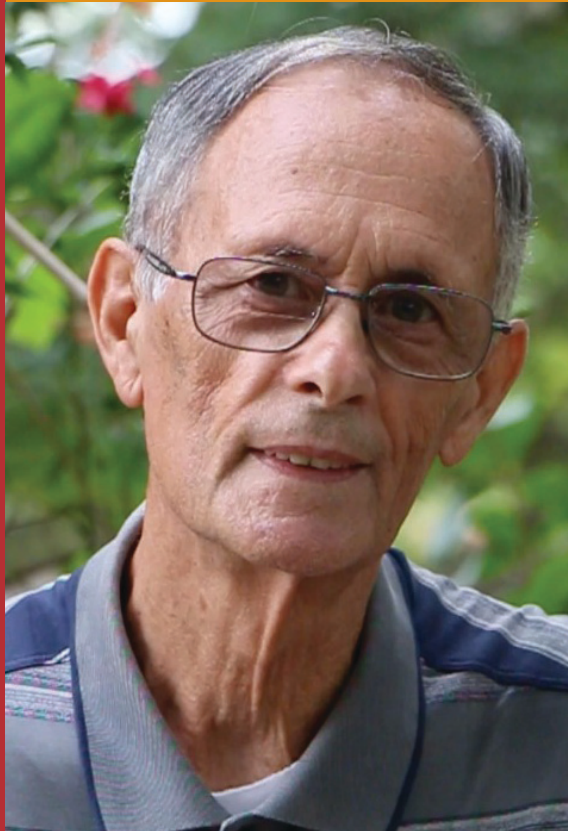


6/2017

In memoriam

Xaverian biographical profiles



Fr. Bruno Calderaro

23 September 1937 ~ 28 May 2017

In memoriam

Fr. Bruno Calderaro

Cittadella (PD – ITA)
23 September 1937

Douala (Camerun)
28 May 2017

Fr. Bruno Calderaro was born in Cittadella, Padua, Italy, on 23 September 1937; he joined the Xaverian Institute on 11 September 1956 in the novitiate of San Pietro in Vincoli (RA) and was ordained priest on 17 October 1965. He was assigned first to Mexico (1967–85) and then to Cameroon-Chad (1985–2017). The Lord called him to Himself on 28 May 2017.

On 31 July 2017, the parish priest of San Donato, Fr. Gianni Toneotto, wrote in the Bulletin of the Vicariate of Cittadella: «We only have to pronounce the name of our beloved Fr. Bruno to feel sentiments of admiration and gratitude.

«Admiration for the life of this Xaverian, a priest for 52 years, who worked first in Italy as a vocation animator, then as a formator in Mexico and, finally, in Africa, his mission field.

«To the word “*admiration*”, we add the word “*gratitude*”. We, the people of San Donato, wish to express our gratitude to Fr. Bruno because, whenever he came back to Italy for brief periods of rest, he always made himself available to everyone. We remember him above all for the months he spent with us in 1994, when he replaced our parish priest, Fr. Luciano, who was recovering from illness.

«But going back to his nostalgia for Africa, we can say that Fr. Bruno and the mission lands of Africa had become as one. All of us understood this when we saw him leave for the last time: he was skin and bones and well aware of his precarious physical state, but he was determined to live his vocation as a missionary of the Gospel until the very end».

After completing elementary school, on 26 September 1950 Bruno entered the minor seminary of Vicenza, where he attended junior high school; from there he moved to Zelarino in October (VE) 1954, where he attended senior high school. He entered novitiate in San Pietro in Vincoli (RA), on 11 September 1956, and made his First Profession there on 12 September 1957. In connection with this, he wrote to the Superior General, Fr. Giovanni Gazza, one month before his First Profession:

After studying and meditating on the book of the Constitutions and other documents, I ask you to accept me among the Xaverians. I have prayed a lot to the Lord during this year of Novitiate and Our Blessed Lady has always encouraged me and sustained me in my work.

With God's help I was able to understand a little better the sublime level to which the Constitutions are calling me, namely, "before all else my sanctification and then the salvation of the infidels": this is my ideal, about which I have dreamed since I was a young boy and lived out as a young man. How many times I have been fascinated by the path to which the Lord is calling me!

There is no doubt that "the apostolic life, combined with the profession of the religious vows, is the most perfect life possible on this earth".

Truly the year of Novitiate was the most wonderful year of my life because God was working in and with me in the daily work and in every action.

Father, I ask you not to ignore the words of a poor young man, but to accept me among the ranks of your sons.

I thank you wholeheartedly and ask for your paternal blessing.

He then went to study Literature and Philosophy in Desio (MB). He did his Introductory studies and Theology in Parma, where he was ordained priest on 17 October 1965. At the end of Theology, Fr. Bruno was assigned, in October 1966, to the junior seminary of Zelarino, as a vocation promoter.



On the Feast of the Epiphany in 1966 he wrote to the Superior General, Fr. Giovanni Castelli, asking him to be assigned to the mission of the Congo:

«Today is the manifestation of the Lord to the peoples. May I therefore also manifest a simple, but profound desire? Please send me to the Missions at the end of my Theology course. All I desire is to spend my life in the missions. I hope that I will not be stuck in Italy, but God's will be done».

On 21 September 1966 he repeated his request to the new Superior General, Bishop Gianni Gazza: «On the Epiphany of this year I asked the Superior General, Fr. Giovanni Castelli, to assign me to the Congo because I wanted to spend my life in the mission! I now present my request to you, in the hope that it will not end up in the same way as the first one, but not because you must do as I wish, but because I hope you may find a way of life that is more suitable to my sanctification as a Xaverian missionary».

In July 1967 he was assigned to the Xaverian Region of Mexico. He served there first in the minor seminary of San Juan del Rio, as prefect, teacher and vice-rector (1967–77), then in the minor seminary of Arandas, where he was in charge of constructions (1977–78) and rector (1978–85).

A former Xaverian student, Alejandro Macias Sapién, writes: «I met Fr. Bruno when I joined the junior seminary of Arandas in 1979. He was the rector and treasurer of the community. He always had an attitude of responsibility and care for every aspect of community life and the confreres.

«He was a very dedicated man in every sense, in his profoundly Marian spiritual life and in his daily work. [...] I used to watch him building the seminary, looking for construction materials and how he dealt with the benefactors, and when he celebrated the evening Mass, offering a profound reflection on the signs of God's presence in daily activity.

«Finally, I can say that Fr. Bruno had a great influence on my life: he taught me to walk the path of goodness and become a responsible man close to God».



On 13 April 1984, the General Councilor, Fr. Alfiero Ceresoli, wrote to Fr. Bruno who had expressed his desire to go to Zaire (today's Democratic Republic of Congo), "his African dream":

Perhaps you were expecting a letter of assignment. We are not quite there yet, but things are looking good.

When we met, you asked to go to Zaire, but this year there are many confreres who wish to go there. For some the choice is determined by objective factors, such as the fact that they have already been there.

I am therefore asking you to move your preference a little to the northwest, which is still in French-speaking Africa. We need missionaries for Cameroon-Chad, where we are extending our areas of activity, given the

urgent needs and the deliberation of the last General Chapter. There are few Christians there and the Church is taking its first steps.

We obviously do not wish to make a final assignment without your consent [...]. You told me your dream was to go Africa. Cameroon is in Africa... I await your reply. Give my greetings to all the confreres in Arandas.

Fr. Bruno was assigned to the Xaverian Region of Cameroon-Chad. He arrived there on 21 September 1985, the feast of St. Matthew, apostle and evangelist. He served as assistant priest in the parish of Douala-Oyack (1985–92), parish priest in Douala-Ndog Passi (1992–99), Bafoussam-Koptchou (1999–2007) and Douala-Ngodi Bakoko (2013–17).

He also carried out other tasks: rector of the Philosophy community, in Bafoussam (2007–09) and missionary animator (2010–13).

Fr. Bruno wrote to Fr. Ceresoli on 30 May 1986: «Life here in Douala is normal and tomorrow we will celebrate baptisms and first communions (about 150). Today we are doing the spiritual retreat with the adolescents. The pastoral visit of the Vicar General will be in July we will celebrate the Confirmations on that occasion.

«Personally I am well and happy to be here. Our presence among the Africans is essential for attracting them to Christ. We try to reveal to them the great mystery of God. I thank the Lord who grants me the great joy living among them.

«The day retreats I preach to the various ecclesial movements give me a great spiritual and human satisfaction. It is a special spiritual experience and so far everyone is happy with them. We try to repeat them, mindful that we cannot love what we do not know.

«The rains have arrived, bringing humidity with them, but everyone is fine. It is a small cross that unites us to the Lord in the redemption of people [...]. I hope that the work on formation develops serenely and to everyone's satisfaction.

«Please give my best wishes to all the confreres of the General Direction».



Many people of Cameroon-Chad, both Christians and non-Christians, expressed their appreciation for the person and the work Fr. Bruno Calderaro. The following are just a sample:

«You were the best catechist, counselor and father I have ever met».

«Fr. Bruno, thank you for the work you carried out in our pastoral area, from Oyak to Ladibamba. You taught us to seek God, to be faithful to our commitments and to be strong in times of difficulty».

«The Kuete family thanks you for all you did for us: you were a good father, a tireless counselor and a friend. We will never forget you».

«Fr. Bruno, as a priest you were a great man of faith, a courageous worker and a tireless builder of churches and dispensaries. You did all this with the sole desire to build up the people of God [...]. You were a good pastor who had a paternal and maternal love for all the faithful; you were a good formator of catechumens».

The Xaverian Sisters write: «Fr. Bruno has left us some wonderful memories. When we arrived in Douala four and a half years ago, he was a brother and father to us at the same time. He accompanied us and initiated us into the new pastoral and social reality of Douala. All the Xaverian Sisters thank him, especially those of the Cameroon-Chad Delegation, for his fraternal and affectionate presence, which was discrete in the various joyful and sad moments, for his witness of a moderate and consistent life as a tireless, zealous missionary, who was passionate about God and people, and for the dialogue, consultations and discernment we did together for the smooth running of our pastoral activity».

Fr. Fernando García, the then Regional Superior of the Xaverians in Cameroon, writes:

Fr. Bruno Calderaro was a very reserved man of few words. He had a strong personality and when he decided on something, no one could change his mind.

He was a great apostle and missionary. He arrived in Cameroon in 1985 after 20 years in Mexico and he spent 32 years in Cameroon.

He was committed to building chapels and the formation of the laity. In the last years he served the parish of Saint Jude the Apostle day and night: he had begun it and it was a real jewel!

From what has been said about him, I was especially struck by his closeness to the people. He often went to visit and dialogue with them in their homes.

St. Paul's confession to the elders of Ephesus sums up well the profound thought of this missionary: «I do not place any value on my own life, provided that I can complete the mission the Lord Jesus gave me — to bear witness to the good news of God's grace » (*Acts 20:24*).

Thank you, Fr. Bruno, for the gift of your life and for your witness as a zealous missionary dedicated to the coming of God's Kingdom.



On the morning of 28 May 2017, Fr. Bruno had prepared everything for the celebration of Mass when he suddenly became ill. He was immediately admitted to the Gineco Hospital in Douala, where he remained for almost the entire day.

In the late afternoon he wanted to return home, despite being told that it would be better to remain in hospital for observation. In the evening, at the hour of Vespers, the Lord called him to Himself: “Well done, good and trustworthy servant; you have shown you are trustworthy in small things; I will trust you with greater; come and join in your master’s happiness” (*Mt* 25:21).

«Then I heard a voice from heaven say to me: “Write down: Blessed are those who die in the Lord. Blessed indeed, the Spirit says; now they can rest for ever after their work, since their good deeds go with them”» (*Rev* 14:13).

Fr. Domenico Calarco S.X.

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