER OF THE POOR

Portrait of a saint







“We remember the humble priest, *the priest from the mountain*, as some still like to call him, no one would know whether to characterize more his evangelical simplicity or his amazing stamina [...] He looked up to heaven and smiled at the earth, a unique figure of ascetic and apostle...

The poor *priest from the mountain* – as he liked to call himself – fiercely persecuted when he was young was filled with zeal for the apostolate he had dreamed of bringing souls to God by lifting them out of human poverty. Once his Institutions began to prosper and bear fruit, the same priest was loved by his Superiors, Pastors, Bishops, and even by Popes.”¹

PRESENTATION

“In Christ we were given all the revolutionary novelty of the Gospel: that is the love which saves us and gives life a foretaste of eternity”. These words by Pope Benedict XVI indicate that a holy person offers our sometimes tired and disheartened eyes, the luminous witness of a fragment of Heaven.

On the eve of the canonization of Blessed Louis Guanella, this publication aims to retrace his steps on the path to evangelical holiness and to propose themes for reflection to stimulate our modern awareness in order to cultivate the seeds of eternity in our times.

Bishop Diego Coletti of Como took part in a study and planning meeting (Rome, September 6, 2010) of the Committee for Canonization. Among the many precious aspects of the multifaceted figure of this saint from Lombardy, he identified those which make his charism and spirituality shine, modern and prophetic, in today’s world.

The chosen themes formulated in this text, are in continuity with and are presented as a development of the thoughts that Pope Paul VI outlined in his speech for the beatification on October 25, 1964.

The Pope wondered what the vein of holiness in this mountain priest could be. He discovered that his charitable achievements were the fruit of a vital energy that sustained him in his tireless pilgrimages among the encampments of the marginalized. The soul of his holiness was weaving *“a marvelous story of charity, working through mercy;”* his dynamism was sustained by *“great piety, by assiduous prayer, in an effort to be in continuous communion with God.”*



This is the unifying principle of all Fr. Louis Guanella's good works and he himself repeated it as a synthesis of the canticle of the Magnificat, "*It is God who does.*" It is He who fills life with ideals, it is He who in the tunnel of incomprehension provides the courage to persevere; it is He who, in the desert of material poverty, "*fills the starving with good things,*" and it is He who in the incomprehension of human beings preserves their faith in the covenant of love.

This publication aims to be of service to those who hold it in their hands; it presents an urgent need: to recover the unity of individuals, because it is only in the Gospel commandment that life finds its fullness. To love God and to love one's neighbor are the rails of communion. Our society seems to have derailed. In many parts of the world the "death of God" is being talked and sung about and in many of our social milieus people live as if "there is no God."

With the death of God our neighbor is also dying and it is precisely in this desert that a saint feels the need to give back to God the possibility of making his dream of mercy come true for the new poor in body and in soul.

Fr. Guanella waited a long time for a guiding star to appear on his path. He called it "*the hour of mercy*" This hour was the starting signal, the invitation to cut the moorings and start out on the great adventure of charity. And the "*hour of mercy*" came when he was forty. In those years, God Himself, through a multitude of experiences, both joyful and painful, modeled the spirit of this valiant man. He had conquered his heart, his soul, all his energy and his mind. From this divine richness, in the most radical way, Fr. Guanella's passion blossomed for the poor and the needy, who are nothing other than the face of God Himself, veiled by suffering and discomfort.

His expression "*I cannot stop while there are poor people to be saved,*" was the fire in his veins that brought him close to the poor and made him fearless and courageous in the face of the



difficulties he encountered. Luke-warmness and mediocrity were unknown to him, *“What does it matter to be imprisoned for the poor, for the cause of the poor? One would become a martyr!”*

His passionate wanderings in the streets of the marginalized poor relegated him to being among those who acted without criteria, embarking on risky adventures. His friendship with Blessed Cardinal Ferrari and the fatherly support of St. Pius X illuminated the horizons of his charitable work and strengthened him on the arduous path to holiness.

Pope John Paul II, as he crossed the threshold of the third millennium, asked the Church to set the barque afloat and to put out into the deep to feel the pulse of the world, *“to have your answer ready for people who ask you the reason for the hope that you all have”* (1 Pt 3:15).

People in our day live with their eyes lowered to the ground, with narrow horizons. When the longing for God is extinguished in hearts, the source of love also dries up and a new evangelization, the attempt to reawaken the desire for beauty and spirituality, becomes urgent.

The gratitude of the entire Guanellian Family goes to the priests, sisters and Guanellian collaborators who have compiled this “chronicle of God’s marvels,” as a prophecy for our times.

The authors have sought to describe the coordinates of the holiness lived by Fr. Guanella in the conviction that he cannot be betrayed by relegating his charism and his mission to a library shelf; rather, they must be embodied in our times, so as to become an extension of him within us: us too, holy like him!

Their study concerns the most sensitive points of the Guanellian charism for today.

In response to the absence or impoverishment of spirituality in our epoch, they portray Fr. Guanella as a “Man of God.”

The spreading poverty in the contemporary world receives consolation and hope because Fr. Guanella, “Father of the poor,” urges us to “*cradle in our heart human wretchedness so as to provide for it.*”

The phenomenon of globalization can discover in Fr. Guanella, “Citizen of the world,” an inspiring model for seeking the common good, the good of all.

The educational emergency that characterizes our times can find in the witness of Fr. Guanella, the “impassioned educator,” energy and vigor to rediscover that education is first and foremost the work of the heart.

These are themes of yesterday for the complexity of today, but the 2000-year history of the Church is marked by the continuity of the witness and of the Christian culture passed on by the saints.

The priest from Lombardy sought to “*illuminate minds and strengthen hearts,*” and to help people to recover the primacy of God so that individuals might return to the center of the stage in the life of the community and feel that they were accepted, loved, supported, understood and also forgiven. Each of his acts of charity bore the seal of attention to the person’s dignity, especially when the individual’s rights had been violated. He was not a theoretician of human rights but acted practically on behalf of people, implementing efficient pedagogical paths that created well-being and joy of life even for the most suffering and those marked by illness, for the elderly and for those who were physically or mentally handicapped.

He stood before the poor with a clear vision of faith: every creature bears the imprint of the image and likeness of the Creator, “*How can one believe that God’s image is sculpted on the foreheads of the poor and not run to help them, to serve them?*”

Fr. Louis Guanella is certainly not a saint to be set in a niche. He is a priest of the streets who challenges us and tells us to pay attention to the fragments of goodness present in every-

one we meet, because those fragments, enhanced by divine grace and healed by patient, loving care, can prove useful in transforming individuals into a “cathedral of God.”

In entering the third millennium, Pope John Paul II wondered, “*Can holiness ever be planned?*” Holiness is as necessary as breathing; for Christians, baptism means aiming for holiness, setting before them “*the radical nature of the Sermon on the Mount: Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect*” (*Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 31).

Still today in the title of one of his small ascetic works Fr. Louis repeats to us, “*Let us go to the Father;*” may you follow without fear and with so much love the path of the Gospel Beatitudes.

This publication is offered to all people “of good will” in the hope that it will reawaken in them the desire to walk on the path of holiness with greater fervor, following in the footsteps of Fr. Louis Guanella; and that it will foster generous feelings for the civil and moral growth of the People of God, so that the future may evolve following an agenda of hope and that the expectations of the poor may become understandable and achievable.

General Postulator
Fr. Mario Carrera

Rome, February 21, 2011



PREFACE

FATHER GUANELLA, A SON OF THE CHURCH OF COMO

One after another, we have followed with sincere trepidation the steps in the process that have led to the canonization of Blessed Louis Guanella, a son of the Church of Como, the first saint of our diocese in modern times.

The authorization issued by the Holy Father Benedict XVI arrived at the end of the Year for Priests and I shall never tire of recalling how important it is for all of us – priests, religious and lay people – to look at the luminous figure of Fr. Louis Guanella. He is an example to follow, a witness of genuine charity, of a Gospel transparency lived in love and with attention given freely to his brothers and sisters, especially the most vulnerable.

During his life, the saint was able to make choices that were to be “forever” and in this period when there is a strong focus on the “educational challenge,” I am pleased to stress his capacity to be with people, supporting them, helping them on their path while seeking something for which it was worth putting himself at stake. This also seems to me a happy coincidence: the canonization of Fr. Louis precisely at the beginning of the decade that the Italian Church is dedicating to the theme of education, choosing a precise path: “To educate in the good life of the Gospel” – an action about which Guanella has much to tell us. We read in no. 34 of the Pastoral Guidelines of the Italian Episcopal Conference 2010-2020: *“In the educational work of the Church, the primary role of witnessing emerges clearly, because ‘modern man listens more willingly to witnesses*

than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are credible and coherent witnesses of the Word they proclaim and live' (cf. Evangelii Nuntiandi, 41)."

This is the distinctive trait and the greatness of Guarella: being a credible and consistent witness of a Word he proclaimed by living it – a witness we listen to and follow willingly. With superabundant generosity he invested his time, skill and resources to give hope to the brothers and sisters he met daily and in every kind of situation. With his own life he helped others to change their lives for the better.

For the Church of Como, this canonization is an event of great joy and of justifiable satisfaction. Fr. Louis lived, to the full, a sense of belonging to the diocese, in a territory like ours which still today – in an epoch when travelling, communicating and meeting are after all easy and accessible to all – he did not hide his rich and solid heterogeneity. But for him distances did not exist, there was no difference between the sparse pastures of the Valchiavenna, the marshy areas of the Pian di Spagna, the rural areas of the mountains or of the upper part of the lake, or the noble city of Como... For him what counted was the human being with his dignity, his heart, his faith and his weakness. In Fr. Louis's eyes everyone was equal – the poor and the rich, the sick and the healthy... Indeed, as we have already said and as we well know, he embodied perfectly the teachings of Jesus: those who for others were the last, were for him the first, those to be cherished. His sensitivity led him to develop acute and brilliant responses to situations of difficulty and hardship: methods of formation, courses of rehabilitation, activities and jobs that are still valid today and represent an invaluable and irreplaceable contribution to the welfare of society.

He was a man of a highly refined intelligence and with many interests. Proofs of this are his involvement in promoting the construction of the beacon on the Brunate Hill of Como in

honor of Alessandro Volta; his friendship with Fr. Gemelli; his ability to fire up hundreds of collaborators and cooperators with his enthusiasm; his passion for discovery and knowledge; his sensitivity to pilgrimages (with a special love for the Holy Land where the Houses named after him are oases of peace, dialogue, coexistence and formation).

He was a humble man, who knew how to listen to those who were beside him (just think of Blessed Clare Bosatta and Sr. Marcellina).

He was a very modern man who saw no limits to the world: it is significant that the miracle which led to his canonization happened in the United States.

Let us look to him; to his capacity for prayer, listening and contemplation; to his complete trust in God in the centrality of the Eucharist; to his devotion to Mary.

Our diocese has the happy and demanding responsibility for safeguarding, increasing and making known the beauty and depth of the Guanellian message that consists of concrete acts of love rather than of words.

+ *Diego Coletti*, Bishop of the Diocese of Como

Como, January 18, 2011







PART I
IN THE BACKGROUND







Fr. Louis Guanella lived through a large part of the second half of the nineteenth century, a period marked by profound social transformations which affected his human development, his path to faith and his vocation to serve the poor.

It would be difficult to describe his personality and the original aspects of his journey to holiness without a look, however brief and cursory, at the historical, social and ecclesial context in which he achieved his splendid witness as a man of God, a father of the poor, a citizen of the world and an impassioned educator.

1. The Historical Context

Louis was born on December 19, 1842 in Fraciscio, a small town with about 240 inhabitants located in the upper Valle Spluga, in the Lombardo-Venetian Kingdom, dependent on the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Today it is an outlying district of the municipality of Campodolcino, in the Province of Sondrio, in the Region of Lombardy, Italy.

The taking of the Bastille (Paris, July 14, 1789) marked the end of the absolute power of monarchs and the beginning of the French Revolution, of the historical phenomenon that was to be widely influential on all future history, not only in France but throughout Europe. Historians maintain that this event changed the course of history because it marked the affirmation of human rights, summed up in the three famous words,

“liberty, fraternity, equality” (*Declaration of Human and Citizens’ Rights*, 1789). It led governments to transform the organization of states, until then substantially monarchic, giving birth to the “constitutional state,” a state founded on a “constitution,” a charter of rights and duties of its citizens, and on the distinction between legislative, judicial and executive powers for a better regulation of social life.

With a closer look at these changes, one cannot fail to see that the ideas introduced and promulgated by the French Revolution were already present in the famous “*Declaration of Independence*,” proclaimed a few years earlier in Philadelphia, in the United States of America; however, unlike the Americans who developed these values from the humus of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, in France these same values were anchored in human reason.

These new ideas of freedom caused important upheavals in the geopolitical organization of Europe because they led to bloody civil wars in almost all the states and fomented an ever increasing aversion to the Church, the Pope and religion in the name of positivistic reason (the “goddess” Reason). This was the beginning of secularism, the distancing from Christian values, a phenomenon that characterizes Western European society today.

After the fading of the bright star of Napoleon Bonaparte, the great protagonist of the Revolution, the sovereigns of the European states met in Vienna at an historic Congress (October 1814 – June 1815) to endeavor “to restore,” namely, to bring back the geopolitical situation of the past and to stamp out the new revolutionary ideas, considered a threat to social stability.

The actual result was the creation of a compromise between new and old political and social ideas. In particular, the relationship between Church and State became ambivalent. The State controlled the appointment of bishops, from time to time

issuing an *Exequatur* (authorization); it considered parish priests as its own “civil servants;” it classed religious Orders as “useful” and “not useful” to social progress; it defended the privileges of the clergy; it assumed the organization of educational establishments, even if in fact, these remained in the hands of the clergy.²

This political change, defined by historians as the “Restoration,” lost its consistency and vigor as years went by and everywhere in Europe the ideals of the French Revolution flourished.

In Italy it gave rise to the “Risorgimento,” in other words the historic phenomenon that led to the Unification of Italy, the political unification of the many States into which it was divided and to the birth of the Italian State (1848-1870). Bloody wars of independence were fought to liberate the northern regions from Austrian occupation and to unite the north to the south, which until then had been geographically separated by the Pontifical or Papal State(s). The first war of independence took place in 1848; the second (1859-1860) led to the birth of the Italian State. The third war of independence took place in 1870 and culminated with the taking of Porta Pia³ and the fall of the Pontifical State; in fact, it marked the end of the temporal power of the Pope and the redimensioning of the Pontifical State to the proportions of the present-day Vatican City State.

In the course of these wars of independence thousands of human lives were lost; violence, wretchedness and suffering of all kinds, as well as serious social problems, were recorded.

It was also a period of bewilderment and confusion. Among Catholics, opposing movements of thought and action emerged: the “Intransigents,” who defended the temporal power of the Pope and the “Liberals,” who instead, fought for the independence of the State from the Church.⁴

In these rapid political changes in the Italian scene, the

Guanella family was a paradigm. Fr. Guanella's grandfather Tomaso was born Swiss under the domination of the Grisons; his son Lorenzo, Fr. Louis father, was born under the government of the Cisalpine Republic under Napoleon's rule; the grandchildren, including Louis, were born under the Austrian government, except for Gaudenzio who was born in 1849, in a tumultuous pause of Italian freedom; the great grandchildren were born Italian citizens. It is rare that in one family four successive generations should be born under the flags of as many different nations.

2. The Social Context

The birth of the Italian State was proclaimed on March 17, 1861. The new rulers had to face serious problems: uniting the intentions of the Italians ("*Now that Italy is made, we have to make the Italians*") and to provide economic, industrial, infrastructural development to the entire territory of the new state. It was necessary to fight ignorance and illiteracy; to improve the social conditions of the citizens; to care for health, rendered precarious by frequently insufficient and often inadequate hygiene and sanitary conditions. Brigands, present in vast areas of Italy, had to be eliminated; the budget had to be balanced. Above all it was necessary to resolve the complex "southern question" (to improve the disastrous economic situation that had been created in the southern regions following the Unification) and the "Roman Question" (the temporal power of the Pope), which had massive repercussions on the Italian population that was closely bound to the Catholic Church.

The economic situation was extremely problematic due to the serious agrarian crisis; the phenomenon of emigration to the Americas was very strong (between 1861 and 1905 about

20% of the Italian population migrated to England, to the United States and to South America).

The second half of the nineteenth century was also characterized by a “great” industrial revolution; in the factories and companies steam-powered machines were installed to facilitate and multiply the production of goods. If on the one hand this phenomenal technical progress accelerated the process of industrialization, on the other, unfortunately, it fuelled unemployment because the use of machines gradually eroded the demand for manual labor. Combined with other factors, the industrial revolution consequently provoked profound discontent among workers, who set about defending their rights. It was in this context that the trade unions and other bodies for the protection of workers’ rights emerged.

Technological and scientific progress made giant steps, which determined continuous changes in the daily lives of Italians. New means of transport were introduced: trains, steamships, motorcars, airplanes and trolley buses. With the discovery of electric energy, lighting systems in houses and cities changed. There were gramophone players, radios and steel, which revolutionized the construction of buildings and bridges. The sector of transport and communication registered important innovations: the opening of canals, tunnels, and roads that speeded up the movement of people and goods, and as a result, cultural exchanges. Communication became faster with the invention of typewriters, rotary printing presses, the telephone and the cinema. Public administrations provided towns with sewers, drinking water, the electricity grid, sanitary services and garbage disposal. The large cities were transformed by town planning: the large bourgeois districts were contrasted by sprawling suburbs, often squalid, poor and disreputable.

These were important inventions that transformed the lives of the citizens and fostered a new awareness of the greatness of

mankind, but they also created profound imbalances between the social classes. It is not surprising, therefore, that in the second half of the nineteenth century, especially in Italy, many male and female religious congregations were founded that were dedicated to serving the poor and destitute in various fields of mission: instruction, health, education, professional work and the family.

3. The Ecclesial Context

Even before the Unification of Italy and throughout the Risorgimento, the policies of the House of Savoy⁵ were marked by a strongly anticlerical position, supported by Liberal and Republican circles. The anticlerical policy was in fact the only point held in common between heterogeneous political groups (Liberals, Mazziniani, Free Masons, Garibaldini...). The slogan "*Libera Chiesa in Libero Stato*" (Free Church in a Free State) was launched; however, only liberal individuals were free, not the Church as a community, as a "body." Indeed, all public religious processions and any form of ownership of assets on the part of religious bodies, whose legal personality had been removed (Law of the Confiscation of Ecclesiastical Assets 1866-67; Law of the Suppression of Religious Institutes, 1866), were prohibited.

Following the Breach of Porta Pia (1870) relations between the Church and the Italian State became incandescent and the consciences of Catholics were severely put to the test by unpopular measures and laws, such as the abolition of the exemption from military service for seminarians (1875), the abolition of religious oaths in tribunals (1876) and the suppression of religious education in state schools (1877).

The State granted freedom of religious practice to all its citizens, introduced civil marriage (1866), suppressed ecclesias-

tical immunities, started the civil register and introduced compulsory schooling (Casati Law 1864). It imposed the *Exequatur* for the appointment of bishops and parish priests. These decisions gradually led to the estrangement of the Catholic masses from the Liberal government.

For her part, the Church forbade Catholics to participate in political activity and in elections (*non expedit, it is not proper*), thus showing a certain displeasure with the new measures which in the following years were also accepted by the Catholic world. Pope Pius IX rejected the *Legge delle Guarentigie*⁶ (the Law of Guarantees) by which the Italian State wished to repair the separation of the Church after the taking of Porta Pia, considering it unilateral; his successor, Leo XIII, did the same.

In spite of all this, the Catholic world was able to organize itself and in 1874 in Venice it started the *Opera dei Congressi*, that is the assembly of all the Catholic associations operating in the social, economic and religious sectors, with the aim of defending the rights of the Church, promoting Catholic charitable works, coordinating activities promoted by these associations and encouraging the formation of Catholic workers' associations for mutual support and rural savings banks. These ideas were legitimized by Leo XIII's Encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1891).

4. Father Guanella and His Time

In summing up the influences Louis Guanella received from the historical, social and cultural context in which he grew up and achieved not only his charitable works but also his personal journey to sainthood, we can say that:

- he countered the attempts to distance God and the faith from human hearts (secularism) with the firm certainty that God is a Father for us, who watches over our steps and sur-



rounds us with love through His Providence.

- he reacted to the anticlericalism and the atmosphere of aversion to the Church, with active charity, showing that the Church is a caring mother, expert in humanity and able to assume the joy and hope of mankind.

- he was able to unite, with trust in scientific and technological progress, wise actions of sensibility and of thought with the intention of showing that the dignity of human beings, above all else, is inherent in their being children of God.

These luminous certainties of faith gave rise to his passion for the poor and his tireless work in their favor: to improve their living conditions, to assure “*Bread and the Lord*” to all, rolling up his sleeves and acting *ante litteram*, thus anticipating what we now call, in modern terms, “the principle of assistance and solidarity.”





“The summit of your mountain is sublime, because from there you are better able to contemplate Paradise. The depth of your valley is sacred, because in the seclusion of solitude we learn to love the Lord and our brothers better...”

(L. Guanella, *The Mountaineer*, vol. 4, p. 4)



“Behold the longing of the mountaineer, ‘My hometown is dearest to me’. His village costs him sweating labor, but this is the reason for him to love it more.”

(L. Guanella, *The Mountaineer*, vol. 4, p. 6)





“When Father Louis gets a little nervous, he humbly replies with a smile, ‘Remember that I was born close to the Rabbiosa Torrent’.”

(L. Mazzucchi, *Fragmenta Vitae and Dictorum*, 16)



“Do you remember when you tended your flock as a little shepherd? You often thought of your father and home...your mind longed for your father, your heart was filled with emotions, and tears flowed as rivers from your eyes. To stop crying you shouted, ‘Dad is at home... Soon I will see my beloved father’.”

(L. Guanella, *Let Us Go to the Father*, vol. 3, p. 14)





“Providence had chosen and guided us. He granted me virtuous parents that instilled in me a spirit of hard work and sacrifice. From them I learned to keep busy all the time.”

(L. Mazzucchi, *Fragmenta Vitae and Dictorum*, 38, May 26, 1915)



“Father Louis strongly believed that his sister Catherine was inspiring and cooperated with him in his ministry of charity. When overwhelmed by constant trials, his mind unconsciously recalled his sister, and a special comfort ensued to go on in the journey he had begun.”

(L. Guanella, *Unpublished note*, Rome, February 8, 1909)



“Dear people of Fraciscio... to us St. Rocco recalls our church and our priest. He represents our village, the chain of our mountains, our small world, and our affection to prayer, faith and family peace. Pray for me, for I am brother of yours. Father Louis Guanella.”

(L. Guanella, *Fourth Centennial of the Transfer of the Body of St. Rocco*, vol. 1, p. 619)



Fraciscio –
Family home





Vision of the Old Man at Campodolcino. Fresco by Conconi, St. Rocco Church, Fraciscio.



On the Windy Plateau at Gualdera. Fresco by Conconi, St. Rocco Church, Fraciscio.







Part II
In the foreground





1. Under the Wings of Providence

Louis Guanella was born on December 19, 1842 in Fraciscio di Campodolcino, surrounded by beautiful and rugged mountains that were to accompany him from childhood to the hardships of life. His parents were Lorenzo Guanella and Maria Bianchi, a rural family of which Louis was the ninth of thirteen children. Among his childhood companions a special place was reserved for the Rabbiosa torrent that flowed at the foot of the village; with Caterina, his favorite sister, he would go out not far from the house and make mud pies in bowls, playing at “making soup for the poor.”⁷

When he was seven years old, Louis had a vision which was almost a prediction of the path he was to follow throughout his life: near the parish church of Campodolcino, an old man appeared to him and asked him for the sweets he had in his hand, then disappeared. This vision made him panic and filled him with regret. It was to remain a secret which he only spoke many years later, towards the end of his life on earth.

In the spring of 1852, on the day of his first Communion, in the solitude of the heights of Gualdera, he had another vision. This time it was of the beautiful Lady, Our Lady, who spoke to him and recommended that he devote his life to the needy.

In 1854, at the age of twelve, he left Fraciscio and went to the Collegio Gallio in Como where he studied for six years. Although he was later to speak with gratitude of his teachers and professors, he spent his first period at the college nostalgic for the mountains and his birthplace. At the end of his secondary education, he entered the diocesan seminary at St. Abondio to study philosophy. This was followed by theological studies at the Major Seminary.

On May 26, 1866 Bishop Bernardino Maria Frascolla of Foggia, condemned by the Italian Government to compulsory residence in Como, ordained him a priest and exhorted him “with words of fire” to be courageous and enterprising. Years later in his booklet *“Il Montanaro,”* referring to himself, he wrote that his plan on that solemn day was to *“be a sword of fire in the holy ministry.”*⁸

A few days later he celebrated his first Mass in the Church of S. Maria Assunta in Prosto, in the presence of his parents, brothers and sisters; the following year (1867) he was sent to carry out his priestly duties in Savogno, a small village at an altitude of about one thousand meters in the mountains of the Valle Bregaglia. With the help of his sister Caterina, he stayed there for eight years, sparing no effort to help his people, becoming “everything for everyone.”

In 1875, he asked the bishop, and obtained permission to join Fr. John Bosco in Turin, from which he acquired *“an experience useful to his own projects.”*⁹ Don Bosco entrusted him with various responsible tasks and would even have liked to send him on a mission to Latin America but Fr. Louis was too focused on his desire to work for the people of his valley, to found his own institute, and he regretfully declined the offer from the Turin saint.

When he left the Salesians he returned to his diocese and was sent by the bishop to Traona, a village in the lower Valtellina; there he was parish vicar for three years and, in 1880,

opened a college for the poor children of the valley. Unfortunately, his project was opposed by both the archpriest and the Prefect of Sondrio and the following year he was forced to close it.

After this experience, which must certainly have been traumatic, in August 1881 the bishop asked Fr. Louis to go for a while to the parish of Olmo, a tiny village in the Valle S. Giacomo. Here, Fr. Louis spent months in loneliness and suffering,¹⁰ in interior purification and in prayer while waiting for Providence to show him which path to take in order to create some kind of institution,¹¹ for which he felt soundly called by God.¹²

In fact, in the autumn the bishop appointed him administrator of the Parish of Pianello Lario, where he remained for nine years and initiated his charitable works. The early days, however, were not the easiest; he found himself up against a wall of diffidence, “*A worry kept on bothering me: are you on the right path or off it? [...] I was not believed.*” A group of young consecrated women had founded a home in the village for the elderly and for abandoned children, with the support of the parish priest Fr. Carlo Coppini, who died earlier that year. Fr. Guanella wanted to take it over but the consecrated women were prisoners of prejudice, “He is a hot-head! Be careful!” With time, their initial diffidence changed into an ever more decisive and confident collaboration. This group also included two sisters, Clare and Marcellina Bosatta, the foundation stones of his charitable institutions. With them, Fr. Louis was to begin his mission to help the poor, the sick elderly and poor children. “*The hour of mercy*”¹⁴ had struck at last.

From Pianello Lario in April 1886 a small group of sisters and patients left for Como to open the House of Divine Providence on Via Tommaso Grossi, which is still the pulsating heart of the Guanellian Institute. And from Como the Insti-

tute branched out in many other institutions: in Milan, in the Veneto region, in Romagna, in Switzerland, in Pian di Spagna at the northern-most tip of Lake Como. There, in a center he called Olonio S. Salvatore, he established a home and an agricultural workshop for the “buoni figli,” good sons, as he affectionately called the mentally disabled.

In 1902 he made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land and, while traveling between Lebanon and Galilee, he prayed that one day his works could put down roots there too, in the land that had been the theater of Our Lord’s life.

When he returned to Italy, he set about obtaining approval from the Holy See for his Congregations and for the extension of his institutions. It was his dearest wish to reach Rome and, thanks to favorable coincidences disposed by Divine Providence to which he trustfully abandoned himself, his dream came true. In 1903 he entered the agricultural colony of Monte Mario. A few years later, in 1907, he acquired a part of the former convent attached to the Church of S. Pancrazio on the Janiculum Hill and opened an institute for elderly women and “buone figlie,” good daughters, which he dedicated to his great friend and protector, Pope St. Pius X. Also supported financially by the Pope, he settled in the crowded district of the Trionfale in 1909, where he built a church in honor of St. Joseph and began educational works.

1908 was an important year because with other confreres he made his first religious profession, thus founded the Congregation of the Servants of Charity, although the official approval from the Holy See didn’t come until a few years later, in 1912.¹⁵ In that same year (1908) he obtained the approval he hoped for the women’s Congregation of the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence from Rome.

Welcoming the calls of Providence, he opened institutions in southern Italy, at Ferentino, near Frosinone, at Laureana di Borello in Calabria and in Valtellina.

In the winter of 1912 he undertook a difficult voyage to the United States to prepare several institutions for the care of Italian immigrants and the following year he sent the first group of his Sisters there. Three years later he rushed to the rescue of earthquake victims of Marsica, in the Abruzzo mountains. In the Church-Shrine of S. Giuseppe al Trionfale, with the approval of St. Pius X, he founded the Pia Unione del Transito di S. Giuseppe, an association of believers who were given the task of praying that the dying might encounter death serenely. It was “*the crown of his Works.*”¹⁶

In September 1915 he was unexpectedly struck by paralysis from which he would not recover; these were his last days but his mountaineer’s spirit gave him the strength to encourage his confreres and his Sisters to work unsparingly, “*Charity in all things...It cannot finish as long as there are poor people to save and needs to be cared for... The whole world is your homeland!*”

On October 24, 1915 at Como, Fr. Louis Guanella ended his days on earth and returned to God, under the wings of whose Providence he had, compliantly and with firmness of intent, walked step-by-step as a true son of the mountains.

He was raised to the honors of the altar and beatified by Pope Paul VI on October 25, 1964 and Pope Benedict XVI will canonize him on October 23, 2011.

2. The Environment of His Formative Years

Louis Guanella spent his childhood and the first years of his ministry as a priest, apart from the “Salesian” parenthesis, in small mountain villages. The typical mountain environment influenced his personality and, indirectly, his progress to sainthood. His origins, his character, his sensitivities, his language and his concerns made him a thoroughbred man of the mountains; passionate about them, he always clung to them with his

whole heart, glad to have been born in the mountains and to have spent his early years there.

From the mountain environment Louis Guanella received a magnificent cultural heritage of thought and values, which had its fulcrum in a strong religious sense and its dominant points in a great spirit of sacrifice and sobriety, of practice in tenacity and work, in perseverance on the path “step-by-step,” in attachment to his own traditions, in a powerful family spirit and a genuine sense of belonging to the community.

3. Characteristic Traits of Father Guanella’s Holiness

“They say it is very difficult to become holy. But that is not true. Nothing impossible is asked of one in order to become holy. It is enough to do with a most holy intention all the deeds that pertain to one’s state.”¹⁷

“You, who have long been seeking advice to become holy, pray to be able to do all things in accordance with the divine will, because that is enough to make you a great saint.”¹⁸

These were the type of suggestions that Fr. Guanella would offer to those wishing to walk on the path to holiness and who turned to him for enlightened advice. There is no doubt that these suggestions reflect experiences that he himself lived. He progressed in holiness to the point of being proposed for the devotion of the whole Church, having aimed solely to fulfil God’s will in all his Christian activities, as a priest and as a religious.

a) Introduction

The saints are living pages of the Gospel of Jesus who is newly incarnate in every epoch. They are credible witnesses

who were able to combine the proclamation of the Word with concrete action. Their holiness is rooted in their awareness of being known and loved by God in the profound intimacy of their being and in allowing their hearts and minds to be opened by the grace of the Spirit that shone from the passion of the ideals that motivated their steps.

In the firmament of holiness, every star shines with its own reflected light. Benedict XVI, in his homily on the Solemnity of All Saints 2008 spoke of the Church as a “botanical garden”, where the Creator spread the variety of colours of holiness on the luminous faces of the saints. With eyes illuminated by faith *“the world appears like a garden where the Spirit of God,”* the Pope said, *“created with amazing fantasy a multitude of men and women saints, of all ages and social conditions, of all languages, peoples and cultures. Each one is different from the others, with the uniqueness of their own personality and of their own charism.”*

b) A Man, A Saint

Faced with the creative and multifaceted personality of Fr. Guanella, identifying his spiritual and specific charism is not simple; but we can follow the tracks that lead to the heart of his holiness. Its focal point lies in the way he related to life. In him, as in all the masterpieces of holiness, two dimensions were interwoven; the vertical and the horizontal.

The vertical dimension is represented by his relationship with God; a relationship lived in the recognition of His fatherhood and in his own filial attitude, in his awareness that *“It is God who does.”* Paul VI expressed it well in the speech for his beatification, *“Everything is God’s; the idea, the vocation, the capacity to act, the success, the merit, are all God’s and not man’s.”*

The horizontal, social dimension, of which the fabric of Guanellian holiness is woven, derived from his feeling that he was a “collaborator of God,” which led him to relate with every one of his needy neighbors, practised in the style of the Good Samaritan in the light and spirit of the Gospel Beatitudes. None of the states of frailty or poverty of men and women were foreign to him, because in each person he recognized the dignity of the Son of God and brotherhood.

Paul VI, in his acute and masterful speech on the day of the beatification, portrayed these two major directions in the filigree of Fr. Guanella’s life: an intimate path, modestly guarded, and a more visible route marked out by the flourishing of his works of charity. The religious direction drove him on towards God’s panorama “*to interpret, to execute and honor God’s will.*” His prayer was assiduous, his asceticism constant, an ever more intimate communion with God the Father, plunging to the abyss of humility until he could say truly, “It is God who does. Honor and glory to Him alone.”

Paul VI defined the lungs of his spiritual breathing in this quest for communion: tension and relaxation. The tension was his concern with spreading the Kingdom of the Father, which Paul VI characterized as, “*Perseverance, tenacity, energy, courage, a spirit of heroism, sacrifice.*” The relaxation was the broad, deep breath that opened the sails of the soul to the wind of the Spirit and with trust, allowed him to be guided by God. When God is at the helm, said Pope Montini, “*Nothing is fearful,*” “*trust is the true strength,*” every great work can be undertaken with “*the security – to the utmost risk – that Providence will not be lacking.*” For Fr. Guanella, “*strong, positive and loving trust*” in God’s Providence was the lynch-pin of his holiness and of his extraordinary and fruitful activity.

After these preliminary notes, we now present the more detailed main characteristics of Fr. Louis Guanella’s path to sanc-



tification. We do this from a special perspective; narrating how he became a saint, telling the story of how he achieved holiness, stressing the aspects that can involve us even today, living in an historic context so different from ours, yet not so very different.

Indeed, we offer here the aspects that make him feel close to us, even today; the aspects that can encourage us to follow in his footsteps, comforted by his witness, on our own personal and communal path to holiness in the world and the Church today.





'You have known a boy who said to his father, 'I would like to be a priest... I feel God calling me...' A few years later that boy re-entered his family as a newly-ordained priest and shepherd of people... Look at him! On his forehead is written, 'Sacred to the Lord.' The Lord called him and wants him to be His and yours. Pray for the priest of God.'

(L. Guanella, *Fifty Little Remembrances of Holy Missions*, vol. 1, p. 678)



Fr. Guanella on Lake Como. Fresco by Conconi, St. Rocco Church, Fraciscio.

“Fr. Guanella remembers very clearly that when crossing the lake in a little boat between Dervio and Olciasca, he looked toward the church of Pianello which he could not see distinctly. Fixing his eyes upon it, he experienced a light in his mind and a movement in his heart which seemed to say, ‘Look over there, because in that place you will work and have great satisfaction.’”

(L. Guanella, *The Ways of Providence*, vol. 4, p. 230)



MAN OF GOD

Did Fr. Guanella have his own spirituality? This is a question that implies an explanation; what do we mean by “spirituality?” Technically one could say that a person is spiritual who is able to establish a correlation between the natural and the supernatural, the human and the divine. More generally, spirituality is the concrete way in which persons live their relationship with themselves, others, the world and, most importantly, with God.

Fr. Guanella was a **Man of God**, he had a spirituality of his own because he conformed his thoughts and actions to God’s will, forming intimate convinced friendships with the saints by whose example he felt inspired.¹⁹ It was his personal conviction that man has always been the object of God’s love; by a singular gift with which God Himself had endowed him (*Rm 5:5*), divine love (*agape*), which is in the heart of man and manifests itself in his personal life story. This is the fulcrum of his spirituality; the certainty of being loved by God as by a tender father, **Fatherhood of God**.

For Fr. Guanella, God was the constant reference point, the horizon of his gestures, words and actions since his childhood in the family. Faith was the rock on which he based his daily life, in his moments of joy and trial. His faith had strong emotional connotations, *“The Lord observes you like a father who enjoys fixing his gaze on the face of his only son. From the features of the face the parent distinguishes both the past and recent experiences of his son. Sometimes he can even foresee his future*

actions. God the Father distinguishes all this perfectly in you, just as in a mirror held up to you, you yourself can discern the features of your own face."²⁰

His focus, therefore, was on letting himself be educated by God the Father, to conform his actions to His will, "*God uses the tenderness of a father with you, at all times and on every occasion educating His son. The Lord instructs you with the divine books of the Holy Scripture. He instructs you in holy prayer... He moves salutary thoughts in your spirit and in your heart firm intentions to do good... the Lord teaches you the most useful things in life.*"²¹ He let himself be educated showing an attitude of great openness and availability, compliance proper to one who feels he is a tenderly loved son. His spirituality was a characteristically **filial spirituality**; he lived "heart to heart" with God the Father, he felt enveloped by His gaze, "*The Lord observes you with sighs of love, better than a father who counts the heartbeats of his sleeping child.*"²² In his daily discernment he constantly referred to Him, "*Look continuously at your Father, see that He gives you bread to live, and just smile at Him with gentle affection.*"²³

In the Bible, Fr. Guanella discovered the true face of God the Father and in the light of the **Word of God**, he formed his vision of the world, man and history, "*The same thing happens to those who study the holy books as to those who mine a mountain. On the surface they find gold veins; as they go deeper they find seams of the purest gold.*"²⁴ "*He had such a concept of the Word of God that he never tired of preaching it,*" said the Servant of God, Bishop Aurelio Bacciarini in the canonical process for the recognition of his heroic virtues.²⁵ To his men and women religious he recommended, be "*as greedy as you can for the Word of God. Do not really tire of this because the Word of God does you much good, it instructs your mind, it strengthens your heart, it inspires your works. [...]. Why go to quench our thirst at rivulets, when we have the royal stream*



*flowing from that copious and crystal clear source, Holy Scripture, that never fails?*²⁶

In the Bible Fr. Guanella found the nourishment he needed for his **contemplation**, “*With a respectful hand I approach the books of the Scripture. Within is the Word of God. What luck for us! The Lord in His books sends us His letters and speaks to us heart to heart, as a father to a son.*”²⁷ To contemplate, in the Bible, is the ability to connect, unite and compose in unity the “puzzle” of life’s events; it is the ability to tie together the events of personal, communal history in a providential plan for salvation that God holds firmly in His hands. Like Mary, the listening Virgin, Fr. Guanella too strove to live in full harmony with God’s will; he treasured in his heart the words that came to him from God and, piecing them together like a mosaic, learned to understand them more fully. At the end of his long working days he liked to spend some time before the Blessed Sacrament to verify his life in the light of God’s plan and gather momentum for the following day; in **prayer**, which he considered as indispensable as the breathing that keeps us alive,²⁹ he learned to come to terms with God so better to come to terms with man.³⁰ He repeated, “*It is with the breath from the lips that material fire is lit and rekindled and it is with the spiritual breath of prayer that the fire of zeal and charity is rekindled.*”³¹ This was his way as a young priest in Traona, as a Founder in Como, where he had a little window specially made in his bedroom so that he could fix his gaze directly on the tabernacle. His contemplative dimension emerges in its full splendour especially if we set it alongside the figure of Blessed Clare Bosatta,³² whom he guided to evangelical perfection through prayer and mortification, the Way of the Cross and charitable service. It fills one with amazement that as the foundation of charitable institutions God should have chosen mystical souls.³³

From his contemplation of God and from His plan for sal-



vation he was able to draw nourishment and vigour to witness courageously to his faith, to defend its values, to combat its errors and to unmask the hypocrisies of a “*lying world*.”³⁴ He was a “**faithful servant**” of the Church, a strenuous defender of the Pope’s mission, even distributing through popular presses ascetic and moral pamphlets, after the pattern of the more well known ones of Fr. Bosco,³⁵ promoting the Catholic culture, the Christian vision of life, and the values of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He had courage to spare, but some mistook his courage for pig-headedness or stubbornness, a refusal of historical progress. Since his time in Savogno, at the beginning of his priestly ministry, he was labeled an “obscurantist,” that is, a person who opposed the spread of progress and any form of social and cultural innovation. By those who did not know him, and unfortunately by some members of the Church, who were not properly acquainted with him and also, unfortunately, by several exponents of the Church, he was known as a “hot-head,” merely because he had the fixed idea of doing good to all and did not tolerate dispute with the authority of the Church and the Pope. His courageous witness illuminates our minds and warms our hearts, men and women of the twenty-first century, living as we do in a climate of diffidence against the Christian message, of more or less veiled hostility to the Church and to the Pope, of moral relativism and of aversion to what the individual cannot autonomously decide.

This happens to all people of God, to **prophets**, who, even in the midst of the adversities of life, are able to remain completely faithful to Him, not betraying His love. Prophets, precisely because they are illuminated by the Word of God, can see beyond the curtain of daily events; they are able to recognize the signs of His presence even in the midst of clamor and confusion, sorrow and suffering. In the face of widespread evil they are not disoriented, but are able to appeal to the fidelity

of God, who never abandons man trapped in his own sin. They always inspire hope. Fr. Guanella was a sower of hope, with his life that was never compromised by banality, superficiality or luke-warmness; with his enveloping charitable action, with the ministry of the Word. His face always showed an enchanting serenity, radiating from the peace in his heart. He strove to instill in others this spiritual joy, constantly telling his Sisters and Priests, “*always be content in the Lord.*”³⁶

His desire **was to be in harmony with Divine Providence.** The world is continuously watched over by God, who not only maintains it in creation, but guides it in the achievement of His plan of love.³⁷ This “continuous” benevolence of the Father is Providence. Hence his invitation to live considering that “*God is present with us as with a child who keeps his eyes fixed on his father,*” saying, “*God sees me. God provides for His children.*”³⁸ Cradled in the fatherly arms of God, he abandoned himself to Him with great trust. This abandonment in God the Father was for Fr. Guanella his experience of Providence. In his writings he compares God’s tenderness, His provident love, with the sun “*which is in the middle of the sky and yet sends its light and warmth both to the mountains and to the plains, to the rocky coasts and to the sea, and looks upon all and at the same time shines its rays upon you, as though it had to provide for you alone. So just as the sun shines in every corner of the earth, you must remember that in every part of the world the Lord from above perceives you, to rescue you.*”³⁹

He felt moved by God’s Providence throughout his earthly existence; he did not take a step unless he felt deeply convinced of being “called” by God. Fr. Leonardo Mazzucchi, his first biographer, recalls, “*In establishing his works he always declared that he was obeying a divine call, and I still feel the vivid impression I had when, in December 1912, he sought to explain to us the reasons for his forthcoming trip to America and ended by saying, ‘And then there is the call!’ And he withdrew*

into himself without explaining it."⁴⁰ The call of Providence was the criterion that guided him in establishing his works; he was not self-seeking nor did he wish to make his dreams come true. He declared without hesitation, *"If I knew that my Work was not wanted by God, I would be the first to destroy it!"*⁴¹ Near the end of his life, looking back at his childhood, at his youth, at his early years as a priest, at his failures in Traona, at the initial struggle in Pianello Lario, at the years rich in satisfactions, he humbly recognized that he had been guided by Providence in it all. Indeed he wanted to entitle his autobiographical memoirs, *"Le Vie della Provvidenza,"* The Ways of Providence.

His trusting abandonment in God was not, however, a form of "quietism", he demanded a robust faith because, he said, *"the support God gives you is proportionate to the faith with which you pray to Him, so that if you make humble and fervent appeals, God the Father will hurry to help you."*⁴² **A faith of quality**, therefore, a far cry from sugar-coating and sentimentalism. His love of God was firmly rooted and based on his awareness that he had to play his own part, *"Until midnight I see to it and then I know that God sees to it."*⁴³ He gave numerous teachings along these lines, *"The limit of the Christian's power is marked by the strength and grace of the Almighty. God grants this strength and this grace in proportion to our co-operation."*⁴⁴

Fr. Guanella was **a man of broad views**, open to "earthly" realities and values. In regards to creation, he was optimistic, because creation is a fruit of God's fatherhood. But at the same time, he was not ingenuous, knowing the human heart well and knowing it has spoiled relations with other beings and with things, he said, *"You were born frail, because you are a child of parents sickened by sin. Time after time, since, by sinning, you returned to insults, you charged your spirit with affliction, your body with wounds."*⁴⁵ As regards the human being, he had a re-

alistic vision but without letting himself be drawn into pessimism, always remaining open to the supernatural dimension; man is indeed a sinner, but he has been redeemed, “recreated” by Grace. He can plunge into the pool of evil, but he can also raise himself to the sublime peaks of virtue, he is always able to accomplish miracles of good. He liked to repeat, “Remember that it was the Lord who drew you from nothing. Your beautiful soul resembles God, just as the beloved face of a son resembles the face of his father.”⁴⁶ “Only the Lord is without sin and without shortcomings of any kind. To do a bit of good to ourselves and to others we need to trust in man as man, that is little, frail and mortal.”⁴⁷

His conception of the causes of society’s downfall seems very up to date, “Lucifer and his companions in Heaven were wise. They lacked power, so they decided, ‘Let us fight God and do everything in the same way as the Most High.’”⁴⁸ And it is indeed man’s pride rebelling against his Creator which makes the world, “An ever-burning fire of concupiscence . . . , the darkness of interest . . . , a pestilential air of pride and vanity; it becomes a land of iniquity, a vale of tears, in which one must be on the alert and fear constantly the enemies that surround it.”⁴⁹

He had a great trust in man’s capacities, but also clear-mindedness about the **necessity for asceticism**. To renew the world and society, one must renew oneself, one must be reborn to new life every day like Jesus Christ, “In the old self there is pride of mind, there is the perversity of the heart; in the man regenerated by Jesus Christ there is humility of mind, there is charity of the heart. To see things as they are seen by God, the source of light and charity, and to emulate the resemblance, in this is the great daily, monthly, yearly struggle for the whole life of Christian humanity. We must never ever tire.”⁵⁰ From his early years as a priest he practised mortification, sacrifices, even in severe forms of penance (cilices). His spiritual baggage included the conviction that, “The first and greatest mortification is the exact

observance of the Rule itself and patient tolerance of one's daily crosses, humiliating oneself for one's own defects and showing compassion for those of others."⁵¹

Along this path, he guided several souls towards holiness, for whom he himself authored hagiographic writings for the edification of the people of God and to "hasten" the opening of canonical processes for their beatification including Sr. Clare Bosatta, Anna Succetti, his sister Caterina, Alessandrino Mazzucchi... A page of his autobiographical memoirs, written in his own hand,⁵² enables us to grasp the intensity of the ascetic commitment he exercised and exhorted, "*The foundation of the houses of divine Providence is for us the letter F repeated four times to say: fame, freddo, fumo, fastidi (hunger, cold, smoke, adversity). This letter, thus repeated four times with the spirit prepared to practice it according to faith and reason, constitutes the base of an upside down pyramidal stone that recalls the letter V and this letter V stands for victim. We need victims in everything, and we especially need victims in conformity with the great Victim of Calvary, to build towers of salvation for souls.*"

FATHER OF THE POOR

Aware that God is honored when the dignity of man is restored, Fr. Louis Guanella, from being a “man of God” became a “father of the poor,” that is, he translated his spirituality into action, transforming his filial relationship with God into brotherly solidarity with the poor. *“Times are stormy and we need to create within parishes various institutions for men, for women and for every need. They are leaven; God’s spirit is in them: they produce small examples of holiness that sanctify and save.”*⁵³

His century witnessed new ways of supporting human wretchedness; in the second half of the nineteenth century new religious families came into being that were dedicated to the apostolate of charity. His response to God’s call also became active, multifaceted and creative; he was able to bind together his **passion for God** and his **passion for the poor**. In 1892 the first issue of the bulletin of the Mother House in Como was published, *La Provvidenza*.⁵⁴ In it he said, *“in the house there are already poor people of every kind.”* From then on his priority was to *“show the world the facts, that God is with those who provide the solicitous care of a father for his children.”*⁵⁵

He undertook a long process of the discernment of God’s will and of the call of the Holy Spirit, committing himself to deciphering the multiple signs of the call he received, to purify the good intentions he bore in his heart and to keep himself available to letting Grace guide him. This availability was broad; with humility, but not without suffering, he accepted



his failures, his false steps when “*he thought he had Providence in his pocket,*”⁵⁶ waiting, until he was well into his forties, for the hour of mercy to strike. Through this inner work, he managed to clarify for himself that serving the poor was God’s heartfelt desire, even before it was his own personal plan of life, and that in fulfilling this desire of God the Father he would quench the thirst for happiness in his own heart.

From his faith, Fr. Guanella had a clear vision as regards humanity, *anthropology*. **Man is God’s work.**⁵⁷ By creating man in his own image and semblance, God wanted to place him at the summit of creation. Man is not an accident, but the marvelous work of God’s intelligence and goodness,⁵⁸ “*Man is intelligence incarnate.*”⁵⁹ Because of original sin, however, man is wounded and continues to bear the scars of this sin in himself.⁶⁰ The whole life and history of humanity is under the rebellious force and the wound of that first sin. God responded mercifully to man’s disobedience: by sending his own Son, Jesus Christ, to save him from death in sin.⁶¹ The tendency to evil endures in man in the form of temptation, passions and instincts, but, corroborated by Grace, he can choose to be on God’s side.

Jesus Christ came down from Heaven to restore the divine image and likeness to its original splendor. He revealed God’s plan to man, a plan of salvation.⁶² Thus man is called to welcome this plan, this vocation, and to commit himself with the best of his energies to putting it into practice.⁶³ The heart of the revelation brought by Jesus Christ is sonship with God; God is a Father of infinite tenderness; man can turn to Him as to a father. Indeed, like Jesus Christ, the beloved Son of the Father, every human being is called to walk to the Father, following the path of holiness, the Gospel Beatitudes. This uphill, strenuous and hazardous path leads to the summit if it is walked hand in hand with Christ, who never fails to encourage us, “*Let us go to the Father!*”⁶⁴ Man must entrust himself to this guide,



as to a brother and father, especially when the ascent becomes a way of the cross and entails dying to oneself to welcome the new life, the life of the Spirit.

In the light of Christian revelation, Fr. Louis developed his apostolate in the **defense of life**, of its inviolability, from conception to its natural end. He was able to see life in its depths and, to paraphrase *Evangelium Vitae*, we may say that he never gave in, disheartened in the face of those who were sick, suffering, marginalized or on the threshold of death.⁶⁵ He was convinced that human life participates in the life of God Himself, “*I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full*” (Jn 10:10). His mission among the poor was to act so that no one would be left behind in life,⁶⁶ so that life, even in its poorest manifestation, might be preserved from any form of aggression, material or ideological. To those who were following him, priests, sisters and lay co-operators, he would firmly point out that the supply of “*bread and the Lord should never be scant in our houses but of sufficient quantity*,”⁶⁷ meaning that human persons materially need bread, a roof and clothing, but they also need God. Without God, the lives of human beings, even when they are filled with every material good, would remain empty and meaningless. Indeed, individuals bear within them an innate desire to relate with God,⁶⁸ in accordance with St. Augustine’s experience, “*You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart has no peace until it rests in you.*”⁶⁹

One of the pillars on which his mission of charity rested was the awareness that helping the poor was helping God Himself, as Jesus taught, “*In so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me!*” (Mt 25:40). His eyes were able to **see Jesus in the poor**, “*The most abandoned of all, bring him in, sit him at your table and make him yours, because he is Jesus.*”⁷⁰ He was attracted by the suffering, by the sick, by the abandoned, by the destitute, by all those marked by non-beauty because they bore the stigmata of the Crucified Jesus.

He called them “*treasures*,”⁷¹ comparing them to the biblical figure in Psalm 22, “*Here am I, now more worm than man*,”⁷² and therefore to the “*suffering servant*” of Isaiah (*cf. Is 42; 49; 50; 52-53*); and hence to Jesus in his condition as victim, offered for the redemption of the world. For this reason, the charitable service that Fr. Guanella developed, “*especially for the poor children of the people, for the elderly poor of the people*,”⁷³ was the main road to his sanctification, to his becoming a saint, to his being a saint. His service for the poor, expressed at levels ever closer to God’s style, sanctified him, turning him into the image, frail and weak, yet nevertheless the image of the One who is Holy. For Fr. Guanella, the service of charity was not only the place where holiness is expressed, but also the place in which holiness comes into being and matures; holiness develops in and with charity.

Fr. Guanella’s **great heart** made no classification, formulated no definitions, but welcomed the poor in all their conditions; he saw their neediness both at the spiritual and the material level, with the sensitivity and intuition that only a loving heart can have. On his visit to the mentally disabled at the Casa S. Giuseppe in Via Aurelia Antica in Rome, on March 28, 1982, Pope John Paul II spoke these moving words to the Guanelians, “*A special charity is required, a heroic charity in order to love these unfortunates, these mentally-retarded, these spastics, many of whom we see in this house. It is easy to love visible beauty; it is difficult to love in the absence of beauty. To discover beauty beneath its lack, beneath its opposite, a particularly acute, penetrating, especially great and unique charity is necessary. This was the path followed by Fr. Guanella, this is your path.*”

He set so few limits on taking people in that many never ceased to suggest to him that he “put some order” in that sort of Noah’s ark which was his first foundation, the Casa della Provvidenza in Como. He managed to put it into order in his own way, not by reducing the number of people he took in,

but by organizing the poor into “families,” along the lines of what he had seen in the better known Little House of Divine Providence in Turin, founded by St. Joseph Benedict Cottolengo.

In addition to calling them “*treasures*,” he liked to refer to the poor as “*masters*,” sacraments of Jesus Christ. To his mind, the poor were not only the image of Christ but also the **prophecy of mankind**, because they revealed the true greatness and the values on which the authentic dignity of the human person is founded. A being deprived of riches, and often lacking health, esteem, beauty, intelligence and culture, is nonetheless dear and precious before God and reminds one of a fundamental truth; persons are of value for what they are and not for what they produce.

He was personally convinced that the **poor teach us**; serving them is, for everyone, a school of humanity, an evangelization, in the sense that they put us in a better situation to understand the message of God who chose to be on the side of the weak, of little ones. The awareness of their dignity is crucial for building a society that is truly on a human scale, guaranteeing for each and everyone access to life, health, family, work, wellbeing and happiness. Indeed, by recognizing and promoting the poor, the lowliest, we recognize and promote the dignity of all and in all we make love and justice present.⁷⁴

In the exercise of his priestly ministry, he was not content with welcoming the poor who knocked at the door of his institutes but went out to find them⁷⁵ where they had been left in a pitiful state;⁷⁶ he was concerned by individual cases, taking charge of them and helping them both materially and spiritually. In this way, he learned to see the problems of the poor from the inside rather than from the top down. What broadened the confines of his mind and heart was, precisely, his encounter with the “*buoni figli*,” the mentally disabled. These are creatures who need everything and he assumed responsi-

bility for assisting them, caring for them and helping them even in their most basic needs. He understood that a glimmer of intelligence in their minds, lovingly nurtured, could illuminate their darkness.

We are face to face with a saint, Fr. Guanella, who was **passionate about humanity**; a saint who was able to elevate the sense of closeness to the human being; not only was he great in his love for God, but he was also great in his love for man, an expert in humanity. Concerned by his vocation to be close to man, throughout his life he studied greatness and humility, the peaks and the depths. He lived a heroic, radiant, splendid charity for humanity.⁷⁷ His was a multifaceted, creative charity which found a way to invent solutions for all types of need; for the disabled, orphans, children, humanitarian emergencies (the earthquake in the Marsica in the Abruzzo region) and emigrants; all these solutions are evidence of his numerous initiatives for humankind, as are the many works he started and that his disciples continue to care for and “invent” in so many parts of the world.

Charity, drawn from the furnace of **intimacy with God**, led him to provide a genuine response to the needs of the poor, a response of such love that those who received it felt recognized in their dignity, they felt renewed, placed in a position to be able to stand up again: indeed, when a person feels loved, the meaning of life blossoms for him anew. Before seeing the poor person as someone in need of his help, he saw him or her as a brother or sister to be cherished. In his heart, he “laid” human wretchedness in order to provide for it.⁷⁸

In **Jesus the Good Shepherd** (*Jn 10:11-18*) and **Good Samaritan** (*Lk 10:25-37*), who in his life and his words proclaimed to the world that God is Father and cares for all his children, he found the model to impress upon his priestly ministry, with the primary aim of restoring dignity to the poor and of recognizing their ability to form reciprocal relationships. A qualifying

aspect of his holiness was, specifically, that he always aimed at creating family proximity and reciprocity with the poor; that he strove to guarantee them, especially the most forsaken of them, not only a few decent forms of physical and psychological support, but also a warm and welcoming family atmosphere.

The family spirit was a hallmark of his institutions. The poor were integrated into the life of the house because they were considered, even those in the worst state of health, a gift sent by Providence, hence also a “help,” a precious contribution to the realization of the mission. He intuited that it was appropriate to create a family atmosphere around the poor, beginning especially with the individual. From the very outset of his experience as a Founder he wanted to be surrounded by a “family” of collaborators who, bound to each other by the “*bond of charity*,”⁷⁹ might live together with the poor as a “*small communion of saints*,”⁸⁰ as a family that believed together, loved together, hoped and worked together, under the vigilant eye of God the Father, patterned on the model of the Holy Family of Nazareth. Within the family, relationships are very important; these relationships that are expressed in charitable service are able not only to speak of God’s tenderness, but also to heal people, to cure them of their wounds, to provide their humiliated lives with dignity, and “to redeem them.”

Fr. Guanella was **a letter that God sent to the poor**, His beloved. This letter was sent by God and was addressed to the poor.

The content of this epistle surrounded the poor with affection, calling them to be part of his family and accompanying them with a father’s heart.

In the conviction that “*the poor represent Jesus Christ*,”⁸¹ he also reminds us that “*those who feed the poor will have mercy in abundance, that any kind of good that is done, even to the lowliest or the most unfortunate of our brethren, is as if it were done to Jesus*.”⁸² May his firm resolution, “*I want to love, it is*



*as necessary for me to love as it is indispensable for me to
breath,*”⁸³ spur us, as citizens of the twenty-first century, to ac-
tion.





“Father Guanella held great veneration toward Mother Marcellina Bosatta whom he considered the co-founder of his Institutions. I believe that even the foundation of the Servants of Charity Institute was pursued under the advice and blessing of Mother Marcellina.”

(*Summarium Super Virtutibus*, p. 206)

Sr. Clare Bosatta had been the cornerstone and precious victim of the House of Divine Providence in Como.”
(L. Guanella, *The Ways of Providence*, vol. 4, p. 238)





“Father Guanella was definitely planning to settle in Como... He needed a permanent settlement...He finally succeeded in renting a house and land from Mr. Biffi. No one can explain the foreboding Guanella had when, during his years at Gallio Academy, passing by that location, he sensed more than once that on that piece of land his institutions would be established.”

(L. Guanella, *The Ways of Providence*, vol. 4, p. 235-236)



Father Guanella among the survivors of Marsica earthquake. Fresco by Conconi, St. Rocco Church, Fraciscio.

“The world, like a volcano, is going through tremors and shocks that threaten its existence. But it will be saved by the spirit of charity.”

(L. Guanella, *La Divina Provvidenza*, June 1910, p. 92)



“Providence was always with me. I was never afraid of debts or fearful for my life; Providence is our defense; thus, nothing should scare us.

Even at present, in the midst of painful events, I am not afraid: Providence watches over us. Providence will be our friend if we put our trust in Her and keep sin away. The foundations of Providence were born from that belief.

To make any progress, we need trust in the Providence of God, a spirit of hard work, a spirit of prayer. Upon that was built what we have done until now, until my old age. The Lord will have pity on many defects and will take into consideration the good that we have done. Our Institute will grow and prosper if it will keep, learn, and spread that spirit.”

(L. Guanella, *La Divina Provvidenza*, 1915, p. 85)



“Behold our priest! We are touched to the bottom of our heart. Let the priest take care of it, because he handles our interests and the interests of mankind in relation to God. [...] When, at last, bent under the weight of his old age, and prostrated in his person and shaking in his body, he will come to his nephews and nieces and will say, ‘I loved you in the ministry of my life; I still love you now that I am dying. I do not have a family nor have I relatives other than you. To you, my beloved, I entrust my body and with it all the goods God has entrusted to me!’ In saying this, so many hearts will tremble. Blessing them, he will go down to his tomb while in the midst of their weeping and moaning, they will say, ‘O Father and pious Shepherd, why have you left us orphaned and desolate?’ Yet, he is no more, and will look over you from heaven. From there he will assist you even more with inspirations, and will make you understand what he really is, a minister of peace, a father to the people, and a priest who saves souls.”

L. Guanella, *The Mountaineer*, vol. 4, p. 27)

CITIZEN OF THE WORLD

Since childhood, Louis was inclined to feel an integral part of the social community of Fraciscio, the village where he lived with his father, Lorenzo, his mother, Maria, and his many brothers and sisters.

Already the fact that he lived in a large **family** predisposed him to form relationships, woven of meetings and exchanges, of alliances, affinities, tenderness and respect for the ability of each one, of emulation and of incentives. His sense of belonging developed naturally, as it were, because everyone in the family felt responsible for the smooth running of the home and was busy putting into practice the motto “*eat and work!*”⁸⁴ To make ends meet Louis’s father would go down to the valley in the winter months to distill grappa. His mother and sisters helped out with the work in the fields and the little ones made their own contribution by doing domestic tasks and work in the stables. In the summer, the older children would leave their beds to the vacationers who would climb up to the village in search of good mountain air, and so their home became a small boarding house.⁸⁵ A whispered warning sufficed and they would all do their best to ensure that the rooms would be found tidy and quiet when their father Lorenzo, “*priest and king*”⁸⁶ of the family and who was very firm, came home.⁸⁷ And then, on the occasion of the local feast, at S. Rocco, there was that most significant rite, the pan of rice for guests, for friends,⁸⁸ for the family and for the poor of the village. “What

you don't manage I will see to" and "all for one and one for all." It can only be said that the family atmosphere was a wonderful apprenticeship for little Louis.

The typical mountain environment also taught Louis solidarity and **a sense of the common good**; in a small village all the inhabitants helped each other to ensure that family and social life went well, they all felt that they shared in the joys and sufferings of the others. In this regard little Louis received lessons that throughout his life he never forgot. One in particular deserves mention. He was seven or eight years old. He tended the cows of other local shepherds who at the end of the day had given him a tip. He spent it immediately on sweets. His father Lorenzo came to hear of this and reprimanded him in front of the shepherds themselves for having accepted a reward in exchange for a favor and then obliged his son to return the coins that were left, making up himself the amount spent on sweets.⁸⁹ The lesson could not have been clearer: it was essential to be generous and to show solidarity to those in need as well as to renounce even legitimate pleasures. A society that is supportive, united, peaceful and propositional can only be built on this rock of free and generous self-giving that expects no reward.⁹⁰

He was a "son of the mayor" of the municipality and this particular aspect prepared him for being an active citizen. His father, Lorenzo, was a member of the municipal administration of Campodolcino for more than twenty years, first as mayor and later as councilor-assessor and, until his death, as a deputy councilor. *"His views were such that there was no one better. He was always the last to speak and he had the last word, even with the authorities of the administrative district or province, for he was certain and right in his views and in the proposals he made."*⁹¹

With these incisive words Fr. Louis was referring to an experience that marked his life. Who knows how often he wit-

nessed meetings between his father and the townspeople who were making some claim or submitting a problem of private interest but which had repercussions on the common good, for example the felling of trees in woods that belonged to the State, the use of a fountain as drinking water for animals, the repair of paths ruined by water or snow, or the building of a votive chapel...

Louis did not remain a spectator but cultivated a **sense of responsibility**, that is, he worked hard to make his small contribution to improving the situation. One day, on his way from Fraciscio to Madesimo, along the path Louis discovered a stream. He studied its characteristics and concluded, "*It would be possible to channel it and supply water to the whole village, obliged to fetch it with difficulty.*" He spoke about it to his father. Using his authority as mayor Lorenzo was able to make this felicitous idea a reality.⁹²

In carrying out his municipal tasks not only did his father Lorenzo make use of his intelligence, his abilities, his experience and his being "a person of conscience", as he had been taught by Grandfather Tomaso,⁹³ but also of his limpid, crystal clear faith. Indeed he was a man who went to Mass every day, who recited the Rosary and read the Bible. From these sources he drew light and strength in the search for the common good of his fellow-citizens.

Educated by these childhood experiences in the family and in the village, Fr. Louis developed an ever more convinced sense of **belonging to the people** and a strong commitment to improving their living conditions, from both the material and spiritual viewpoint. And it could not be otherwise because, as we have had the opportunity to say, he was a man of God, a man who firmly believed in the mystery of God who took flesh, who was made man and came to dwell among us. This particular aspect of his holiness deserves emphasis, namely, his attention to the secular dimension of the human person, to the

social dimensions, which found its reason for being in the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God.

Fr. Louis felt strongly called into question by the human factor; not only by the condition of the poor, but also by that of the well-off, the wealthy, with whom he also associated, and whom he felt were equally in need of a kind word, of spiritual and moral support, of encouragement to live a life impressed with the Christian message.⁹⁴ He associated with them not only because he hoped to draw from their friendship some financial benefit, the money he needed to keep his works going, but because by reawakening their consciences to the Gospel values he was certain of making an effective contribution to building a new humanity, a humanity rooted in and founded on charity; in fact, he was convinced that *“the world would be saved by charity.”*⁹⁵

In the face of the wretched conditions of the people he came across, he did not lose himself in empty actions of protest or sterile complaints but rolled up his sleeves to further their well-being, the quality of their life, letting himself be guided by an innate optimism and a healthy realism. He dared. He had **the courage of enterprise**. He was motivated by the desire to act quickly, to do a lot and to motivate others to act because the needs were so numerous. He would say, *“I am made to inspire; others will order, they will complete.”*⁹⁶ Indeed, God’s Spirit guided him to generate a vast movement of people in the Church, consecrated and lay people, who would extend his apostolate of charity in time and in place, to the very ends of the world. Today the two religious Congregations of the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence and of the Servants of Charity continue his mission of charity in at least 21 nations, impelled by the Founder’s legacy, *“The whole world is your homeland!”*⁹⁷

Particularly significant was the relationship that bound him to Mother Marcellina Bosatta,⁹⁸ Co-Foundress of the religious

family of the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence. Mother Marcellina was his right arm, the wise and “practical” counselor, the faithful steward of his treasure and spirit. She was close to Fr. Guanella not only in order to be aware of and to see to his material needs, which he himself often neglected, but also and above all to encourage him, to support him, to suggest possibilities or show him a different perspective. Thanks to her frankness, as a daughter of freedom in the Holy Spirit, their relationship of collaboration never deteriorated.

She was in charge of promoting **lay people** as precious collaborators of his beneficial projects, *“Lay people can be more helpful than priests, because they can go everywhere and introduce themselves [...]. It is necessary to have a heart full of charity [...]. We shall succeed when they see that we act for love of God and of our neighbor. Little by little and without realizing it, you will convert many people. Little by little you will change public opinion.”*⁹⁸ Impelled by his example, today, too, the men and women religious of the Institute, in the various social contexts in which they live and work, are committed to the formation of lay people, supporting and guiding them in the mission of charity. The **Guanellian Lay Movement** gathers and coordinates them; it is the *“common home of all men and women of good will. Attracted by Father Guanella’s spirituality, they show concern and care for the poor and have the desire to increase the culture of solidarity and love in the world.”*¹⁰⁰ Among lay people, the **Guanellian Cooperators**, an Association of the faithful recognized by the Holy See, makes a special contribution.¹⁰¹

When as a young priest, he was sent to Savogno, it was characteristic of Fr. Guanella to assume **pastoral responsibility**, totally “taking charge” of the people entrusted to him. In that mountain village he set his hand to everything, *“as a laborer, as a painter and even to some extent as a stonemason,”*¹⁰² to give the people better living conditions: he enlarged the square and

the church; he built a roof over the laundry area so that the women might be sheltered from bad weather; he taught everyone, children and adults, in the morning and in the evening; he built the cemetery outside the inhabited area; he built votive chapels for processions on the paths that led from the village to the mountains or to the neighboring villages; he defended the interests of his parishioners' against the bullying of certain administrators.¹⁰³ He also wrote a book to help families develop correct knowledge about the changed political and social situations (*Saggio di Amonimenti Familiari per Tutti ma Più in Particolare per il Popolo di Campagna* [Essay on Family Recommendations for Everyone but More Particularly for People in Rural Areas]). He saw to Christian formation with a simple, solid and continuous preaching, to the point that some people said, "*Surround Savogno with walls and you will have a convent.*"¹⁰⁴ He never felt he was merely a "distributor" of services, but gave the whole of himself, "*rich in the greatest poverty of his parishioners.*"¹⁰⁵

While he was studying at the seminary, passing through Pian di Spagna, in the region of Upper Lake Como, he noticed that there was a lot of uncultivated land and said to himself, "*Our people work so hard to rob our rocks of a blade of grass and here there is so much land that could be drained by bringing many people here.*"¹⁰⁶ In his heart he cherished this youthful insight until years later, summoning famous agronomists and local peasants to collaborate and employing his "buoni figli" of the house of Como, he initiated the procedure of draining those marshlands. He built a church and houses there; he procured work and improved the sanitary conditions of the local peasants. He received a medal for this from the Italian Government.

His **great attention to emigrants** should also be mentioned. As a little boy he had experienced the anguish of the departure for America of his Aunt Maria Orsola; as a young seminarian

on summer holidays with his uncle, Fr. Gaudenzio Bianchi, he would often visit the people of the valley who had moved to Switzerland close by in search of work. As an adult, he founded “Stations” for spiritual assistance to Catholics at Vicosoprano and Promontogno, in the Bregaglia Valley at Splügen Dorf, and in the Rhine Valley at Andéer. Towards the end of his life he sent his Sisters to the Italian emigrants in the United States of America facing, at his advanced age, the hardships of a long sea voyage in order to prepare the ground for them.

Fr. Guanella lived **an active citizenship in solidarity**, drawing inspiration from Jesus’ words, “*Be in the world but not of the world*” (cf. *Jn 17:1-26*). He was sensitive to the social situations of the people, particularly attentive to the living conditions of the poor, but also able to interpret reality with the eyes of faith, “*This is our policy: Our Father!... .*”¹⁰⁷ When God reigns in the human heart, when his word is taken as the horizon of thought and action, when charity becomes the rule of life and of human relations, so as to respect all of us as children of the same Father and brothers and sisters of each other, when “*The sharing of goods and resources... is not guaranteed merely by technical progress and relationships of utility, but by the potential of love that overcomes evil with good, opening up the path towards reciprocity of consciences and liberties,*”¹⁰⁸ then, and only then, can an authentic development of humanity take place. Fr. Guanella was firmly convinced that without openness to God man cannot achieve his own development nor can society be brotherly and authentically supportive – thoughts which Pope Benedict vigorously reminded contemporary man recently of the way to encourage the development of peoples.¹⁰⁹

Fr. Louis, who had himself been born in a remote mountain village, was able to build a fertile relationship with the **world of culture** and of Catholic associations; he was a convinced

supporter of the Opera dei Congressi, a federation of various Catholic associations,¹¹⁰ with the worlds of science, technology, architecture and medicine, particularly the sector concerned with improving the conditions of assistance to and treatment of the disabled.

Since his youth, Fr. Guanella had been passionately interested in botany and in historical studies, convinced that “*those who wish to know the future must study the past of people and of things.*”¹¹¹ In the period he spent at Savogno “*he explained to those docile parishioners at conferences and at the winter school the history of the Contado di Chiavenna by the writer Crollalanza.*”¹¹² Among the many short ascetic and moral works that he wrote in the Pianello period, one even has a historical character, “*Da Adamo a Pio IX* [from Adam to Pius IX].”¹¹³

On the occasion of the celebrations of the centenary of the invention of the electric battery, Como 1899, Fr. Guanella established a committee to set up a monument to Alessandro Volta. He desired to display not only the scientist’s greatness but also his beautiful testimony as a man of faith.¹¹⁴

He entrusted to the noblewoman and writer Maddalena Albinetti Crosta¹¹⁵ the editorship of the bulletin “*La Divina Provvidenza,*” which he had deeply desired as a means of making his charitable works known, of keeping in touch with his benefactors, and of inculcating the values of faith.¹¹⁶

For the draining of the marshy region of the so-called Pian di Spagna¹¹⁷ Fr. Guanella turned to famous engineers: Giovanni Battista Cerletti and Giovanni Sartirana; and he always remained in touch with them, in order to keep up to date on the developments of farming and to make suggestions to his collaborators in the various agricultural colonies¹¹⁸ he had founded. He had a sincere friendship with Aristide Leonori, a respected architect and a fervent Catholic,¹¹⁹ whom he commissioned to build the church dedicated to St. Joseph in the



Trionfale neighbourhood. Despite the negative opinion of some members of the diocesan curia of Como, he met Giosuè Carducci, a poet and writer at the peak of his glory, a freemason and anticlerical, “*who was very courteous to him.*”¹²⁰ And how is it possible not to mention his friendship with the great doctor, Fr. Agostino Gemelli, whom he confirmed in his vocation?¹²¹

His **capacity for universality** lay in his broad cultural vision but also and above all in his ability to perceive the universal values in every person, in his attention to the individual, to the small village as an expression of life in the world. It would be beautiful, for example, to seek in his letters the personal interest he showed for his confreres and his friends. Even in the years in which he was henceforth head of a large organization he never lost sight of the individual wherever he might be and gave him suggestions or asked his advice.

Today, especially in the European context, we are aware of how urgently necessary it is for Catholics to be full of enthusiasm and intelligence, as Fr. Guanella was, to be active and responsible citizens, for each one to make his own contribution so that the dignity of the person may always be safeguarded from any attempt at exploitation, and of how important it is to “make culture” by witnessing courageously and promoting the values of faith.





PASSIONATE EDUCATOR

Fr. Guanella was an attentive and passionate educator. Driven by the breath of the Spirit who was acting within him, he never lacked this **passion** for the growth and improvement of the weakest, frailest and most suffering people. It was a passion born in his soul from the earliest age (*the game of making soup for the poor* with his sister Caterina...) and which, when he reached adulthood, was characterized by his special love for all marginalized people. As the practical man that he was, he declined this passion as com-passion, in other words, the art of accompanying those who were suffering, of seeking to understand them, to alleviate them, but above all to love them and to stay with them as Mary stayed with Jesus, standing close to the Cross. He therefore expressed this passion in practical love, as the ability to take charge of the other, of his whole world, of creating bonds that warmed the heart and gave hope.

Thus, he realized that education is, above all and especially, a **work of the heart** and that interpersonal relationships, especially educational ones, arise from the heart and develop by way of the heart, "*human relationships originate and are developed through emotions and free will more than through other personal capabilities. They are expressed through internal attitudes and external behavior, conveying all the feelings of anyone who desires the welfare of his neighbor in love.*"¹²²

In his autobiographical memoirs he recalled "*there was in those times in all educational institutions an excessively severe system which educated hearts by fear rather than by love.*"¹²³ In

contrast, he was convinced that following the ways of the heart was the most delicate and at the same time the most effective way to reach the depths of the soul and stimulate it to goodness and growth.

For him this was the foundation of and prerequisite for any process that claimed to be educational, because it gave educating hope, even where it did not seem realistic to expect results or when it even appeared an impossible and useless undertaking. Indeed he said, "*The needs of the unfortunate are to be intuited by the affection of the heart rather than by the speculative examination of the mind.*"¹²⁴

We can therefore affirm that "*the Guanellian vision of the educational relationship cannot but have precise foundations: a) education is a friendly relationship, wanted and desired; love is the soul of his educational system; b) the first fundamental principle is 'to surround with affection,' because the educational relationship develops on the 'ways of the heart' and the interior attitude which expresses it is kindness; c) the active criterion which derives from this is the 'primacy of the heart over technique; d) the goal of educating is the capacity to love, to show solidarity, to communicate.*"¹²⁵

Bringing these elements to the fore constantly made **trust and optimism** present in his life as an educator. Trust that generates trust and sets the best energies in motion; he said, "*The handicapped are to be encouraged in some useful task...*"¹²⁶ He not only placed trust in people and in their energy and resources, but also and above all in the force of love and in the mysterious power of God's grace, with the awareness that this force and power were working with him as allies. In him, optimism was not born from sentimentalism but rather and above all from the conviction that goodness is greater than evil. This optimism helped him to overcome fears, to see and to appreciate the resources available to him and to keep his hope alive. It enabled him to attract many people. In fact he said, "*good*

and cheerful people attract many."¹²⁷

Life and many different circumstances did not, of course, permit him to take refuge in mawkish or dreamy idylls; in fact he experienced in his own skin the burden of suffering and limitation, developing an awareness of the value of **work, dedication** and **effort**. This sensibility also characterized his vision of the educative process that does not strive to build people who are "soft and spineless" but rather aims for lofty goals, taking hard work, effort and constancy into due account. He said, "*Nothing is achieved without effort,*" and further, "*In the Lord's works it is necessary to trust as though God were doing everything and we nothing, but at the same time to work as though everything depended on us and nothing on God.*"¹²⁸

With regard to **intellectual learning** he highlighted the need "*to try hard to get all the best out of them,*" to "*study the means to relieve the sick continuously.*"¹²⁹ He invited his collaborators to make this commitment their own, "*We can never say 'enough' in promoting our own or another person's development.*"¹³⁰ Nor did he stop even in the face of particularly complicated situations for example, those of people with serious disabilities. He said, "*They are deficient, but more often than not, capable of some improvement.*"¹³¹

At the root of these solicitations was his firm conviction of the **educability** of the human being always and everywhere, in any condition and at any moment of his or her life. This conviction is an incentive to hope and impels a person to action and commitment.

Experience and reflection on this concept of educability spurred Fr. Guanella much further, to the point of making him assert that in the human being is a potential which God has implanted in him: a "*seed of every elect virtue,*"¹³² a glimmer of ability or even of knowledge. And not only is it a potential in the sense of talents or gifts (many or few), of qualities, but a potential as a power, a force that enables the person to develop

what he possesses. *“The Lord has given the vine branch the power to produce exquisite fruit and He Himself has instilled in your heart the power to produce good actions. This power is of different kinds. One kind gives you prosperity for this earth and likewise the other gives you blessings for Heaven.”*¹³³

Thus one of the fundamental elements of the educational process is affirmed and emphasized; namely, that **the subject himself or herself is the co-author** of his or her own process of growth. *“To educate means to augment the other from within, not to mould him from without [...] the growth of persons, therefore, is not attributed to external forces. Human growth always happens through the personal assimilation of knowledge and values.”*¹³⁴ Using an expressive image, Fr. Guanella said that *“the heart of a person is like the soil of an orchard or garden which produces fruits and flowers when cultivated.”*¹³⁵ We take this to mean that education is a commitment to helping individuals to craft their own development.

In this process of the promotion of people, prompted also by the influence of Don Bosco’s thought and the experience he acquired living beside him, Fr. Guanella maintained that **the preventive system** was a necessary premise.¹³⁶ If on the one hand this approach is expressed in ensuring that people avoided negative situations or any form of regression, on the other, it means reinforcing and maintaining the psychological, physical and moral resources that prevent evil from taking root. Preventing is therefore the capacity for anticipating needs and for intense discernment, with trust in people and in the power of God’s grace.

Fr. Guanella’s childhood and having lived in a large family with both parents present and attentive proved crucial. The depth and sensibility of this experience impelled him to assert that every educational process must take place in a context that is distinguished by a **family atmosphere**. By this he meant a reference to the values, determination and universally effec-

tive forms of behavior that characterize a good family, such as the care for and defence of life, reciprocal affection that binds the various members, the co-responsible participation of each one in the common good, and the ability to forgive each other lovingly and care for each other.

In the light of these elements it is clear that Fr. Guanella, in his being as an educator and in proposing his pedagogical model, was referring to sweeping horizons that embrace the whole person, his **entire self**: his soul, his mind and his body. Fr. Guanella wrote, *“In the alphabet there is an initial letter which, repeated three times gives what one can best desire here on earth. This letter is the consonant S, which is the first letter of the word “santità”(holiness), of the word “scienza”(knowledge) and of the word “sanità” (healthiness). Holiness is effective in perfecting the Christian being of the religious person. Knowledge is effective in perfecting a person’s intellectual faculties. Healthiness perfects the development of the physical body. What more can a father hope for his children? A child gives pleasure when he is healthy, satisfies when he is wise, consoles when he is holy. How fortunate the parent who, in giving his child all his care, obtains his development, enriched with these gifts.”*¹³⁷ He summed up this concept with the formula: to give everyone *“Bread and the Lord.”*

For Fr. Guanella the ultimate goal of all true education was holiness. *“Only one thing is necessary; to save one’s soul. As for the rest, a long life, a short life, what does it matter? What does it matter whether one is rich or poor, healthy or sick, esteemed or disesteemed by men? It is God alone who must judge us.”*¹³⁸

Fr. Guanella laid the foundations for a true and proper Guanellian pedagogy, with intuitions that could be developed, actualized and put into practice. Those who have continued his Institute, women and men religious, Guanellian cooperators and lay people, worked out this pedagogy in a Basic Document for the Guanellian Mission,¹³⁹ proposed and spread far

and wide on all the continents and applied with intelligence and dedication in various services to the person. They also drafted a handbook for the operators who serve and collaborate in Guanellian houses: *With Faith, Love and Competence: Profile of the Guanellian Staff*.¹⁴⁰

There is one providential circumstance; Fr. Guanella is being canonized at the beginning of a decade, 2010-2020, which the Italian Church is dedicating to education. The Italian Episcopal Conference, recognizing the delicate and sublime art of education as a cultural challenge and a sign of the times, and even before that, a constitutive and permanent dimension of the Church's mission, asks mainly Christian communities, but also all people of good will, to "reappropriate" the important role of "*Educare alla vita Buona del Vangelo*" (education in the good life of the Gospel).¹⁴¹

*"The soul of education, as of the whole of life, can only be a dependable hope"*¹⁴² and the source of this hope is one, Jesus Christ, risen from the dead. To form solid people, capable of collaborating with others, and to give meaning to one's life it is necessary to start here, from the encounter with Jesus Christ and his Gospel. Proclaiming Christ, true God and true man, means bringing humanity to fullness and therefore sowing culture and civilization. The task of the Christian educator is to spread the good news that the Gospel can transform the human heart, restoring reasons for life and hope; it is witnessing to the awareness that "*without God man neither knows which way to go, nor even understands who he is.*"¹⁴³

It is precisely by taking these paths that society will be able to positively resolve the situation of the "educational emergency" being discussed, because such paths effectively contradict the false idea of autonomy which lies behind the phenomenon of emergency, the idea "*that induces man to conceive of himself as an 'I' complete in himself whereas instead he becomes an 'I' in relation to the 'you' of God and with the 'we'*

of his brothers and sisters."¹⁴⁴

Among the priorities that the Italian Bishops consider urgent to focus on during the decade in order to give an impetus and power to the Church's educational task is *"the re-launching of the educational vocation of institutes of consecrated life and of ecclesial associations and movements. It is a matter of presenting anew the educational tradition of institutions which have made an important contribution to the formation of priests, religious and lay people. It is therefore necessary that parishes and other ecclesial subjects develop an integrated and missionary pastoral approach, particularly in the frontier zones of education."*¹⁴⁵

In the message published on the occasion of the 15th World Day of Consecrated Life, the Bishops recognize *"the specific commitment of a great many institutes of consecrated life in the field of education, in accordance with their own charism, whose fruitfulness is witnessed by the presence of numerous holy educators."* They state that *"the consecrated life reminds us that education is truly 'a thing of the heart,' not a jumble of emotions, but a personal synthesis, which basically gives direction to the choices and decisions of each one. The whole People of God is waiting for this richness, which has left traces in many scholastic institutions and in the care of itineraries of spiritual life, to be strengthened and renewed."*¹⁴⁶

Almost a Conclusion...

Borrowing Pope Benedict's words, we can say, at the end of these notes, that *"holiness is the goal of the Christian. In the life of saints it becomes obvious that those who go towards God do not distance themselves from human beings but on the contrary make themselves truly close."* (Homily on the Solemnity of All Saints, 2010).



In the Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, his famous Predecessor, the late John Paul II, wrote, “*The ways of holiness are many, according to the vocation of each individual... the paths to holiness are personal and call for a genuine ‘**training in holiness**,’ adapted to people’s needs. This training must integrate the resources offered to everyone with both the traditional forms of individual and group assistance*” (31).

We have tried to describe Fr. Louis Guanella’s beautiful witness of holiness to offer further incentives. Among the many aspects that characterized his experience, perhaps one of them can suit our soul, and can support us on our personal journey of holiness: like him, we too!





Father Guanella is dying. Fresco by Conconi, St. Rocco Church, Fraciscio.
 “I believe that this illness of mine was sent by God’s Providence for extraordinary graces upon the House; extraordinary suffering, extraordinary graces... Because I intercede to the Lord on behalf of the Institute and you, I do not desist to send fiery words to God! ... God will take care of you. Nothing is necessary here on earth. Providence will help you! Death! Paradise! In your hands, O Lord! ... Let you all follow me by carrying out this program of life: Prayer and Suffering!”

(L. Guanella, *La Divina Provvidenza*, October 1915, p. 150)



“May the prayers of so many of the less fortunate accompany, to the bosom of God, the meek and valiant soul of Father Louis Guanella, apostle of Christian charity – died a saintly death at the age of seventy-three – and may his kind and pious image live and be perpetuated in the Servants of Charity – and in the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence – to whom he gave his holy example and his heart.”
 (Inscription hanging on the main door of the Sacred Heart Church in Como on the day of the funeral of Father Guanella, *La Divina Provvidenza*, November 1915, p. 195)



A witness

In Memory of Father Guanella

After the funeral of Father Guanella the newspapers “L’Ordine” of Como and “Italia” of Milan had published the article, “*In remembrance of Father Guanella.*”

“Mr. Leonori, intimate friend of the Founder of the Works of Providence, writes, ‘Father Guanella is not the man that should be remembered through empty and useless monuments. His speaking monument stands in his many Houses of charity he founded. I firmly believe that they will multiply now that they have a special patron saint in heaven. I would like to suggest a fundraiser for building of a new wing for the abandoned elderly – the most beloved people to the great heart of Father Louis Guanella – to be built in the House where he died. It will be the most practical and precious monument that will remember his departure from us.’

Mr. Leonori opened the fundraiser by offering one thousand liras. Many other minor donations already arrived to the Guanellian House in Como. The initiative is one that is not going to be disregarded. It is commendable...It is a must that Father Guanella be remembered through a monument that should transmit his spirit of charity, his ardent passion in aiding those who are suffering. The initiative merits our support, and we praise it.”

(La Divina Provvidenza, November 1915, p. 199-200)



“Prayers and honors – to the Canon Louis Guanella – jewel of Como’s clergy – Father of the poor and abandoned – apostle of evangelical charity – we pray – that this flame may not be extinguished here below – but may live and be perpetuated – in holy and fruitful Works – as they were cherished – by his elect mind and generous heart.”

(Inscription hanging upon the main door of the Cathedral of Como on the day of the funeral of Father Guanella, *La Divina Provvidenza*, November 1915, p. 196)





Part III
The setting







The Journey Towards Canonization

Fr. Guanella was deeply convinced that the helm of history was in the hands of God who customarily acts in the ordinary routines of daily life. Sometimes God acts in exceptional ways but He prefers a fertile drizzle to downpours. Fr. Guanella was a practical man and knew that God is to be found more often through the window of the senses, supported and accompanied by the sentiments of the heart.

In his numerous pastoral writings the word ‘miracle’ appears more than two hundred and fifty times, but always in reference to Jesus, to some event in the Old Testament or to a saint. Even if his writings remained basically apologetic, when he wrote about miracles it was always to elevate the sense of faith to be embodied in daily life.

In any case, it should be said that the supernatural is never something external like a hat on the head but lives within human nature, ever striving to overcome the limits of the human condition. Blaise Pascal wrote that “*man infinitely overcomes man*” since “*God created us in His image and likeness*” so that we might share in His nature and take possession of those fragments of the divine that all creatures carry in their hearts.

There exists an elective affinity between the ordinary and the supernatural that the human being cannot destroy. In today’s society this gap has increased and even the person of faith feels



the resulting discomfort. In the past, religious formation was nurtured by fascination with the extraordinary which was not a world of miracles, but rather an awareness that existence is accompanied by One who thinks and loves. Today's exasperated scientific strictness, by accepting only what is codified in the laws present in nature has concealed the dimension of mystery that envelopes every human being's life. Today we see this phenomenon, alongside scientific rigor and often accompanied by the denial of God's existence, a flourishing interest in the "extraordinary" is emerging, sought in astrology, horoscopes and mediums. The "art of divination" seems to be attracting many followers.

We must admit that even in the Christian world the "extraordinary" attracts a lot of attention, to the point of creating some concern: indeed "gurus" and "healers," divine apparitions and messages command great attention.

From the beginning, especially in Jesus, miracles have been offered as a support to faith that is transformed into a "flowering of Heaven" and comes to fruition in evangelical virtues. It is precisely this "flowering of Heaven" which gives rise to a canonization process. The desire to see a person glorified by the Church is born precisely from the extraordinary qualities that have illuminated his or her life.

One of the indispensable requirements for the initiation of a process of canonization is the fame of holiness and sanctity that surrounds a person's life and death. This fame of holiness consists in noting the abundance of evangelical fruits that have matured from the divine seed planted on the day of Baptism. When Christians emerge from the baptismal font they are already holy; they have all the characteristics to perpetuate, on earth, the evangelical virtues brought by Jesus. Saints are those who live these virtues heroically.

The Canonical Processes

In the weeks preceding Fr. Guanella's death the whole Church of Como, at the Bishop's request, was committed to praying to God for him. On the day of his funeral, religious and civil figures wished to pay homage to the prophet of evangelical charity by participating in the celebrations at which Cardinal Carlo Andrea Ferrari, Archbishop of Milan and a fervent admirer of this "*Servant of Charity*," presided.¹⁴⁷ In this farewell there were also poor people mourning the "*father of the orphans*."

The fame of Fr. Guanella's holiness was not a vain hope. It remained alive. A devotion to him developed and many people in need found the help they required in the intercession of Fr. Guanella.

Less than eight years after his death, the Congregations of the Servants of Charity and of the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence, founded by Fr. Guanella, asked the Pastor of Como, Bishop Alfonso Archi, to begin an informative enquiry on both his reputation for holiness and his power of intercession.

The process began in 1923 and ended in 1929. Forty-four persons appeared to testify, forty-two of whom made depositions based on direct knowledge, *de visu*, and two by hearsay, *ex auditu*.

A similar request was sent to Cardinal Eugenio Tosei, Archbishop of Milan. The process also opened in 1923 and closed in 1930. In Milan there were likewise forty-four witnesses. Forty *de visu*, three *ex auditu* and one for a cure obtained.

The majority of the depositions sent to the apostolic process on the theological virtues (Faith, Hope and Charity) and on the cardinal virtues (Prudence, Justice, Fortitude and Temperance) were given by persons who had been in touch with Fr. Louis for at least thirty years, an acquaintance consolidated

by time and experience.

Alongside these two processes there were also three rogatory processes: one in the Diocese of Arezzo, another in the Diocese of Adria and a third in the Diocese of Pisa.

Many cardinals, archbishops and bishops sent Pope Pius XI “postulatory letters” to ensure that the process would continue successfully. For the record, there were ten cardinals, fifty-eight archbishops and one hundred and twenty-four bishops in all.

THE MIRACLES

For the Beatification

There were two decisive miracles for the beatification: the cure of Maria Uri and the cure of Teresa Pighin.

The First Miracle: The Cure of Maria Uri.

Maria Uri, born in Gravedona on October 19, 1921 and taken to the Casa S. Maria in Como-Lora when she was nine, was cured by Fr. Guanella’s intercession in May 1932. The Apostolic Process was conducted at the Tribunal of the Diocese of Como.

Having suffered for several days from an unspecified ailment of the abdomen, on May 27, 1932 the doctor was called and found the little girl in a very serious condition. On the evening of May 28th, since she was then presumed to be dying, an invocation was begun through the intercession of the Servant of God, Fr. Louis Guanella, and a relic of his was placed on the child’s chest. The sick girl remained in a very serious condition until midnight. She then fell asleep and slept peacefully

until she awoke at six o'clock in the morning the following day completely cured. The Medical Consultants unanimously expressed the following diagnosis, "non-determinable diffuse hypertoxic acute peritonitis with etiopathogenesis." Her recovery was "instant, perfect and permanent."

The Second Miracle: The Cure of Teresa Pighin

The second miracle was brought about for Teresa Pighin, born on July 22, 1898 in Zoppola, Udine. The Apostolic Process was conducted at the Diocese of Vittorio Veneto.

The woman, married and a mother of four, worked in the countryside and had enjoyed excellent health until February 1929, when the first symptoms of her illness became apparent. Admitted to a sanatorium, the progress of her tuberculosis was in a certain way blocked, but serious muscular atrophies resulted. She proved to be suffering from Pott's disease, a form of tuberculosis localized in the vertebrae. This disease begins to develop in a specific vertebrae, and then spreads to others; as it progresses, the distance between the vertebrae is increasingly reduced until collapse, so that rapid intervention is essential.

Immobilized in bed for more than two years, on November 30, 1934 the sisters of Casa Pio X in Cordignano, to which she had been admitted, gave Teresa a relic of Fr. Guanella and began a second novena for her recovery.

On the morning of December 2nd, the sick woman awoke with an unexpected shudder throughout her body, followed by a general feeling of wellbeing. Teresa felt her strength returning, her respiratory difficulties disappeared and she realized that her legs no longer felt heavy. She got up and walked about the sick-room without feeling tired or needing support.

The Apostolic Process began eight years later, from Novem-

ber 1942 to March 1943, and ascertained that this was an “*instant, perfect, permanent cure, absolutely inexplicable by the laws of nature.*”

For the Canonization

The Cure of William Glisson

The miracle occurred in the Diocese of Philadelphia, USA.

On the evening of March 15, 2002, William Glisson was rollerblading with a friend of his on Baltimore Pike in Springfield, very fast and without wearing a helmet. A pothole in the asphalt caused him to trip. He was flung backwards, flying up about six and a half, and landed about thirteen feet away with a traumatic occipital brain injury. Unconscious, he was taken immediately to Crozer Keystone Hospital, a highly specialized center where the doctors diagnosed a deep comatose state. When informed, immediately his mother rushed to the hospital and the doctors explained the gravity of her son’s condition, telling her that there was little hope that he would live.

He underwent brain surgery, but in the post-operative period showed no improvement. Because of the gravity of the case, the doctors decided to undertake a second neurosurgical operation. However, in spite of the two operations, they could only note his constant deterioration of the situation.

On March 19th, the Feast of St. Joseph, Dr Noreen M. Yoder, a family friend who worked at a center for the rehabilitation of the mentally and physically disabled, gave William’s mother two relics of Fr. Guanella. The woman, with great faith, put one on her son’s wrist and wore the other around her neck. From that moment a series of prayers began in order to obtain a miracle from the Blessed. The prayer network spread, not only among his relatives, but also at the Catholic

school attended by the young man's sister.

On March 25th something began to change, the doctors registered an improvement for the first time. In the following days further improvements were noted and on April 9th William was discharged from the hospital with a program for neuro-motor functional re-education. With this, two months after the trauma, his recovery was so rapid it astonished the brain surgeons. The neurological examination was negative. No cognitive or neuro-psychological deficits were found.

Eight months after the accident William returned to work in his father's firm as a carpenter. Four years after the accident his case history was excellent. This case history was confirmed by two neurological experts "ab insectione" who, in the course of the diocesan canonical process, examined young Glisson in 2006.

William not only went back to work, but in 2008 was happily married and leads a perfectly normal life.

After the canonical process was conducted in the American diocese, the relative documentation was taken to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints in Rome and after hearing the favorable opinions of the Medical Commission (November 12, 2009), of the Theological Consultants (January 30, 2010) and of the Ordinary Congregation of Cardinals (April 20, 2010), on July 1, 2010 the Pope authorized the Congregation for the Causes of Saints to promulgate the relative Decree.



OPERA DON GUANELLA
COMO
 Via T. Grossi, 18 - Telefono 22.158

In preparazione alla auspicata prossima Beatificazione del Ven. Don Luigi Guanella. S. E. Mons. Felice Bonomini, Vescovo di Como, procederà in forma riservata alla ricognizione canonica delle spoglie del Servo di Dio nel Santuario del S. Cuore.

Il sottoscritto Superiore Generale dell'Opera Don Guanella si pregia d'invitare la S.V. a rendere riverente omaggio alla salma del Venerabile, il giorno 10 luglio alle ore 15,30, presso la Casa Divina Provvidenza in Via T. Grossi, 18.

L'invito è strettamente personale.

Con rispettosi ossequi.

Como, li 1 - 7 - 64

Dev.mo
 Sac. Carlo De Ambroggi
 Superiore Generale

In preparation for the Beatification of the Venerable Louis Guanella, His Excellency Felice Bonomini, Bishop of Como, will perform the canonical recognition of the mortal remains of the Servant of God in a private ceremony at the Sacred Heart Shrine.

I, the Superior General of the Servants of Charity, have the pleasure to invite you to venerate the body of the Venerable on July 10, 1964, at 3:30 pm, at the House of Divine Providence, Tomaso Grossi Street.

This invitation is strictly personal.



The Bishop of Como at the canonical recognition



Procession with the mortal remains of the Servant of God.



Daughters of St. Mary of Providence and Servants of Charity at the day of the canonical recognition.





Pope Paul VI with Mother Angela Cettini, Superior General of the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence on the day of the Beatification.



... with Fr. Ezio Cova, Servant of Charity, postulator





... with the Most Rev. Felice Bonomini, Bishop of Como



... with the nephew of Fr. Guanella, Brother Lorenzo Guanella, SJ





"It is God who works! ... All is from God: the idea, the vocation, the capability to go ahead, the success, the merit, the glory are from God, not from man."
(Paul VI, Discourse at the Beatification)



Perfect and instantaneous healing of Maria Uri from acute and dif-fused peritonitis.



Theresa Pighin miracu-
lously healed from TB
spondylitis and Pott's
disease.





Center: Mr. William Glisson, the recipient of the miracle of Father Guanella



“I present you my greetings, O my good mountaineer. Listen! It is the Spirit of the Lord who from all times has taken some of His most beloved children from the solitude of the mountains and valleys and made them saints. O child of saints, rejoice! May you become more worthy of such land and saints! I now embrace you in spirit and accompany you to the greater joy that is blessed Heaven.”

(L. Guanella, *The Mountaineer*, vol. 4, p. 4)



NOTES

¹ A. MONDELLI DE MARZI, *l'Ordine della domenica di Como*, June 5, 1910 in L. MAZZUCCHI, *La vita, lo spirito e le opere di don Luigi Guanella*, Editrice Nuove Frontiere, Roma 1999, p. 55; MADDALENA ALBINI CROSTA in *La Divina Provvidenza* – November 1915, p. 192.

² In this respect Fr. Guanella's experience was symptomatic. During his time in Savogno (1867-75), although the Casati Law on compulsory school education had come into force in 1864, this public service had not been implemented when Fr. Guanella met the need with his own initiative.

³ Porta Pia is an important gate into Rome, located at the beginning of the consular Via Nomentana. Michelangelo Buonarroti set it into the Aurelian walls, which encircled the city, to defend it from enemy assaults. On September 20th, the army of the Kingdom of Italy opened a breach in it and entered the city.

⁴ Fr. Guanella sided with the group of the "Intransigents," loyal to the Pope; he even defending the Pope's authority with ascetic and moral writings.

⁵ The House of Savoy, sovereigns of the Kingdom of Piedmont and Sardinia, played a very important role in the plan for the Unification of the different regions of Italy into a single State; the family's various descendents bore the title "King of Italy" (constitutional monarchy) until June 2, 1946, when, with a referendum, the Italians opted for the political form of a "Republic."

⁶ "Guarentigie" means Guarantees; the Italian State guaranteed to the Pontiff the inviolability of his person, the honors of a sovereign, the right to have armed guards to defend his palaces: the Vatican, the Lateran, the Cancelleria and the Villa at Castel Gandolfo. These assets were to be considered extraterritorial which exempted them from Italian law and ensured the freedom of postal and telegraphic communi-



cation and the right to diplomatic representation. Lastly, they guaranteed an annual income for the maintenance of the Pontiff, of the Sacred College and of the Apostolic Palaces. The law also regulated relations between the State and the Catholic Church, guaranteeing to both: full, peaceful and free autonomy. The clergy were to be allowed unlimited freedom to meet and bishops were exempted from swearing an oath to the King. Nevertheless, the law preserved the Government's placet for the appointment of bishops and parish priests.

⁷ Cf. L. GUANELLA, *Le Vie della Provvidenza*, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 2003, p. 14.

⁸ L. GUANELLA, *Il Montanaro*, Opera Omnia, Vol. III, Centro Studi Guanelliani, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 1992, p. 1002. Fr. Guanella wrote this pamphlet in 1886 to pay homage to and comfort the populations of Tartano and Talamona, villages in the Valtellina, hit by floods in September 1885 that caused many deaths and serious damage. In his booklet he exalted the human, moral and religious values of mountain people; in fact he cites memories from his own childhood, the experiences he lived with his family, his own feelings... From this point of view, the booklet is invaluable for knowledge about the environment in which he was born and grew up.

⁹ The expression is not Fr. Guanella's, but that of a Salesian historian, Pietro Stella, quoted by M. CARROZZINO, *Don Guanella e Don Bosco, Storia di un Incontro e di un Confronto*, Saggi storici – I, II ed., Centro Studi Guanelliani, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 2010, p. 131. In his autobiographical memoirs, Fr. Guanella stated, "I feel within myself that Divine Providence is calling me to Turin and that will be God's will." *Le Vie della Provvidenza*, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 2003, p. 46; later, when he sought to justify his decision to leave Don Bosco, he stated, "I consider it a very great good fortune to have come to Don Bosco, but my heart would feel an emptiness for the rest of my life because, it may not seem true, but the thought of building a 'ciabotto' in my homeland is still alive within me (Don Bosco called his foundations 'ciabotti')", p. 49.

¹⁰ Fr. Louis did not readily accept the idea that he could not reopen his college in Traona; he sought support everywhere to overcome the

Prefect's hostility. The bishop was of a totally different opinion; he was convinced that Fr. Guanella would not succeed and when he met him in the parish premises at Campodolcino, in a moment of impatience, he flared up at Fr. Guanella, saying, "I cannot suspend you because I do not have the reasons. But I would if I could'. He felt embittered... And it all ended then and there." L. GUANELLA, *Le Vie della Provvidenza*, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 2003, p. 56.

¹¹ Letter from Fr. Guanella to Bishop P. Carsana, written from Olmo, October 1881, Archivio Guanelliano Como.

¹² Letter from Fr. L. Guanella to Bishop P. Carsana dated May 20, 1878, Archivio Guanelliano Como.

¹³ L. GUANELLA, *Non Ritournerà Più Dunque Suor Chiara Fra Noi?*, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 1982; pp. 26-27.

¹⁴ L. GUANELLA, *Le Vie della Provvidenza*, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 2003, p. 58.

¹⁵ Cf. Decretum laudis "Humanis Miseriis Sublevandis."

¹⁶ Cf. *La Divina Provvidenza* – December 1926, p. 244. The Decree of erection was dated February 23, 1913; with the Decree of the Holy Office issued the following April 24th, the Association was enriched with Indulgences; on June 1st it was raised to the rank of a Primary Association. Lastly, with the Apostolic Letter of February 14th the following year, Pope Pius X recommended its dissemination throughout the Catholic world. Cf. *La Divina Provvidenza* – May 1913, pp. 69-72.

¹⁷ L. GUANELLA, *Il Pane dell'Anima – Primo Corso*, Opera Omnia, Vol. I, Centro Studi Guanelliani, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 1992, p. 367.

¹⁸ L. GUANELLA, *Andiamo al Padre*, Opera Omnia, Vol. III, Centro Studi Guanelliani, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 1999, p. 140.

¹⁹ Fr. Guanella had a special "relationship" with saints and particularly with the "saints of charity," among these, some aroused great fascination in him: St. Teresa of Avila, St. Francis of Assisi (he became a Franciscan Tertiary), St. Joseph Benedict Cottolengo and St. John Bosco, St. Jerome Emiliani, St. Cajetan (Gaetano) of Thiene, St. Camillus de Lellis...

²⁰ L. GUANELLA, *Andiamo al Paradiso*, Opera Omnia, Vol. III, Centro Studi Guanelliani, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 1999, p. 453.

²¹ L. GUANELLA, *In Tempo Sacro*, Opera Omnia, Vol. I, Centro Studi Guanelliani, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 1992, p. 835.

²² L. GUANELLA, *Andiamo al Paradiso*, Opera Omnia, Vol. III, Centro di Studi Guanelliani, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 1999, p. 447.

²³Cf. *Ibid.* p. 462f.

²⁴ L. GUANELLA, *Il Pane dell'Anima – Secondo Corso*, Opera Omnia, Vol. I, Centro Studi Guanelliani, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 1992, p. 409.

²⁵ A. BACCIARINI, *Positio Super Virtutibus*, I, Rome 1937, Archivio Guanelliano Como, p. 259.

²⁶ L. GUANELLA, *Regolamento FsMP – 1911*, Opera Omnia, Vol. IV, Centro Studi Guanelliani, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 1988, p. 614.

²⁷ *La Divina Provvidenza*, October 1914, p. 159.

²⁸ BENEDICT XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*, n. 33.

²⁹ L. GUANELLA, *Il Fondamento*, Opera Omnia, Vol. III, Centro Studi Guanelliani, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 1999, p. 877, “*Il cuore è la vita del nostro corpo, la preghiera è la vita dell'anima cristiana.*”

³⁰ L. GUANELLA, *Regolamento SdC – 1905*, Opera Omnia, Vol. IV, Centro Studi Guanelliani, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 1988, p. 1159, “*Per intendersi giustamente con gli uomini, anzitutto bisogna sapersi intender con il Signore, che è via, verità e vita.*”

³¹ L. GUANELLA, *Regolamento SdC – 1910*, Opera Omnia, Vol. IV, Centro Studi Guanelliani, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 1988, p. 1339.

³² Dina Bosatta (1858-1887) as a religious took the name of Chiara (Clare); together with her sister Marcellina and other young women from Pianello Lario she constituted the founding nucleus of the nascent Congregation of the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence. By Grace she was endowed with a mystical soul which led her to seek a

spousal union of love with God, through many physical trials and sufferings. When she was only 29, under the guidance of Fr. Guanella, she brought her personal itinerary of sanctification to fulfilment. John Paul II beatified her on April 21, 1991. For further information: L. GUANELLA, *Dono di Giovinezza – Vita di Chiara Bosatta*, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 2009; P. PELLEGRINO – M.L. OLIVA, *La Storia di Chiara*, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 1991; *Chiara Bosatta – Scritti e Documenti*, edited by E. SOSCIA AND F. BUCCI, Centro Studi Guanelliani, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 2002.

³³ “It is quite amazing. Here we have a holiness of a contemplative nature placed by God as the foundation stone of an institution that is simply dedicated to mercy.” In A. BERIA, *Vita di Suor Chiara Scritta da Don Guanella*, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 1983, p. 5. “We can deduce that Sr. Clare, responding with faith, generosity and perseverance to God’s grace and gifts, was very well able to harmonize the spiritual dimension with the active one. And it is surprising how God wished to give a mystical soul to an emerging Institute dedicated specifically to charity and to the apostolate.” SACRA CONGREGATIO PRO CAUSIS SANCTORUM, COMENSIS CANONIZATIONIS SERVAE DEI CLARAE BOSATTA SORORIS PROFESSAE INSTITUTI SS. MARIA A PROVIDENTIA, *Relatio et Vota Congressus Peculiaris*, Rome 1988, Archivio Guanelliano Como, p. 93.

³⁴ L. GUANELLA, *Il Pane dell’Anima – Terzo Corso*, Opera Omnia, Vol. I, Centro Studi Guanelliani, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 1993, p. 633.

³⁵ Fr. Guanella, between 1872 and 1889, wrote as many as 45 ascetic and moral booklets; they have been collected and published by the Centro Studi Guanelliani. They are identified here as Opera Omnia.

³⁶ A. BACCIARINI, *Positio Super Virtutibus*, I, Rome 1937, Archivio Guanelliano Como, p. 305.

³⁷ Cf. *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2005, no. 55.

³⁸ L. GUANELLA, *Il Pane dell’Anima – Primo Corso*, Opera Omnia, Vol. I, Centro Studi Guanelliani, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 1992, p. 312.

³⁹ L. GUANELLA, *Andiamo al Padre*, Opera Omnia, Vol. III, Centro Studi Guanelliani, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 1999, p. 126.

⁴⁰ L. MAZZUCCHI, *Positio Super Virtutibus*, I, Rome 1937, Archivio Guanelliano Como, p. 303.

⁴¹ L. MAZZUCCHI, *La Vita, lo Spirito e le Opere di Don Luigi Guanella*, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, 1999, p. 443.

⁴² L. GUANELLA, *Andiamo al Padre*, Opera Omnia, Vol. III, Centro Studi Guanelliani, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 1999, p. 126.

⁴³ L. GUANELLA, *Le Vie della Provvidenza*, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 2003, p. 78.

⁴⁴ L. GUANELLA, *Il Pane dell'Anima – Terzo Corso*, Opera Omnia, Vol. I, Centro Studi Guanelliani, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 1992, p. 655.

⁴⁵ L. GUANELLA, *Andiamo al Paradiso*, Opera Omnia, Vol. III, Centro Studi Guanelliani, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 1999, p. 470.

⁴⁶ *IBID.*, p. 446.

⁴⁷ L. GUANELLA, *Regolamento SdC – 1910*, Opera Omnia, Vol. IV, Centro Studi Guanelliani, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 1988, p. 1261.

⁴⁸ L. GUANELLA, *Andiamo al Paradiso*, Opera Omnia, Vol. III, Centro Studi Guanelliani, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 1999, p. 470.

⁴⁹ L. GUANELLA, *Il Pane dell'Anima – Primo Corso*, Opera Omnia, Vol. I, Centro Studi Guanelliani, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 1992, p. 351f.

⁵⁰ L. GUANELLA, *Regolamento SdC – 1910*, Opera Omnia, Vol. IV, Centro Studi Guanelliani, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 1988, p. 1297.

⁵¹ L. GUANELLA, *Breve Statuto delle Figlie del S. Cuore Chiamate Crocine in Como – 1893*, Opera Omnia, Vol. IV, Centro Studi Guanelliani, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 1988, p. 90.

⁵² The autobiographical memoirs, *Le Vie della Provvidenza*, were dictated by Fr. Guanella to available scribes in the winter of 1913 or 1914,

except for certain “important” passages written in his own hand. The page in question is the beginning of article XIII, entitled “*The Moral Constitution of the Casa della Divina Provvidenza in Como*,” Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 2003, p. 69.

⁵³ L. GUANELLA, *Settimana con Dio*, in L. MAZZUCCHI, *La Vita, lo Spirito e le Opere di Don Luigi Guanella*, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 1999, p. 480.

⁵⁴ From the December issue of 1895 to today the title of the bulletin has been *La Divina Provvidenza*.

⁵⁵ L. GUANELLA, *Regolamento SdC – 1905*, Opera Omnia, Centro Studi Guanelliani, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 1988, p. 1148.

⁵⁶ In this respect, his experience of failure at Traona is illuminating. When Bishop P. Carsana informed him he was to go to Traona, Fr. Guanella “*thought that he had Providence in his pocket*,” he believed that he could now consider the phase of seeking his vocation as a founder as over and done with. In L. GUANELLA, *Le Vie della Provvidenza*, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 2003, p. 52.

⁵⁷ “*Lastly God thought of creating man. He sought advice from the most august Trinity and they said, ‘We shall make man in our image and likeness.’ Moses then concluded expressly, ‘God created man in His likeness, in His likeness God created him.’*” L. GUANELLA, *Da Adamo a Pio IX – I*. Opera Omnia, Vol. II/1, Centro Studi Guanelliani, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 1995, p. 20.

⁵⁸ “*The work of God par excellence here on earth is man, created so that he might be a reverend son of Holy Church*,” L. GUANELLA, *Le Glorie del Pontificato*, Opera Omnia, Vol. II/1, Centro Studi Guanelliani, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 1995, p. 954.

⁵⁹ “*A pagan doctor considering the structure of the human body exclaimed, ‘This is not a book I have written, but a hymn I have sung in honor of the Divinity.’ Man stands in an attitude of command, he is king of the universe, all the animals obey him, in stature he is in proportion to all the created things around him. ‘Man’ says St. Ambrose, ‘is an image of the universe.’*” L. GUANELLA, *Da Adamo a Pio IX – I*, Opera Omnia, Vol. II/1, Centro Studi Guanelliani, Nuove Frontiere Editrice,

Rome 1995, p. 20.

⁶⁰ “Now this act of Adam was a sin, but of weakness,” *ibid.*, p. 22.

⁶¹ Fr. Guanella recalls for us a sentence of St. Thomas, “Man after sin needs divine grace to be healed,” *ibid.*, p. 22.

⁶² “God therefore did not place a curse on Adam and Eve. But he did not stop punishing them with a scourge of the senses, concupiscence, tormenting them continuously. And showing Himself in the act as a master rather than a father, He chased them out of the earthly paradise and there to guard the entrance He placed a cherubim armed with a flaming sword. However the Lord, ever good, seeing the wretches confused and trembling, gave them clothes of animal skins and then with immense goodness went on to say, ‘A woman will crush the head of the serpent. From this woman will be born one who will be the savior of all. And if you and others believe in the one I shall send, you will nevertheless be saved.’” L. GUANELLA, *Da Adamo a Pio IX – I*, Opera Omnia, Vol. II/1, Centro Studi Guanelliani, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 1995, pp. 23-24.

⁶³ “Ob, if alongside Jesus you were to bury the former man of concupiscence, may you believe that you would shake the world around you into holiness!” L. GUANELLA, *Il Fondamento*, Opera Omnia, Vol. III, Centro Studi Guanelliani, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 1999, pp. 872-873.

⁶⁴ L. GUANELLA, *Andiamo al Padre*, Opera Omnia, Vol. III, Centro Studi Guanelliani, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 1999, p. 143.

⁶⁵ JOHN PAUL II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 1995, no. 85.

⁶⁶ AA.VV, *Basic Document for the Guanellian Mission*, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, 1994, no. 74.

⁶⁷ L. GUANELLA, *Lettera Circolare ai Servi della Carità – 20 October 1913*, Opera Omnia, Vol. IV, Centro Studi Guanelliani, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 1988, p. 1411.

⁶⁸ Cf. *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2005, no. 2.

⁶⁹ Cf. AA.VV, *Basic Document for the Guanellian Mission*, Nuove

Frontiere Editrice, 1994, no. 19.

⁷⁰ L. GUANELLA, *Vieni Meco – 1913*, Opera Omnia, Vol. IV, Centro Studi Guanelliani, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 1988, p. 795.

⁷¹ L. MAZZUCCHI, *Fragmenta Vitae et Dictorum*, Archivio Guanelliano Como, article XXVI no. 2.

⁷² L. GUANELLA, *Le Vie della Provvidenza*, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 2003, p. 92.

⁷³ L. GUANELLA, Regolamento SdC – 1910, Opera Omnia, Vol. IV, Centro Studi Guanelliani, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 1988, p. 1232.

⁷⁴ Cf. “*Making Charity the Heart of the World*” – Guanellian Lay Movement, Rome 2010, no. 16. See also *La Divina Provvidenza – February 1913*, p. 27, “*This eminent work of redemption, of the apostolate, of social merit, of holy co-operation in the action of Jesus the Savior is that which is consecrated to the cancelling the double order of evils, to restoring the double happiness of the spirit and the body: our ministry has the aim of salvation, the wellbeing and the sanctification of souls; its purpose is also, and is a good means for the latter aim, to alleviate bodily needs, to take in the abandoned and the needy, for whom the world offers neither joy nor smiles.*” See also AA.VV, *Basic Document for the Guanellian Mission*, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 1994, no. 14.

⁷⁵ AA.VV, *Basic Document for the Guanellian Mission*, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 1994, no. 13.

⁷⁶ One day in Prosto, he saw a young boy in a pitiful state. He liked him, treated him as a good friend, then he gave him a great proof of brotherhood; he looked after him, found him a free place at the Piccola Casa della Provvidenza in Turin and took him there himself. Cf. L. GUANELLA, *Le Vie della Provvidenza*, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 2003, p. 40.

⁷⁷ “*Art and religion, science and the faith, these are the good sisters that hold hands to raise man from earthly baseness to heavenly greatness.*” L. GUANELLA, *Quarto Centenario di Andrea della Peschiera*, Opere, Vol. II/2, Centro Studi Guanelliani, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 1997, p. 504.

⁷⁸ "It is a work of mercy that you accomplish, O Filotea, when in your human heart you lay human infirmities in order to provide for them." L. GUANELLA, *Il Fondamento*, Opera Omnia, Vol. III, Centro Studi Guanelliani, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 1999, p. 975.

⁷⁹ L. GUANELLA, *Massime di Spirito e Metodo d'Azione 1888-1889*, Opera Omnia, Vol. IV, Centro Studi Guanelliani, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 1988, p. 22.

⁸⁰ L. GUANELLA, *Vieni Meco – 1913*, Opera Omnia, Vol. IV, Centro Studi Guanelliani, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 1988, p. 799.

⁸¹ L. GUANELLA, *Regolamento Interno FsC – 1899*, Opera Omnia, Vol. IV, Centro Studi Guanelliani, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 1988, p. 993.

⁸² L. GUANELLA, *Regolamento SdC – 1910*, Opera Omnia, Centro Studi Guanelliani, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 1988, p. 1233.

⁸³ L. GUANELLA, *Nel Mese dei Fiori*, Opera Omnia, Vol. I, Centro Studi Guanelliani, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 1992, p. 950.

⁸⁴ L. GUANELLA, *Le Vie della Provvidenza*, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 2003, p. 37.

⁸⁵ P. PELLEGRINI, *Don Guanella Inedito*, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 1993, p. 35.

⁸⁶ L. GUANELLA, *Le Vie della Provvidenza*, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 2003, p. 12.

⁸⁷ L. STERLOCCHI, *Vita di Caterina Guanella*, Como, Scuola Tipografica Casa Divina Provvidenza, Como 1911, p. 10.

⁸⁸ L. GUANELLA, *Le Vie della Provvidenza*, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 2003, p. 37.

⁸⁹ L. MAZZUCCHI, *Fragmenta Vitae et Dictorum*, Archivio Guanelliano Como, art. XXIV n. 1.

⁹¹ L. GUANELLA, *Le Vie della Provvidenza*, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 2003, pp. 11-12.

⁹² L. MAZZUCCHI, *Fragmenta Vitae et Dictorum*, Archivio Guanelliano Como, art. XLVI, n. 3.

⁹³ L. GUANELLA, *Le Vie della Provvidenza*, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 2003, 38; cf. also L. MAZZUCCHI, *Fragmenta Vitae et Dictorum*, Archivio Guanelliano Como, Como, art XXX n. 1: “*In all things and also in the Council he always said, ‘Let us pay heed to our conscience.’*”

⁹⁴ L. MAZZUCCHI, *Fragmenta Vitae et Dictorum*, Archivio Guanelliano Como, art. II, n. 11.

⁹⁵ Cf. L. GUANELLA, *La Divina Provvidenza June 1910*, pp. 92-94.

⁹⁶ L. MAZZUCCHI, *Fragmenta Vitae et Dictorum*, Archivio Guanelliano Como, art. II, n. 26.

⁹⁷ L. GUANELLA, *Vieni Meco – 1913*, Opera Omnia Vol. IV, Centro Studi Guanelliani, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 1988, p. 788.

⁹⁸ Marcellina Bosatta (1847-1934), Blessed Clare’s elder sister, supported Fr. Guanella in all his works of charity; she was a wise and confident counselor, from the very beginning in Pianello Laria, where she had been Superior of the little community of Ursulines founded by Fr. Carlo Coppini. She was the first Superior General of the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence. After Fr. Guanella’s death, Sr. Marcellina remained a faithful guardian of his spirit and his teachings, continuing to guide the Congregation until 1925. She spent her last years in retirement and prayer at the Mother House in Como-Lora.

⁹⁹ L. GUANELLA, *La settimana con Dio*, in L. MAZZUCCHI, *La vita, lo spirito e le opere di don Luigi Guanella*, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 1999, p. 481.

¹⁰⁰ L. GUANELLA, *Making Charity the Heart of the World – Guanellian Lay Movement*, Rome 2010, no. 6

¹⁰¹ The Association was recognized by the Pontifical Council for the Laity as “*An Institution of the Guanellian Religious Family*” with a Decree dated May 22, 2003.

¹⁰² L. GUANELLA, *Le Vie della Provvidenza*, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 2003, p. 41.

¹⁰³ L. GUANELLA, *Le Vie della Provvidenza*, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 2003, p. 45; V. LUCARELLI, *Don Guanella. Un “Contemporaneo” Affascinante*, Edizioni Paoline, 1991, p. 61.

¹⁰⁴ L. GUANELLA, *Le Vie della Provvidenza*, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 2003, p. 43.

¹⁰⁵ L. GUANELLA, *Le Vie della Provvidenza*, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 2003, p. 42.

¹⁰⁶ L. MAZZUCCHI, *Fragmenta Vitae et Dictorum*, Archivio Guaneliano Como, art. XXVIII, n. 2.

¹⁰⁷ L. GUANELLA, *Le Vie della Provvidenza*, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 2003, pp. 108-109.

¹⁰⁸ BENEDICT XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2009, n. 9.

¹⁰⁹ BENEDICT XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana 2009, n. 19.

¹¹⁰ Cf. G. VECCHIO, *Giovanni Acquaderni, Davide Albertario, Filippo Media, Giuseppe Toniolo, Cristiani per la Chiesa e per la Società*, in *Saggi Storici* – 16, Centro Studi Guanelliani, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome, 2000, p. 175f.

¹¹¹ L. GUANELLA, *Le Vie della Provvidenza*, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 2003, p. 79.

¹¹² L. GUANELLA, *Le Vie della Provvidenza*, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 2003, p. 41.

¹¹³ L. GUANELLA, *Da Adamo a Pio IX*, in *Opera Omnia*, Vol. II/I, Centro Studi Guanelliani, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 1995, pp. 1f.

¹¹⁴ L. GUANELLA, *Le Vie della Provvidenza*, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 2003, pp. 78-79.

¹¹⁵ A descendant of an old Lombard family, Maddalena Crosto married Francesco Albini who came from a patrician family of Urbino. A Franciscan Tertiary, she wrote several formative, devotional and children's theatrical works. Leo XIII conferred various awards upon her for her work as a Christian writer. Her collaboration with Fr. Guanella began in Milan in 1896: she edited the Bulletin "*La Divina Provvidenza*" for ten years, she helped him with the definitive draft of the lengthy *Regolamento delle Figlie di S. Maria della Provvidenza*, printed

in 1911, and wrote *Fiore di Cielo*, the first complete biography of Sr. Clare Bosatta, published in 1910.

¹¹⁶ The first issue of the bulletin “*La Divina Provvidenza*” was published in December 1982. Its publication has continued to our day.

¹¹⁷ It was the district of Upper Lake Como; after the draining begun by Fr. Guanella, the area was completely recovered; new populated centres came into being (Nuovo Olonia, Dubino...).

¹¹⁸ cf. G. ROSSI, *L’Istruzione Agraria in Italia tra Ottocento e Novecento: la Colonna Agricola di Monte Mario a Roma*, in *Saggi Storici -18-Centro Studi Guanelliani*, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome, 2000, pp. 165-199; see also A. ROBBIATI, *Le Colonie Agricole: Il Caso di San Salvatore i Piano di Spagna*, in “*L’Opera di Don Luigi Guanella. Le origini e gli sviluppi nell’area Lombarda*,” *Atti del Convegno di studi per il centenario della Casa della Divina Provvidenza*, Como 1988, pp. 173-216; A. FOLONARO-L. TRUSSONI, *La “Nuova” Olonia SS. Salvatore*, Meroni Editrice, Cassano con Albese (CO) 2000.

¹¹⁹ While he was still alive many people identified him by the nickname “Holy Engineer.” On his death the canonical process for the recognition of his holiness was initiated. He has the title “Servant of God” and the cause of his beatification has been under way since 1960. Like Fr. Guanella, he was enrolled among the Franciscan Tertiaries.

¹²⁰ L. MAZZUCCHI, *Fragmenta Vitae et Dictorum*, *Archivio Guanelliano Como*, art. XVI, n. 5.

¹²¹ L. MAZZUCCHI, *La Vita, lo Spirito e le Opere di Don Luigi Guanella*, Editrice Nuovo Frontiere, Rome 1999, pp. 560-561. In 1907 Agostino Gemelli, in the world Edoardo (1878-1959), was going through a deep crisis, triggered by the powerful suggestions of “modernism.” He was advised by Pius X to confide in Fr. Guanella, “*Open your soul to him and do whatever he tells you as if I myself were commanding you.*” *To the objection that Fr. Guanella was not a theologian and did not know about the problems raised by modernism, the Pope answered him, “Haven’t you already racked your brains with theologians? You need a saint and Fr. Guanella is a saint.” Gemelli met Fr. Guanella and overcame his crisis. He testified at the canonical process, “I think I can testify that if I came through my serious crisis unharmed,*

I owe it not only to Fr. Guanella's great charity, but to the simplicity of his spirit."

¹²² AA.VV., *Basic Document for the Guanellian Mission*, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 1994, n. 140.

¹²³ L. GUANELLA, *Le Vie della Provvidenza*, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 2003, p. 19.

¹²⁴ L. GUANELLA, *Regolamento Interno FSMP – 1899*, Opera Omnia, Vol. IV, Centro Studi Guanelliani, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 1988, p. 301. We publish here (a translation of) the beautiful testimony that Fr. Agostino Gemelli gave at the commemoration of Fr. Guanella that was held in the Church of S. Giuseppe al Trionfale on November 25, 1915, "*Fr. Guanella takes in the creatures whom science itself rejects since it sees in them no possibility of developing spiritual activities; indeed, he sometimes accepts them in opposition to the claims of a certain science that considers this a sterile and useless act. Yet, motivated by love for his neighbor, Fr. Guanella humbly and simply overcomes the proud prejudices of men and women and, in welcoming the 'rejects,' not only carries out a mission of faith and civilization but succeeds in achieving results that psychiatrists themselves would never have expected.*"

¹²⁵ AA.VV., *Con fede Amore e Competenza. Profilo dell'Operatore Guanelliano*, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 2000, nn. 26-31.

¹²⁶ L. GUANELLA, *Regolamento Interno FsC – 1899*, Opera Omnia, Vol. IV, Centro Studi Guanelliani, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 1988, p. 1006.

¹²⁷ L. GUANELLA, *Massime di Spirito e Metodo d'Azione – 1888/89*, Opera Omnia, Vol. IV, Centro Studi Guanelliani, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 1988, p. 43.

¹²⁸ L. GUANELLA, *Regolamento FsMP – 1911*, Opera Omnia, Vol. IV, Centro Studi Guanelliani, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 1988, p. 431.

¹²⁹ L. GUANELLA, *Massime di Spirito e Metodo d'Azione – 1888/89*, Opera Omnia, Vol. IV, Centro Studi Guanelliani, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 1988, p. 50.

¹³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 38.

¹³¹ L. GUANELLA, *Regolamento Interno FsC – 1899*, Opera Omnia, Vol. IV, Centro Studi Guanelliani, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 1988, p. 1007.

¹³² L. GUANELLA, *Il Fondamento*, Opera Omnia, Vol. III, Centro Studi Guanelliani, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 1999, p. 963.

¹³³ M. CAROZZINO, *Visione dell'Uomo ed Educabilità in Don Guanella*, in AA.VV., *Il Rapporto Educative in Stile Guanelliano*, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome, 1989, p. 159.

¹³⁴ AA.VV., *Basic Document for the Guanellian Mission*, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 1994, n. 85.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, n. 87.

¹³⁶ L. GUANELLA, *Regolamento Interno FsC – 1899*, Opera Omnia, IV, Centro Studi Guanelliani, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 1988, p. 1029; *Regolamento SdC – 1905*, *ibid.*, p. 1147, “*Known as the preventive system of education is that method of charity, treatment and expediency through which superiors surround their dependents with paternal affection and brothers surround their own brothers with concern, so that in the day’s work no one will incur evil and all will reach a happy destination. This is the system that is closest to the example of Christian life of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph... In practice, it is necessary to 1) have the preventive system in one’s heart and in one’s mind, 2) to exercise it with one’s equals, 3) with one’s inferiors, 4) and with one’s superiors, 5) in every circumstance and always.*”

¹³⁷ L. GUANELLA, *O Padre! O Madre! – Secondo Corso*, Opera Omnia, Vol. IV, Centro Studi Guanelliani, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 1992, p. 90.

¹³⁸ M. CAROZZINO, *Visione dell'Uomo ed Educabilità in Don Guanella* in AA.VV., *Il Rapporto Educativo in Stile Guanelliano*, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Roma, 1989, p. 160.

¹³⁹ Cf. note no. 63.

¹⁴⁰ AA.VV., *Con Fede, Amore e Competenza – Profilo dell'Operatore Guanelliano*, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 2000; [in English: With

Faith, Love and Competence- Profile of the Guanellian Staff, U.S.A., 2002].

¹⁴¹ ITALIAN EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE, *Educare alla Vita Buona del Vangelo*. Orientamenti Pastorali dell'Episcopato Italiano per il Decennio 2010-2020, EDB, 2010.

¹⁴² BENEDICT XVI, *Letter to the Faithful of the Diocese and City of Rome on the Urgent Task of Educating Young People*, January 21, 2008, in EV 25/55.

¹⁴³ BENEDICT XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, 78.

¹⁴⁴ ITALIAN EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE, *Educare alla Vita Buona del Vangelo*, EDB, 2010, 9.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 55.

¹⁴⁶ COMMISSIONE EPISCOPALE PER IL CLERO E LA VITA CONSACRATA, *Messaggio per la 15° Giornata Mondiale della Vita Consacrata*, Rome January 6, 2011.

¹⁴⁷ L. MAZZUCCHI, *La Vita, lo Spirito e le Opere di Don Luigi Guanella*, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 1999, p. 559.

CONTENTS

Presentation: <i>General Postulator</i>	P.	9
Preface., <i>Bishop of the Diocese of Como</i>	»	15

PART I AGAINST THE BACKGROUND

1. The historical context.....	»	21
2. The social context	»	24
3. The ecclesial context	»	26
4. Fr Guanella and his time.....	»	27

PART II IN THE FOREGROUND

1. Under the wings of Providence	»	37
2. The original environment	»	41
3. Characteristic traits of Fr Guanella's holiness		42
a) Introduction	»	42
b) A man, a Saint.....	»	43
Man of God.....	»	49
Father of the poor	»	57
Citizen of the world	»	69
Passionate educator	»	79
Almost a Conclusion	»	85



PART III
THE SETTING

The Journey Towards Canonization	»	93
The Canonical Processes	»	95
The Miracles	»	96
For the Beatification	»	96
For the Canonization	»	98
Notes	»	109

