

7/2017

In memoriam

Xaverian biographical profiles



Fr. Giuseppe Caretta

29 December 1934 ~ 27 June 2017

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Fr. Giuseppe Caretta

Santorso (VI – ITA)
29 December 1934

Parma (Italia)
27 June 2017

Fr. Giuseppe Caretta died on 27 June 2017 at the Mother House in Parma. The nursing personnel prepared him for the last great effort before he climbed to the top of the Holy Mountain. Each one of them could undoubtedly say something about this confrere, who left behind him a great heritage of affection and wisdom.

Fr. Luigi Zucchinelli writes: Fr. Giuseppe was a man of prayer and he was very devoted to Our Blessed Lady. Every day we saw him with his rosary in his hand and he was always available to accompany groups of pilgrims to Medjugorje.

He was a sensitive confrere who was always attentive to the needs of the community and individuals. He frequented families when he found out that there was someone sick or in need of a good word.

He was always available for pastoral service in parishes and nursing homes. The people in the nursing home in Cassano d'Adda (MI), where he went every Friday to celebrate Mass, thus remember him: "We will never forget his warm presence before and during Mass and we will remember him in our prayers".

He was a man with a ready smile who welcomed everyone. No one felt ill at ease in his presence.

He loved nature and cultivated flowers and he also dedicated some time each day to work in the garden.

Music was part of his life: for many years he was the Director of the *Fogolar Furlan* choir in Udine and Monza and he received many recognitions of merit.

I thank the Lord for giving me the opportunity to live with Fr. Giuseppe for some years.

Giuseppe Caretta was born in Monte di Malo, in the province of Vicenza, on 29 December 1934. He joined the junior seminary in Vicenza on 12 September 1946, where he attended junior high school before moving to Zelarino (VE) for senior high school.

On 11 September 1951 he began novitiate in San Pietro in Vincoli (RA) and he made his First Profession there on 12 September 1952. He then went to study Philosophy and Letters at the Xaverian Lyceum in Desio (MB), and then Theology at the Xaverian Theology community in Parma; in between these periods he served as prefect in Nizza Monferrato (AT). He made his Final Profession in San Pietro in Vincoli on 12 September 1958 and was ordained priest in Parma on 25 October 1959.

On the occasion of his 60th anniversary of Religious Profession, Fr. Caretta wrote to the Superior General, Fr. Rino Benzoni:

Dear Fr. Rino, thank you for your kindness and above all for your prayers on my 60th anniversary of consecration to God and the Mission.

I must repeat, especially over these last years, that “The Lord could not have been more benevolent towards me”.

My only regret is that I have not done more and better. I would be an ungrateful man if I complained about my health because all these days and years are a gift. I ask the Lord and my mother to help me use them to do good.

I promise to always remember my Profession companions in my prayers, especially at Medjugorje.

I send you my best wishes and greetings.



In July 1960 Fr. Caretta was assigned to the Xaverian Region of Japan and he arrived there in September 1960.

«The beginning of the Xaverian presence in Japan was a result of events in China at the end of the 1940s. Just as China was closing its doors to missionaries, Japan (which was in a bad way after the war) offered great hope for

evangelization. Expelled from China, the Xaverians headed for the Land of the Rising Sun.

«On 27 January 1949 the Regional Superior of the Xaverian in China wrote from Shanghai to Bishop Marella, the Apostolic Delegate in Japan: “The current situation of China is such that, although several of our young missionaries are ready for work, they cannot do so. We must therefore find new work fields and our thoughts have turned to Japan, where we believe there is a need for young apostles; St. Francis Xavier, from whom our Institute takes its name, carried out his great apostolate in Japan and our Founder, Bishop Guido Maria Conforti, dearly wanted his missionaries to go there one day [...]».

«On 21 December 1949 [...], the first two Xaverians, Fathers Marco Ronzani and Gaetano Cocci, disembarked in the port of Kobe. Bishop Taguchi entrusted the parish of Kishiwada to them and the two men were already there just three days after their arrival in Japan [...].

«More than elsewhere, the mission in Japan is a really meticulous, difficult and patient task which demands serious preparation and robust health. As in all societies, the Japanese too are searching for anyone who can speak to their spirit and give them “the Bread that nourishes us for eternal life”»¹.

Today, after more than 50 years, we can deduce that the strategy of those beginnings was very positive. Every day, about 40 Xaverian missionaries are working in the land of the Rising Sun in 24 centers of witness, in the first proclamation of the Gospel and in works of charity.

For two years Fr. Caretta dedicated himself to the study of the Japanese language in the Regional House in Kobe. In connection with this Fr. Davide Zamparo, the parish priest of Kanoya, encouraged him to «build the Japanese language bit by bit” in his mind, just as he was accustomed to read the music notes of the rich repertoire of songs that the Japanese children loved so much».

He was then assigned first as assistant priest in Kanoya (1962–65) and Saito (1965–66) and then as parish priest in Takanabe (1966–68).

On 4 July 1964 Fr. Caretta wrote to the Superior General, Fr. Giovanni Castelli:

I am very happy here in Kanoya. In my pastoral activity I carry out seven catechism sessions a week; then there is the catechism for Christian children on Sunday, the altar servers, English language school for a group of female pupils, piano school on Wednesday and Saturday for five people; twice a month I teach catechism in a place that is 40 km from here, I also

¹ Emilio Iurman, *Giappone sulle orme del Saverio*, in AA.VV. *I Missionari Saveriani*, Parma, Istituto Missionari Saveriani, 1996, p. 209 s.

look after the Christians in Saito and, finally, I make a weekly visit to Fr. Alessandrini, who is alone in his parish.



In July 1968, Fr. Caretta returned to Italy, where he worked as a vocation promoter (1972–79) and teacher (1976–83) in the minor seminary of Udine; he then worked in the pastoral ministry in Desio (1983–88) and Tavernerio (1988–2017).

In August 2004, he wrote to the Superior General, Fr. Rino Benzoni:

Dear Fr. Rino, [...] regarding my health: given my age, various aches and pains are beginning to emerge, even though there is nothing serious at the moment. They say that this also helps us to feel that we are true missionaries.

I am finding it more and more difficult to take on commitments than in the past, but I will do what I can, for as long as God wants, without holding back.

I try to help our community of Tavernerio to fulfill all its pastoral and missionary goals.

I send you my best wishes and greetings.

Fr. Caretta's already precarious health was further compromised by a road accident on 6 March 2010 as he was travelling by car to hear confessions in Erba: he was involved in an almost head-on collision and suffered a serious head trauma that affected his cervical spine; he also suffered injuries to his chest, pelvis, a kidney and a thigh bone.

He was taken to hospital in Cantù, where the damaged kidney was removed. Other operations followed. Fr. Zucchinelli wrote: «On 6 April 2010, exactly one month after the accident, Fr. Giuseppe has shown some signs of improvement. He will soon be discharged from intensive care and will be moved to a medical ward for a few days, then he will be transferred to Mariano Comense for rehabilitation. Given the very serious nature of his condition after the accident, we made a novena to the Founder to ask for a cure; we then asked Dr. Monza (the consultant in charge of intensive care) if Fr. Giuseppe's recovery could be the result of a miracle. He replied: "I am more than willing to say that it was"».

At the beginning of June 2017, Fr. Giuseppe was transferred to the Mother House, suffering from a pancreatic tumor. «All is grace» exclaimed the dying priest in the *Diary of a country priest* by Bernanos; From the abyss of his

Fr. Giuseppe Caretta

suffering, Fr Giuseppe Caretta expressed the same belief. His longing to meet his Lord was finally satisfied in the early hours of the morning of 27 June 2017.

Fr. Domenico Calarco S.X.

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