

In the Father's House

«As we have been united
in the profession of the faith,
so let us keep ourselves united
in suffrage and intercession».
(Fr. Alberione)



At about 7 AM on Sunday, 24 January 2021, our brother priest died at the John Paul II Hospital in Bari due to the effects of a liver tumour

FATHER TOMMASO ANTONIO MASTRANDREA **78 years, 67 of Pauline life, 59 of profession and 52 of ordination**

A few days ago, hospitalized in Bari due to the worsening of his already precarious health conditions, Fr. Tommaso, a long-time journalist, died on the day when the Church remembers the figure of Saint Francis de Sales, Patron Saint of journalists. To this great Saint we now entrust “Don Tom”, as he was fondly called by the Paulines and by the journalists and employees of *Periodici San Paolo*, the publishing company of the most widespread periodicals in the Italian Province, where this brother of ours lived a long and fruitful years of apostolate.

Don Tom was born in Grumo Appula (Bari) on 2 April 1942. He entered the community of Bari on 3 September 1953, and made his first profession on 8 September 1961, confirming it in perpetuity five years later.

A generous and “volcanic priest” defined him in an article that appeared on the website www.famigliacristiana.it published immediately after his death. And he really was. Generous in his address to the children with frank and simple words through that magazine, *Il Giornalino* (commissioned by the Founder in 1924, one of the first magazines of our Congregation), which saw him as a protagonist, first as an Editor (1969-1976) and then, continuously for 24 years (1976-1999), as Director. Don Tom was ordained a priest in Rome on 30 June 1968, just the year before starting his journalistic career. It was in the year 1969, in fact, when – as soon as he started his licentiate in Sacred Theology (which he would later obtain in 1970) – the Superiors, cherishing his highly creative nature, initiated him into the editorial apostolate.

Under his direction, *Il Giornalino* achieved considerable success reaching respectable numbers (240 thousand copies), thanks above all to his narrative and dialoguing style with young people. Under the pseudonym of “uncle Giò”, he wrote memorable editorials as the Director of *Il Giornalino*, which have always found a great response in young people, who sent numerous letters of reply. As it happened in the last issue signed by him in December 1999, in which he took his leave of everyone thanking his collaborators (with some touching testimonies in the aforementioned online article) and, above all, his first readers, who have now become parents of the small new subscribers of that magazine that he, like Don Alberione, considered a “garden” where goodness, joy, imagination and knowledge are cultivated.

This very human quality was really Don Tom’s winning asset, because it always made him popular with many of our lay collaborators and confreres, even if it did not spare him great suffering in some critical and conflicting moments of the Italian Province in the middle of the ‘90s.

He was also responsible for works still present in the catalogue, for which he wrote the screenplay. Among the best known is the *Bible Comics*, *It is He*, *Paulus and the Secret of the Four Codes*, the latter on the life and work of Blessed James Alberione.

During his years at the direction of *Il Giornalino*, he was also Director of *Famiglia TV*, *Telenova* and *Novaradio*, our Milanese broadcasting networks that work in synergy with the Diocese of Milan.

Transferred to Turin in 1999, he directed the periodical *Saie Notizie* and was the local Superior of that community for two terms (2003-2009). After another two years spent in the marketing sector of *SAIE*, the company that took care of the so-called “great works”, Don Tom was transferred to Bari, the community where he had entered almost 60 years earlier, for a double mandate as local Superior (2011-2017). Here he had opened the community to fruitful interaction with some local ecclesial and social realities, allowing the use of the sports facilities attached to our structure. In 2017, he was transferred for a short period to the Good Shepherd Parish of Rome as an aid in the ministry and then, upon the passage of this reality to the Diocese of Rome in June 2018, to Modena, for a short period as animator of the local Cultural Centre.

Don Tom also experienced the suffering of not being able to look after his beloved brother Don Giuseppangelo in the last days of his life, a Pauline priest who died in Rome in May 2020, due to the latter’s isolation in hospital for contracting the Covid-19 virus.

He had been ill with cancer for some time but, if at first it seemed that the treatments had had a good effect, in recent months, staying in the community of Bari to access treatment in a local city hospital, the disease has prevailed over him.

On the feast day of the Conversion of St. Paul, we entrust this “volcanic” brother to the goodness of the merciful Father with the words of the Apostle: «I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith» (2Tm 4:7).

Rome, 25 January 2021
Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul



Father Stefano Stimamiglio, ssp
Secretary General

After the cremation, the ashes will be deposited in the family chapel of the cemetery of his hometown, Grumo Appula (Bari). The funeral will be celebrated on site as soon as possible.

The Superiors of Circumscriptions are to inform their communities for the suffrages prescribed (Const. 65 and 65.1).