

DAUGHTERS OF ST. MARY OF PROVIDENCE
SERVANTS OF CHARITY

SMALL STEPS TO HOLINESS

*Journeying with the Saints
of the Guanellian Family*

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Rome 2021

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Graphic and page setting: 3F PHOTOPRESS snc - Roma - September 2021

FOREWORD

This booklet comes as a souvenir of the 10th anniversary of Fr. Louis Guanella's canonisation and the 30th anniversary of Sr. Clare Bosatta's beatification. Its perspective is uplifting and exciting: **“perfect as the heavenly Father”**.

The words written by Fr. Guanella, Sr. Clare and Bishop Aurelio Bacciarini encourage us to aim at the high level of life, not to stop at a mediocre level, but to be enthusiastic about the attainable peak of holiness. Will we reach the goal of such perfection? Our saints affirm we can. They made it, and they are happy to wish this for us, for all of us.

Let us follow these texts and we will learn from them how to reach safely the goal, how not to lose heart while climbing, how to make our steps light, where our strength and conviction should rest. They will encourage us to be men and women of hope, to trust in Providence, to be lay people who want to be fully involved for the Gospel and the Poor, religious women and men in love with the charism of their congregation, a truly rich light given us by the Spirit to reach him. We need much courage and much desire to grow, to become adults in faith and in holiness. The road is open to all, all can conquer it.

Let us recall every day the principle that inspired Fr. Louis Guanella all through the path of his life: *“In the Works of Providence we need to trust as if everything was made by God and nothing by us, and at the same time labour as if everything relied on us and nothing on God”* (Reg. DSMP 1911).

Pope Francis, shepherd and guide of the holy people of God, is accompanying us throughout this booklet with the method suggested in his “Gaudete et Exsultate”: *“In order to be blameless, as he would have us, we need to live humbly in his presence, cloaked in his glory; we need to walk in union with him, recognizing his constant love in our lives. God is the Father who gave us life and loves us greatly”*. (GE 51).

The Guanellian Family wishes that all those who will get in touch with this booklet will have a spiritual journey leading everyone's heart to peace and serenity, feeling the presence of God - our dad at our side, cheering up our steps. His love urges us to the most and the best, and we are happy to move towards the fullness of life that will make us stay with Him all through eternity. We wish you all to become holy!

SR. NEUZA MARIA GIORDANI
Vicar General DSMP

FR. UMBERTO BRUGNONI
Superior General SC

INTRODUCTION

In his Apostolic Exhortation *Gaudete et exsultate*, on the call to holiness in today's world, Pope Francis invites us “to realize that ‘a great cloud of witnesses’ (12:1) impels us to advance constantly towards the goal” (GE 3).

Among them are the Saints of the Guanellian Family, sisters and brothers who, responding generously to the gifts of the Holy Spirit, have become for us sources of fruitful inspirations for life.

On the occasion of the 10th anniversary of Don Louis Guanella's canonisation and of the 30th anniversary of Sr. Clare Bosatta's beatification, remembering also Venerable Bishop Aurelio Bacciarini, we tried to mark a short and simple path following their steps, that they may “excite and encourage us to give our all and to embrace that unique plan that God willed for each of us from eternity” (GE 13).

In the light of these words of Pope Francis we want to read again something of their witness and their writing, to reflect, pray, and allow the Spirit to renew us.

The central page can be detached and kept on its own, and carries some prayers to obtain the intercession of our Saints, since, as Pope Francis reminds us “the saints now in God's presence preserve their bonds of love and communion with us” (GE 4).

We give thanks to the Father as we draw from this many-faceted beauty that springs out of the Lord's love, so that we too grow in holiness, which “is the most attractive face of the Church” (GE 9).

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Anime	A. BACCIARINI, <i>Anime: massime, aneliti, invocazioni</i> - Casa Divina Provvidenza, Como 1960
Come with Me	L. GUANELLA, <i>Come with me for the missionary sisters</i> - O.L. of Providence Delegation, Abor, 2008
Dono di giovinezza	L. GUANELLA, <i>Dono di giovinezza. Vita di Chiara Bosatta</i> - Centro Studi Guanelliani - Nuove Frontiere, Roma 2009
GE	PAPA FRANCESCO, Esortazione Apostolica <i>Gaudete et exsultate</i> , 19 marzo 2018
Maxims and Method	L. GUANELLA, <i>Maxims of Spirit and Method of Action</i> - O.L. of Providence Delegation, Abor, 2008
Opere III	L. GUANELLA, <i>Scritti morali e catechistici</i> , in Opere edite e inedite di Luigi Guanella, III - Centro Studi Guanelliani - Nuove Frontiere, Roma 1999
Opere IV	L. GUANELLA, <i>Scritti per le Congregazioni</i> , in Opere edite e inedite di Luigi Guanella, IV - Centro Studi Guanelliani - Nuove Frontiere, Roma 1988
Scritti e documenti	E. SOSCIA, F. BUCCI, <i>Chiara Bosatta. Scritti e documenti</i> - Centro Studi Guanelliani - Nuove Frontiere, Roma 2002
Voce d'apostolo	A. BACCIARINI, <i>Voce d'apostolo. La predicazione orale e scritta di mons. Aurelio Bacciarini: lettere pastorali dal 1917 al 1934</i> - Tip. Casa Divina Provvidenza, Como 1938
WFG	Writings of Fr. Guanella, translated by Fr. Peter Di Tullio - Bristol, RI (USA) 1987-1993 - Vol. 2 and 3

HOLINESS ... PERFECT AS THE HEAVENLY FATHER.

In order to be blameless, as he would have us, we need to live humbly in his presence, cloaked in his glory; we need to walk in union with him, recognizing his constant love in our lives. We need to lose our fear before that presence which can only be for our good. God is the Father who gave us life and loves us greatly. (GE 51)

Christian life begins with a request, that of the apostle Philip. "Philip said, 'Lord, show us the Father, and then we shall be satisfied'. Jesus said to him, 'Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father'" (Jn. 14:8-9). Discovering, and then encountering the Father, human heart finds an embrace where one can deliver himself, a peace where one finds rest. Outside there is often only anxiety and fear; human life rules as an obscure fate, even hostile. Don Guanella began this happy discovery from an unfavourable position. His times, the education he received, the hardships of his life condition were directing toward a vision of severity. Mysteriously or providentially, he felt an experience of good growing in him, a provident welcome, an easy and desirable path. Everything was taking light from this paternity, starting from the display of nature, the looks and words of human beings. He was convinced, conquered, comforted by the encounter with the Father. He allowed himself to be taken and transformed, and became the vehicle and the mirror of this paternity that embraces without ever abandoning. He found a Father and he became father for the fatherless.

Concluding prayer

O God, through your only Son you gave us the opportunity to know you as a Father. Help us to apply in our life the sentiments Jesus had towards you. Like don Guanella, let me find time, every day, for prayer and active charity. Through Christ our Lord.

"Amusing himself in the bosom of his mother or smiling at the knees of his father, the little child utters in a human sound; 'I love those who love me. I love you, my loving father. I love you, my beloved mother!'. In their own way, as the lily to its blossom, the bleating lamb and the shrilling swallow to their baby, also the mother and the father say to their child: 'I love you, my child, I love you!' You cannot forget for a single moment the tenderness of a father nor the compassionate affection of a child".

(Let Us Go to the Father, WFG, Vol. III, p. 18)



HOLINESS ... CHARITY FULLY LIVED.

Only on the basis of God's gift, freely accepted and humbly received, can we cooperate by our own efforts in our progressive transformation. We must first belong to God ... For that matter, the Church has always taught that charity alone makes growth in the life of grace possible, for "if I do not have love, I am nothing" (1 Cor 13:2). (GE 56)

This is what Pope John Paul II said in the homily for the beatification of Sr. Chiara Bosatta: "Sr. Chiara's humanity was fascinated by the charity of Christ, so that she became united with the suffering of the poor, in whom she saw the shining face of Christ ... St. Chiara says that holiness is possible for all, as long as we remain faithful to God ... In her meekness, in her simple attitudes, in her gentle manners, Chiara was hiding the unspoken strength of truly evangelical charity ... her message is still up to date because she accomplished with love the simple actions of each day, thus sanctifying the daily life". Thirty years after her beatification, we make this message our own. With God we can do everything: even holiness can be within our reach if we live with Him, in fullness, our daily time. Don Guanella said "she was doing good without knowing it" because "good is not proper of those who do much, but of those who love much".

Father, help us to imitate the virtues of Sr. Chiara, so that we also may be inflamed by your Charity to love You, who are Love, and serve our neighbour as your Son taught us. Through Christ our Lord.

"Most holy Heart of my Jesus, be so kind to instil in my heart and enrich it with the beautiful virtues I now ask for, that is that I may always be: obedient, humble, respectful, docile, charitable ... pure in mind and heart, desirous to do good to all and the grace to always be able to love you with a gutted love. Let me praise you and bless you until the happy day when I will have the fortune to see you and embrace you in the beautiful Paradise. Give me grace and means that I may be trained in these virtues and become soon holy".

(Scritti e documenti, p. 7)



HOLINESS ... YOUR MISSION ON EARTH.

A Christian cannot think of his or her mission on earth without seeing it as a path of holiness, for “this is the will of God, your sanctification” (1 Thess 4:3). Each saint is a mission, planned by the Father to reflect and embody, at a specific moment in history, a certain aspect of the Gospel. (GE 19)

The catechism we learned as children started with the question: “For what purpose did God create us?”. An unavoidable question ... always present. The answer is also always the same, even if it can be presented with different accents. It moves around the same point: becoming holy, that means becoming God-like, living in God’s life. St. Peter wrote this to the early Christians: “the greatest and priceless promises have been lavished on us, that through them you should share the divine nature” (2Pt. 1:4). St. John looked at it with his contemplative gaze: “to those who did accept him he gave power to become children of God” (Jn. 1:12). You are not mistaken when you think that this “purpose” is narrowed to myself alone, because it is a call to a mission; it is “the Father’s project” that, while being accomplished in me, involves other people and the whole world and changes my personal history into Gospel, history of salvation. We cannot afford to be wrong along this way. We cannot mix up our steps, because the eternal destiny is at stake. Even in the midst of deceiving messages, stand firm on being faithful to you Creator!

Concluding prayer

O God, through the precious life witness of Venerable Aurelio Bacciarini you have shown us a sure and firm path toward your Kingdom. Do not allow the worldly things, good and useful but often focusing on a purely human wellbeing, to distract us from this path. Through Christ our Lord.

“I really wish to make you understand what is the great purpose we all are aiming to; the salvation of our soul, avoiding the life charm, the pleasures’ seduction, the interests’ anxiety, the world’s promises to ever divert us from this supreme goal. The highest and common mandate for us as Christians is that the world’s illusions never should remove us the vision of heaven, for which we are created and for which we have been redeemed”.

(Voce d’apostolo, p. 10)



HOLINESS ... LIVING IN UNION WITH CHRIST.

The Father's plan is Christ, and ourselves in him. In the end, it is Christ who loves in us, for "holiness is nothing other than charity lived to the full".[24] As a result, "the measure of our holiness stems from the stature that Christ achieves in us, to the extent that, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we model our whole life on his". Every saint is a message which the Holy Spirit takes from the riches of Jesus Christ and gives to his people. (GE 21)

There is a word from St. Paul that leaves no space for darkness. He wrote about himself: "I am alive, yet it is no longer I, but Christ living in me. The life that I am now living, subject to the limitation of human nature, I am living in faith" (Gal. 2:20). This is holiness: allowing Christ's life to develop within the faithful's life. If we don't put obstacles to grace, it makes us "children in the Son". The mysteries of Christ's life are present again in the disciple's life. The liturgical time is not just a remembrance of something past, but an eternal actualisation of the Son's history. Even the humble prayer of the Rosary, that has as an essential element the "contemplation" of Christ's mysteries, is along this path. But what really introduces into the dynamics of Christ's life is the Eucharist. "When we eat this bread and drink this cup ..." Christ himself is present in us. This was the simple and bright insight of don Guanella: "through the grace of the Sacraments you are immediately transformed into a heavenly creature". You are no more the one living; there is a new life, a new creation ...

Concluding prayer

O God, you have great dreams for each one of us, and through you Church you invite us every day to aspire to an ever-growing charity. Through the intercession of St. Louis Guanella, give us to achieve the full stature of your only Son. Through Christ our Lord.

"Jesus, the true Son of God and of the Blessed Virgin Mary, is alive and real in body and human soul in the most holy Sacrament of the Eucharist. Philothea, Jesus enters your heart many times. With his grace he habitually sits on the throne of your heart as in a cherished sanctuary. Rejoice, the Philothea! [...] As the host after consecration has become the true Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, so through the grace of the Sacraments you are immediately transformed into a heavenly creature. What a wonder of the power and mercy of our God and Lord!"

(The Foundation, WFG, Vol. III, p. 234)



HOLINESS ... HABIT OF BEING OPEN TO TRANSCENDENT.

The saints are distinguished by a spirit of prayer and a need for communion with God. They find an exclusive concern with this world to be narrow and stifling, and, amid their own concerns and commitments, they long for God, losing themselves in praise and contemplation of the Lord. (GE 147)

Sr. Chiara, according to many, was almost always seen in an attitude of prayer. Don Guanella said: “she was enjoying a spirit of customary contemplation since her early years”. Her first interest was always for contemplation; this had for her an enfolding charm, so that she preferred to be withdrawn and recollected in herself, rather than having contacts with people outside. Prayer was the flame that warmed up all of Sr. Chiara’s life and actions, to the point that we are not overstating if we say that Blessed Clare’s prayer became her life. Also her sister sr. Marcellina declared that “looking at sr. Chiara in her life of piety I have to state that she had the gift of prayer and contemplation”. If we nourish our relationship with God, we also will have in our heart the warmth of love and tenderness, and we will have fire to inflame the hearts of those around us.

Concluding prayer

So that we also can enter like Chiara in the loving heart of your Son with our daily contemplation and prayer, we implore you, O Father, to instil in us the same spirit of prayer, to contemplate you in prayer and in the poor. Through Christ our Lord.

“After the Spiritual Exercises, in the midst of my suffering I was feeling a very strong desire that the Lord should pierce my heart and I was praying and imploring him to give me this grace ... Often I feel as moved to love God. And to suffer much for him, and to consume all of myself for Him”.

*(Scritti e documenti,
pp. 99.117)*



HOLINESS ... LIVING IN GOD'S FRIENDSHIP.

His friendship infinitely transcends us; we cannot buy it with our works, it can only be a gift born of his loving initiative. This invites us to live in joyful gratitude for this completely unmerited gift, since "after one has grace, the grace already possessed cannot come under merit". (GE 54)

Being saint means entering into God's friendship. Thus, the human being is involved in an uneven relationship, reflecting the distance between the Creator and the creature. With God, one can never have a give-and-take rapport, but only his free gift, an undeserved offering: "we cannot buy it with our works, it can only be a gift". Therefore, holiness is the beggar's attitude, never tired of imploring and waiting. "In hope we already have salvation [...] having this hope for what we cannot yet see, we are able to wait for it with persevering confidence" (Rom. 8:24-25). Aurelio Bacciarini was convinced of this with all his mind's brightness: "No one on earth is in need of divine help more than me". Yet maybe when he started his service as a bishop he could not imagine that he would live this statement in the total weakness of his illness. When this came to his door, he tried to renounce the heavy responsibility of pastoral service, but the Pope did not want. A bishop who had become like Job ("... the Job of Bishops") was representing more vividly the primacy of Grace.

Concluding prayer

O Lord, you told the Apostle Paul that in weakness is the true strength for man and that in every trial Your grace is enough. We wish to emulate Bishop Bacciarini, who achieved the fullness of his holiness in this programme of life. Through Christ our Lord.

"My strength is being aware that I am undeserving and incapable. No one on earth is in need of divine help more than me. Oftentimes, our initiatives fall because we lack trust in God: therefore trust, and trust without limits and without reservations. Only in Jesus Christ is given to hope for peace and salvation, among the visible and continuous wreck of all effort that does not rely on him".

(Anime, p. 186)



HOLINESS ... THE FRUIT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN YOUR LIFE.

Led by God's grace, we shape by many small gestures the holiness God has willed for us, not as men and women sufficient unto ourselves but rather "as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Pet 4:10). The New Zealand bishops rightly teach us that we are capable of loving with the Lord's unconditional love, because the risen Lord shares his powerful life with our fragile lives. (GE 18)

The apostles discovered it since Easter day: "Jesus came and stood among them. He said to them, 'Peace be with you' [...] After saying this he breathed on them and said: Receive the Holy Spirit". The Risen Christ offered them the gift of a new life; he gave his Spirit, that is his love. This is why Christian holiness never could be an independent building, but a construction growing according to the project prepared by Another, with materials provided by Another. At the end, one could be surprised of the building, and this marvel leads to the conclusion that He "shares his powerful life with our fragile lives". The measure of the building is fixed in the Gospel. It begins with a little seed that becomes a majestic tree. This was also what don Guanella discovered, within and around him, in his life and in his work full of difficulties and oppositions. At the end, he could not say anything but; "It is God who does". He was able to move mountains of indifference, to drench deserts of poverty, but not out of his own ability. "It is written that through faith even mountains can be transported from place to place".

Concluding prayer

O God, you put into everybody's heart a seed of greatness and achievement. Make us aware that without You we are nothing, but with You we can reach even unthinkable ideals, as it happened in St. Louis Guanella's life. Through Christ our Lord.

"From the seed of holy virtues soon a tree develops, which grows straight up spreading his blessed branches up to paradise. The seed of this prodigious tree is planted in the heart of a believer at the very moment when the baptismal waters flow over the head of the individual who I regenerated spiritually. Philothea, do you believe this? It is written that through faith even mountains can be transported from place to place".

(The Foundation, WFG, Vol. III, p.159)



HOLINESS ... WOVEN WITH PRAYER AND ADORATION.

Meeting Jesus in the Scriptures leads us to the Eucharist, where the written word attains its greatest efficacy, for there the living Word is truly present. In the Eucharist, the one true God receives the greatest worship the world can give him, for it is Christ himself who is offered. When we receive him in Holy Communion, we renew our covenant with him and allow him to carry out ever more fully his work of transforming our lives. (GE 157)

In the sick, in people she was taking care of, she saw the Lord and was committed to them with fondness and charity. Sr. Chiara, all along the day was in continuous union with the Lord. Her days were marked by prayer, even while working her mind was directed to God and she was staying in union with Him with continuous ejaculatory prayers. Sr. Chiara's prayer became life, nothing was separating her from this "dialogue" with the Lord. But the centre of her day was the Holy Mass, the Eucharist.. she was the first to get up in the morning to hear the call of the bells announcing the beginning of the Mass. This sign was for her a very lively call, a sweet sound, a "magnet" attracting her to meet the spouse of her soul. Sr. Chiara loved God with all her mind, with all her heart, with all her strength. Her sister sr. Marcellina would say that her entire person was reflecting Jesus Christ. If we can renew every day our alliance with Him, our existence will also be transformed.

Concluding prayer

So that our life may be tuned on prayer and our day may be centred on the daily Mass, we ask you, O God, to give us a deep desire to constantly look for Christ in the Eucharist, celebrated and adored. Through Christ our Lord.

"And now here I am, O my Jesus, all yours, because You want it, all for your most loving Heart: all abandoned to your holy hands ... I ask for and want your holy love, the final perseverance and the perfect accomplishment of your most holy divine will".

(Scritti e documenti, p. 6)



HOLINESS ... STAYING FOCUSED ON GOD.

Solid grounding in the God who loves and sustains us. This source of inner strength enables us to persevere amid life's ups and downs, but also to endure hostility, betrayal and failings on the part of others. "If God is for us, who is against us?" (Rom 8:31): this is the source of the peace found in the saints. (GE 112)

In the life of each Christian the scene of the boat in the tempest is repeated: it "was hard pressed by rough waves, for there was a head-wind" (Mt. 14:24). Many different winds are shaking; sometimes from outside, from the world surrounding, from the kingdom of darkness that is the enemy of the children of light, but also from our own heart that is often as a raging sea. A sense of fear can overcome us. The apostle Paul also had moments of fragility and wanted to be freed, but "he has answered me, 'My grace is enough for you: for power is at full stretch in weakness'. It is, then, about my weakness that I am happiest of all to boast, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2Cor. 12:9). If we are small and frail, Aurelio Bacciarini encourages us with increased energy: "Put all your trust in God and raise to him the voice of your prayer and of your hope". Uncertainty can be changed into trust and tranquillity, as did the Sea of Galilee at Jesus' command.

Concluding prayer

In the life of Venerable Aurelio Bacciarini, O Lord, you give us prove that whoever is with You is always safe, always victorious. Nobody and nothing can destroy the peace and serenity that only you can give. Let your presence in us never cease! Through Christ our Lord.

"I encourage you first of all to have trust in God, the source of the calm that is necessary in difficult and dark hours. All human provisions, institutions, systems figured out by men will not serve for the true happiness of peoples unless they carry the seal of God's blessing: history and experience prove it. Therefore putt all your trust in God and raise to him the voice of your prayer and your hope".

(Voce d'apostolo, pp. 434-435)



HOLINESS ... AN ANSWER TO GRACE.

At times, life presents great challenges. Through them, the Lord calls us anew to a conversion that can make his grace more evident in our lives, "in order that we may share his holiness" (Heb 12:10). At other times, we need only find a more perfect way of doing what we are already doing. (GE 17)

The God of Jesus Christ, which is God the Father, while calling a human being to existence, gives the person a destiny for good. "He chose us in Christ before the world was made to be holy" (Eph. 1:4). The moment shall arrive when we will understand everything, because we will be at his presence and everything will be clear for us. But now, during this lifetime, we as children have to gradually discover the Father's will. This is the search for vocation. It may sometimes be a long and labouring way, but we should trust: the Father will not fail to show us his will. And when we have discovered it, we should embrace it with all the impetus of our love. "cultivate the good seed in the garden of your heart". After discovering the "big" will of God, that is our vocation, comes the time of the daily search for the Father's design. Every day marks a stage of this design, so that the flowing time becomes "a more perfect way of doing what we are already doing".

Concluding prayer

O Father, you put on our way don Luigi Guanella as an example of perseverance. Help us to imitate him by welcoming your numberless encouragements to cultivate the gifts you have sown in our life's soil, and to trust in you Providence. Through Christ our Lord.

"Do you feel called to a great spirit of perfection in austerities? or in the fervour of prayer? or in the works of charity? Well, study well yourself and consider that, as in the natural order every creature of flower, of animal or of human being is born, grows and then improves, so in the supernatural order the life of virtue is born and then grows and then gradually improves. You will feel that an inclination to a particular state of life and virtue is dawning in you. Well, cultivate the good seed in the garden of your heart, this seed little by little will grow and make itself felt stronger and stronger and then it will burst out".

(Maxims and Method, p.13-14)



HOLINESS ... CONTEMPLATION IN THE MIDST OF ACTION.

It is not healthy to love silence while fleeing interaction with others, to want peace and quiet while avoiding activity, to seek prayer while disdaining service. Everything can be accepted and integrated into our life in this world, and become a part of our path to holiness. We are called to be contemplatives even in the midst of action, and to grow in holiness by responsibly and generously carrying out our proper mission. (GE 26)

Sr. Chiara was the soul of the house. “She was all for all, she was everybody’s life”. She wanted cleanliness, neatness in persons and things. Don Guanella looking at her said that she was hopping like a small bird from branch to branch: from kitchen to garden, to cooking, embroidering, ironing, setting beds, mending clothes ... all spirit and nimble strength. She was doing this without being distracted, without losing her recollected habit. From house to church ... the little chapel she had prepared in the house had become her shrine, the place where she was pouring out all the affection of her devotion. Sr. Chiara, with her words, but especially by her example, was lightning hearts, strengthening faith and devotion in those who came close to her. She used to say that faith and Christian piety please God’s heart and do good to souls, they are seed of good grain! For her, and also for us, union with God becomes source of life and strength to accomplish our mission in a responsible and generous way.

Concluding prayer

O Blessed Clare, by your industriousness you spread around the scent of God. Ask for us the grace to spread with our lives the Love we have contemplated, so that in industrious charity we can show to all the fatherly face of God. Through Christ our Lord.

“I am all yours,
for You I was born,
do with me
what you like, O God.
How I cherish
repeating this,
what a relief it brings
to my poor soul”.

(Scritti e documenti, p. 119)



HOLINESS ... COMMITMENT TO GOD'S KINGDOM.

Your identification with Christ and his will involves a commitment to build with him that kingdom of love, justice and universal peace. Christ himself wants to experience this with you, in all the efforts and sacrifices that it entails, but also in all the joy and enrichment it brings. You cannot grow in holiness without committing yourself, body and soul, to giving your best to this endeavour. (GE 25)

God's Kingdom is like a building, being erected firmly but with much labour. It's very important not to make mistakes in the construction. The house has to grow according to a well-defined project, in which "Christ Jesus himself is the cornerstone. Every structure knit together in him grows into a holy temple of the Lord; and you too, in him, are being built up into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit" (Eph. 2:20-22). No untimely creativity is allowed: the design of the Other has to be accomplished without conditions. "You cannot grow in holiness without committing yourself, body and soul, to giving your best to this endeavour". In this building there is only one cornerstone, Christ. Once this is laid, all others have their own value, little or big as it may be. Aurelio Bacciarini learned from don Guanella how to value the small stones, rich in love, able of "a humble and holy apostolate like charity, simple and touching like the Gospel from which it flows". He was not expecting flashy things, but a slow growth, able to stay by the side of those who need God.

Concluding prayer

O Father, in Bishop Bacciarini's witness we can have a glimpse of that of Jesus, that you sent to take us back to our Home. Make our voice and action able to instil hope in the hearts of those we meet every day, so that nobody may be lost for our fault. Through Christ our Lord.

"I would like to encourage all those who have at heart God's honour and the triumph of religion, to do good whenever they happen to meet a person that needs to go back to God. This is a humble and holy apostolate like charity, simple and touching like the Gospel from which it flows. May God multiply these friends of good, these messengers of grace and peace, and the most precious fruits of eternal life will not take long to ripen".

(Voce d'apostolo, p. 106)



WE PRAY WITH THE SAINTS OF THE GUANELLIAN FAMILY



"At Baptism, the invocation of the saints resounded for us: this was the first time we had the gift of the company of these 'elder' brothers and sisters, who knew the same labours we experience and live forever in God's embrace. The Saints never cease to take care of those they left on earth. Their intercession is the highest service they render to God's plan. We can and we should pray them to intercede for us and for the entire world".

Pope Francis

PRAYERS TO SAINT LOUIS GUANELLA

*Lord Jesus,
who came down to earth to bring us the love of the Father
and to be the support and comfort of the lowly
and the afflicted, we give you thanks for the gift
of your faithful servant, Saint Louis Guanella,
wonderful reflection of God's love.*

*May the example of his holiness shine throughout the world
for the glory of God the Father
and the rescue of those in need.*

*Through his intercession, bestow upon us
the grace we are asking for ...
Grant us to be able to imitate his virtues:
his ardent devotion to the Eucharist, his serene trust
in Divine Providence, his tender charity with the poorest,
his passionate pastoral care for your people,
so that we may receive, along with him, the eternal joy
you have prepared for us in the house of the Father.*

Amen.



*O Saint Louis Guanella, Apostle of charity,
who spread the treasures of your heart,
in this world full of hatred and selfishness, to rescue
the poor and the suffering whom you loved so much
obtain for us from Divine Providence to preserve
and increase in us the love for God and our neighbour.*

*Obtain for us also the grace ...
we are now asking for, and final perseverance.*

Amen.

PRAYERS TO BLESSED CLARE BOSATTA

*O God, Father of the poor,
who showed in Bd. Clare Bosatta
a model of prayer, action, and sacrifice, hear our prayer.*

*Make us, like her,
docile to the work of the Holy Spirit,
faithful to our mission, doers of good in our daily task!*

*Give us, as you gave Sr. Clare,
a strong faith, that makes us see
the face of Jesus Christ, our Lord and brother,
in the Eucharist and in all the suffering you put on our way.*

*Make us serve them with much charity,
that we may be, in your name,
source of hope for those who are near to be hopeless,
disappointed or desperate.*

*Grant us, pilgrims in time,
to follow the steps of Bd. Clare
to share with her the eternal glory in Heaven.*

Amen.



*Clare, our sister,
affectionate humble servant of the Lord,
pray for us who want to follow, as you did,
the divine path of charity,
along the steps of the crucified and risen Christ
and of his sweet Mother.
May our joy be in following you on the harsh way
of holiness.*

PRAYERS FOR THE INTERCESSION OF VENERABLE BISHOP AURELIO BACCIARINI

God, Father of endless love, through the Heart of Jesus your Son, you have revealed the mystery of your love for each of your children. By your power help us to carry the cross of our labor and suffering through the Holy Spirit. May you be praised forever.

In your mercy you have sent to your Church your faithful Servant, Bishop Aurelio Bacciarini, to strengthen the faith of your people as an example of your compassion for the poor and inspiration of faith in his long suffering.

*Through his intercession give us, your children, the grace we are asking with confidence ...
Give us the strength to accept and love your will where we firmly believe we can find our peace.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.*

Amen.



Divine Heart of Jesus, ardent flame of charity, from your mercy we implore the forgiveness of our sins and a sincere love for God our Father and for our neighbour.

We also pray that, for the greater glory of God and for the good of Christian people, may be glorified on earth the servant of charity, Bishop Aurelio Bacciarini, who prayed, suffered, and worked so much to have people know and love you.

Through his intercession, grant us the grace ... we are now asking for and grant that we may persevere in practicing faith and charity.

Amen.

HOLINESS ... THE FRUIT OF BAPTISMAL GRACE.

Discernment is not about discovering what more we can get out of this life, but about recognizing how we can better accomplish the mission entrusted to us at our baptism. This entails a readiness to make sacrifices, even to sacrificing everything. For happiness is a paradox. We experience it most when we accept the mysterious logic that is not of this world. (GE 174)

We consider in a different way the time of our life according to the judgment directing us. Some may look at it as a leisure time to fill with entertainment occasions, some may consider it a heavy load, moving too slowly. We can look at it as an offering, useful for self and others. Alessandro Manzoni considered life “non destined to be a load for many, and a feast for some, but for all an engagement, and all will have to respond for it” (A. Manzoni, *I Promessi Sposi*, o.t.). This is true even for a simply human consideration. Since our life started from Baptism, this takes the name of “vocation”. In this case the call coming from God’s mouth assigns a task to each person and promises a prize to receive. And this is not according to worldly criteria, but according to “the mysterious logic that is not of this world”. Don Guanella has no provision for discount for himself or his people: “we have much to bear, much to struggle against”, but we are not frightened because “I know in whom I have put my trust” (2Tim. 1:12) and “the sign of the cross is a sign of life for those who follow it”.

Concluding prayer

O Father, in Baptism you called us to become your children and to inherit your Kingdom. Give us the strength of your Spirit so that we may win the struggle against temptations. Make us capable, as St. Louis Guanella, to enter the trial without being affected and destroyed. Through Christ our Lord.

“The Good God in the holy Baptism delivered us from Egypt’s Pharaoh, the infernal demon, and directed us through the desert of life. In this we have much to bear, much to struggle against, but the Lord is with us, and if God is with us, who can be against us? We are Jesus Christ’s soldiers, we received virtue from above, the sign of the cross is a sign of life for those who follow it. Come now, let the fighters come. We expect them without fear”.

(Vieni Meco, Opere III, p. 400, o.t.)



HOLINESS... A HEART CLEANSED FROM WHAT DIRTIES LOVE.

Certainly there can be no love without works of love, but this Beatitude reminds us that the Lord expects a commitment to our brothers and sisters that comes from the heart. For “if I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have no love, I gain nothing” (1 Cor 13:3 ... A heart that loves God and neighbour (cf. Mt 22:36-40), genuinely and not merely in words, is a pure heart; it can see God. (GE 85.86)

Sr. Chiara's commitment to the brethren derived from her heart burning of love for the Lord. In front of people in need she said it was not possible to deny charity because they were suffering members, brethren, God's creatures. Don Guanella said that Sr. Chiara “studied every desire of these people and offered them every comfort. And she was looking, with the body, to their souls, and almost as kneeling like in front of the Blessed Sacrament she was giving them every material and spiritual relief”. Those looking at her were edified ... and received much good. In the Bible the heart is the place where the true motivations, moving our actions, dwell. This is why it needs to be kept well and neat, without stains of falsity and ambiguity, it needs to remain united, all directed to God and the search of His will. Thus will grow and ripe in our existence the fruits of the only commandment of love.

Concluding prayer

Give us, O God, a heart able to see and feel the needs of the poor, so that we may be humble and generous in our service of charity and spread love in whatever we do. May others see in our behaviour a reflex of Your Love. Through Christ our Lord.

“I feel like loving God, running to him and swim in his most sweet Heart ... I feel my heart all in fire for love of the Most Holy Heart of Jesus and I try to pray him to receive my love, all my self ...”.

(Scritti e documenti, pp. 167.177)



HOLINESS ... A PATH OF HUMILITY.

If you are unable to suffer and offer up a few humiliations, you are not humble and you are not on the path to holiness. The holiness that God bestows on his Church comes through the humiliation of his Son. He is the way. Humiliation makes you resemble Jesus; it is an unavoidable aspect of the imitation of Christ. For “Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps” (1 Pet 2:21). (GE 118)

The way to become holy is the one made by Jesus: we should not look for another one. This way goes necessarily following the mysterious steps walked by Jesus. Among them there is the step of humility. We cannot deny the presence in it of a great mystery! Jesus deserves his pre-eminence to be recognised by mankind: “You call me Master and Lord, and rightly: so I am” (Jn. 13:13). At the same time, he is humble and a teacher of humility: “Learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart” (Mt. 11:29). This way is offered to each single disciple and to all the disciples, that is the Church. Does the way of humility force us to neglect the gifts we carry? Aurelio Bacciarini answers this doubt with an immediate and marvellous formula: humble are those who “use God’s gifts according to God’s will”. Not a withdrawing or understating attitude, but the full awareness of what God has given us, giving only to Him the merit.

Concluding prayer

O Lord, what have I, that I did not receive from You? All I am, all I have is Yours, Lord of my life. With Venerable Aurelio Bacciarini I look at you to thank you, as Psalm 8 says, because you made me little less than the Angels. Thank you, my God.

“No one ever did as much good as humble souls do. When are people doing good? When they use God’s gifts according to God’s will: now, who has ever been obedient to God’s will as humble souls are? When they knew God’s will, they embraced it and followed it generously, even unto death. We have to keep in our hearts this holy inclination, this divine fondness for a humble, despised, opposed, afflicted life”.

(Anime, pp. 156, 157)



HOLINESS ... POOR IN SPIRIT.

Indeed, once we think we are rich, we can become so self-satisfied that we leave no room for God's word, for the love of our brothers and sisters, or for the enjoyment of the most important things in life. In this way, we miss out on the greatest treasure of all. That is why Jesus calls blessed those who are poor in spirit, those who have a poor heart, for there the Lord can enter with his perennial newness. (GE 68)

Christian poverty enjoys an overflowing richness: abandonment to Divine Providence. But it also has requirements and hardships. It doesn't make discounts and clearly states that "Being poor is being satisfied of being such and not desiring any type of possession". But Christian poverty goes hand in hand with being children, so that the poor Christian is "in quiet and silence like a little child in its mother's arms" (Ps. 131:2). Christian poverty, beside bringing peace, brings freedom. Those who possess nothing need to defend nothing. When they understand that it is right to abandon the usual works to serve new ones, they do it in simplicity. The ear of the poor is attentive to hear the words whispered by God, those that can be seized and understood only by lovers. Because in a poor heart "the Lord can enter with his perennial newness".

Concluding prayer

Thank you, Father for through St. Louis Guanella you taught us how to live poor: being satisfied of what we have and not desiring to have more. May his example urge us to build our existence not on having but on being. Through Christ our Lord.

"Don't you see a great relief and comfort when you can repeat 'We are the daughters of Providence, and the Lord himself takes care to provide for us. We work and we pray and he, the good God, comes to our aid?' from this one can easily understand the first article of the famous discourse of Jesus Christ on the mountain later called of Beatitudes. 'Blessed - Jesu Christ says - the poor in spirit, because theirs is the kingdom of heaven'. Here is the unspeakable sentence, for you who want paradise; here is the gate: poverty; here is the pledge and the divine promise: 'Blessed the poor in spirit'. What does poor in spirit mean? It means especially two things. Being poor is being satisfied of being such and not desiring any type of possession".

*Regolamento FsMP 1911 ms,
Opere IV, p. 507 - o.ŕ.*



HOLINESS ... LOOK AND ACT WITH MERCY.

Mercy has two aspects. It involves giving, helping and serving others, but it also includes forgiveness and understanding. ... Giving and forgiving means reproducing in our lives some small measure of God's perfection, which gives and forgives superabundantly. For this reason, in the Gospel of Luke we do not hear the words, "Be perfect" (Mt 5:48), but rather, "Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful." (6:36). (GE 80.81)

Sr. Chiara trained herself to look and act with mercy. She was giving herself "all to all". Her service was appreciated because it was done with love, without making noise. She was assisting people day and night, without getting tired and always with a smile on her face, giving courage, making hearts rejoice. By their side her timidity became strength, a strength that was transmitted to those working with her so that all wanted to imitate her. She was fully aware that the Lord was guiding her in the work started and with this strength she was acting for the good of those entrusted to her care. Every action, every word expressed mercy. How much do we need, today, people who can help, serve, understand, forgive. Let also our minds and hearts open up to reproduce in our lives "a small reflex of God's perfection".

Concluding prayer

O Father, you are good and great in love. Help us to imitate Christ, rich in mercy, in attending the sick, taking care of the little ones and the poor on the example of Blessed Clare Bosatta. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

"I will try to do all I can ... to be always patient, sweet, in every occasion I will find.

I will not allow words of impatience, of rudeness escape from my mouth. Divine Heart of my Jesus, make me similar to you, meek and humble of heart.

I shall have much charity with my Sisters, I shall lend myself happily in anything they will ask me, I shall help them in their needs ...".

(Scritti e documenti, p.12)



HOLINESS ... A JOURNEY AGAINST THE TIDE.

The Lord asks everything of us, and in return he offers us true life, the happiness for which we were created. He wants us to be saints and not to settle for a bland and mediocre existence. ... Unless we wish to sink into an obscure mediocrity, let us not long for an easy life, for “whoever would save his life will lose it” (Mt 16:25). (GE 1.90)

The Bible narrates of many journeys, made by single persons or by the whole chosen people. All were wearisome, they required energy and sacrifice. They never had easy steps or comfortable ways, always hard tracks and narrow doors: “It is a narrow gate and a hard road that leads to life” (Mt. 7:14). We should not expect comforts, but sweat and hardship. After all, this is what Jesus admired in John the Baptist: “What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed swaying in the breeze? No? Then what did you go out to see? A man wearing fine clothes? Look, those who wear fine clothes are to be found in palaces” (Mt. 11:7-8). This was not how John the Baptist was made! Typical of Christian holiness is “not to settle for a bland and mediocre existence”. If we look at the journey made by our brethren in faith along the centuries of the Church, we must conclude that there is no space for “the fragility of human criteria and the easy deceits of passions”. We need to follow a teacher, the Church, that encourages to embrace austerity while promising peace.

Concluding prayer

Every human life is a project involving sacrifice, denial, and dedication. We thank you Father, because in Bishop Bacciarini’s life we can read serenity in trials, dedication in his lonely suffering, passion for You, the source of all his accomplishments. Through Christ our Lord.

“The rules of a Christian life cannot be set at one’s whim, they should be drawn from God’s law. We owe Him eternal gratitude because, instead of abandoning us to the fragility of human criteria and to the easy deceits of passions, he has traced for us the path to follow in the Church’s teachings: a severe path, but covered with peace and comfort, the only one worthy for a human being and a Christian, the only one that leads to true earthly prosperity and unspeakable eternal happiness”.

(Voce d’apostolo, p. 246)



HOLINESS ... HUMBLE MEEKNESS.

It is always better to be meek, for then our deepest desires will be fulfilled. The meek “shall inherit the earth”, for they will see God’s promises accomplished in their lives. In every situation, the meek put their hope in the Lord, and those who hope for him shall possess the land... and enjoy the fullness of peace (cf. Ps 37:9.11). For his part, the Lord trusts in them: “This is the one to whom I will look, to the humble and contrite in spirit, who trembles at my word” (Is 66:2). (GE 74)

What is meekness? It is the way love is shown; it is the dress that love wears. It is not frightened weakness, it is not fear clothed with virtue. Meekness is a virtue in the true meaning of this word, that is power, because “the meek shall have the earth as inheritance” (see Mt. 5:4). Don Guanella links Jesus’ meekness with his mission of accomplishing the Father’s will. The summit of Jesus’ meekness was attained when the Father’s will reached its peak; Jesus lived up meekness to the last when he was on the cross. Therefore, this is nothing easy or comfortable, but rather a character of strong souls. Finally, there is another mystery in meekness; the meek attract the Lord’s eye and the Lord trusts them. “My eyes are drawn to the person of humbled and contrite spirit, who trembles at my word” (Is. 66:2). This is why meekness find its place among the Gospel’s beatitudes.

Concluding prayer

Being meek, O Father, is not an act of weakness, but becoming like you. Don Guanella was able to imitate you even to heroism, waiting for the Hour of Providence to sound. I would also try to live the times and stages of my life with patience to the end. Through Christ our Lord.

“Watch now how your Divine Master and Father enveloped his heart with the shield of patience and meekness. The pains which he suffered within lasted all his life, were various as the number of the wild beasts of the desert, and were very intense because the heart and the mind of Jesus were immersed in them as a shipwrecked person in the bottom of the ocean. Jesus contented himself with saying to the Father: ‘Your will be done, Father!’ when the pain of the agony reached its worst, he was heard saying: ‘Sitio, I am thirsty!’ as if to mean, ‘I have suffered enough, yet how I would like to suffer more to show my love to men!’. Jesus proved to be very meek with men”.

(Let us go to the Mountain of Happiness, WFG, Vol. III, p. 105)



HOLINESS ... LEARNING TO MOURN WITH OTHERS.

A person who sees things as they truly are and sympathizes with pain and sorrow is capable of touching life's depths and finding authentic happiness. He or she is consoled, not by the world but by Jesus. Such persons are unafraid to share in the suffering of others; they do not flee from painful situations. They discover the meaning of life by coming to the aid of those who suffer, understanding their anguish and bringing relief. (GE 76)

Don Luigi Guanella wrote: "Tears are almost food and drink for human beings on earth. Some have tears only in their heart, some also in their eyes. Sister Chiara had abundant tears in her eyes, more abundant in her heart. But Sr. Chiara's weeping was serious, of those called by the Church a living prayer". She considered her own sins, everybody's sins and contemplated God rich of beauty and mercy and from her eyes abundant tears flew. The world doesn't want to weep, they prefer to ignore, to hide sorrowful situations, but a Christian should look directly at facts. Pope Francis invites to pray so that from our hardened hearts some tears of repentance may flow, and he reminds us that learning how to mourn with others is a form of compassion that passes on God's proximity and care in the most human and beautiful way.

Concluding prayer

O God, our Father, you are good and great in love. We pray you for all who live Guanellian spirituality; help us to be able to console the sorrowful and feel a sincere and deep compassion for our brethren's needs. Give us sweet attitude and gentle manner to witness to the world how much you love us. Through Christ our Lord.

"How often, in these days, I feel the urge to become saint, to humble myself in front of everybody, to use much sweetness, much gentleness, much compassion with all! And how many changes has undergone my heart! Sometimes all sadness ... sometimes even too happy, and sometimes in between joy and tears".

(Scritti e documenti, p. 131)



HOLINESS ... A BOLD GIVING OF SELF.

Along this journey, the cultivation of all that is good, progress in the spiritual life and growth in love are the best counterbalance to evil. Those who choose to remain neutral, who are satisfied with little, who renounce the ideal of giving themselves generously to the Lord, will never hold out. (GE 163)

Saints are bold, brave, enterprising. Sometimes they show even too much energy in pursuing their aim; just the opposite of “those who choose to remain neutral, who are satisfied with little”. This insistence that surprises may come to the saints from that mysterious word of Jesus: “The kingdom of Heaven has been subjected to violence and the violent are taking it by storm” (Mt. 11:12). All the Saints, both those who lived the Gospel attending only to interior life, and those who made miracles of charity or mission, left an indelible mark in the world. With the plough of their life, saints drew permanent furrows. To the same boldness and entrepreneurship Aurelio Bacciarini encourages us, while saying: “Let your spirit be wide and great like the sun, and do good in all fields”. This is what he did, in the short moments of physical and mental strength and in the long periods of illness. He never allowed himself to fear, finding excuses for a lack of courage. He never turned back, remembering Jesus’ word: “Once the hand is laid on the plough, no one who looks back is fit for the kingdom of God” (Lk. 9:62).

Concluding prayer

O Father, Bishop Bacciarini’s life was a continuous search to please You. He was always moved by the healthy concern to accomplish your will and to be a clear beacon to show by his example the gateway to safe ports to his people. Help me to learn how to imitate him. Through Christ our Lord.

“Let your spirit be wide and great like the sun, do good in every field you see it possible, without human considerations and especially without any claim for self-love, only for the triumph of God and for eternal salvation of souls. Be first of all models of good example in accomplishing your Christian duties, in this accomplishment is the first blessing for the individual person, for the family, for the people”.

(Anime, p. 180)



HOLINESS ... SOWING PEACE.

It is not easy to “make” this evangelical peace, which excludes no one but embraces even those who are a bit odd, troublesome or difficult, demanding, different, beaten down by life or simply uninterested. It is hard work; it calls for great openness of mind and heart... We need to be artisans of peace, for building peace is a craft that demands serenity, creativity, sensitivity and skill. (GE 89)

We should consider the beatitude of peacemakers first in its root and then in its fruit. Obviously, first of all it has to be planted within us. When it is firmly inserted into the believer’s heart, this can become a sower of peace all around. Don Guanella restates here a hit he often repeated: the beatitudes should be first of all considered in Jesus, since they lead us “to resemble Jesus Christ, your Father and Lord”. They are a ladder that from Christ’s poverty and climbing the following steps lead to the peace proper of the child that has found its father. “you enjoy that inner peace that a child enjoys when he is in the arms of his father”. Now the works of peace can multiply and become marvellous, “for building peace is a craft that demands serenity, creativity, sensitivity and skill”. Reaching all these abilities, all the listed virtues, appears almost impossible. On the contrary it is in itself a very simple thing; it needs only to keep the inner peace of Christ, the one of which he said: “Peace I bequeath to you, my own peace I give you” (Jn. 14:27).

Concluding prayer

O Father, I want to welcome the gifts of Peace coming from you into my heart with generosity and spread it through my contacts with all, also those who show themselves as enemies. As don Guanella, I want to be an instrument of your peace and a defender of the voiceless. Through Christ, our Lord.

“Along with Jesus, you have become peaceful within and pacemaker for others. Thus, you have come to share in the great undertaking of the salvation of men. Remember the steps you went through in order to ascend so high. You said: ‘for God’s sake, I want to rid myself of earthly riches; I want to control my own heart by becoming meek, and with tears I want to cleanse my soul. By loving to do good I want to gain strength and by purifying my heart I desire to reach God himself!’. Now that you are in the presence of the Most High, you enjoy that inner peace that a child enjoys when he is in the arms of his father. What else do you need? You only need to suffer persecutions to resemble Jesus, your Father and Lord”.

(Let us go to the Mountain of Happiness, WFG, Vol. III, p. 127-128)



HOLINESS ... SERENITY FULL OF HOPE.

Hard times may come, when the cross casts its shadow, yet nothing can destroy the supernatural joy that “adapts and changes, but always endures, even as a flicker of light born of our personal certainty that, when everything is said and done, we are infinitely loved”. That joy brings deep security, serene hope and a spiritual fulfilment that the world cannot understand or appreciate. (GE 125)

Don Guanella testifies that Sr. Chiara’s health was frail and one could see her hardly able to move, but with her youthful verve she was reaching everywhere and was able to see everything to provide what was needed. She was a machine one could not slow down: prayer and labour had entered her like a second nature. The spirit of faith was moulding her and lifting her up, her heart was for God and neighbour. Don Luigi said that during her last sickness one could see her face spiritualised; she was in this world but with no part for the world’s attractions, because she was recollected in God. He is also the one comparing her to a little bird covered with plumes, almost ready to leave the nest to jump and entrust itself to the sky. We should learn from her the best way to respond to the great love that is given us. We should acknowledge our inability without getting depressed, put all our hopes in God and nourish with His grace the desire to do everything only for love.

Concluding prayer

Small as she was, Chiara has shown us the high level of her holiness. Father, help us to follow her steps on the path to holiness, that welcoming the tiring daily labour we may, by your grace, make the accomplishment of our tasks and duties a sacred activity. Through Christ our Lord.

“My secret is the great King’s secret. The Lord told me the secret of his heart; I hear it and I am deeply humbled: who am I, to deserve my Lord to tell me the secrets of his heart? ... I am God’s secret’s keeper. My secret is mine. The Lord knows why He inspires me to talk or to be silent”.

(Dono di giovinezza, pp. 64-65)



HOLINESS ... THROUGH DAILY HUMILIATIONS.

The Apostles, after suffering humiliation, rejoiced “that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonour for [Jesus’] name” (Acts 5:41). Here I am not speaking only about stark situations of martyrdom, but about the daily humiliations of those who keep silent to save their families, who prefer to praise others rather than boast about themselves, or who choose the less welcome tasks, at times even choosing to bear an injustice so as to offer it to the Lord. (GE 118.119)

Jesus said of himself: “Learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart” (Mt. 11:29)? St. Paul said of Jesus: “Being in the form of God, he did not count equality with God something to be grasped. But he emptied himself taking the form of a slave” (Ph. 2:6-7). Humility is what attracted God in Mary: “He has looked upon the humiliation of his servant” (Lk. 1:48). Even if today we are less prone to give value to the “passive” virtues (as they used to be called ...), we have to face the words of Peter: “Humility towards one another must be the garment you all wear constantly, because God opposes the proud, but accords his favour to the humble” (1Pt. 5:5). Pope Francis proposes the daily life humility: not “stark situations of martyrdom”, but rather “the daily humiliations of those who keep silent”. Aurelio Bacciarini, on his part, talks of humility as the company with the humble: “Those despicable for worldly eyes: the poor, the sick, the children”. In this he sows a special Guanellian attention, that teaches us to call our masters those who are less appearing and that are not even able to say, “thank you”.

Concluding prayer

O Venerable Aurelio Bacciarini, you chose as the image of your priesthood the winepress, as the example of the crucified Christ, make us strong, determined and generous in this life’s trials. Through Christ our Lord.

“Jesus never looked for appreciation from the great and powerful of this world. On the contrary, especially to them he addressed his rebukes, even if he knew well the results of their hatred. Whom did he prefer? Those despicable for worldly eyes: the poor, the sick, the children. He could have done a little more ... it was to crown his life of humility with the supreme act of humility: dying defamed and loaded with abomination, dying on the very sign of abomination, the cross!”.

(Anime, p. 134)



HOLINESS... RECOGNISING CHRIST IN EVERY PERSON.

In this call to recognize him in the poor and the suffering, we see revealed the very heart of Christ, his deepest feelings and choices, which every saint seeks to imitate. ... If I encounter a person sleeping outdoors on a cold night ... I can respond with faith and charity, and see in this person a human being with a dignity identical to my own, a creature infinitely loved by the Father, an image of God, a brother or sister redeemed by Jesus Christ. That is what it is to be a Christian! (GE 96.98)

For those who follow don Guanella, it is a consoling discovery hearing pope Francis inviting to love for the poor. But there is not real need of surprise for this accord, because only one is the substance of Christianity, that is charity. It is first of all the substance of God, (*Deus caritas est...*) and also Christ's mission in the world. When a Christian doesn't put obstacles, this mission is realised almost spontaneously and every situation of life becomes an opportunity to show the Son's goodness. "In this call to recognize him in the poor and the suffering, we see revealed the very heart of Christ, his deepest feelings and choices". We cannot avoid, during our life to see only with some confusion Jesus' presence in the poor, but this is because we are on the way and we have not reached the full vision. "Now we see only reflections in a mirror, mere riddles, but then we shall be seeing face to face" (1Cor. 13:12).

Concluding prayer

O God, let the poor be not only the focus of our Houses and our cares, but also the focus of our hearts. As don Guanella, make us strive every day to look for you, find you, serve you present in them! Through Christ our Lord.

"Nobody can practice the heroism of charity more than those generous persons, who give up their souls for the relief of their brothers. Place charity at the centre of the house of shelter, as a sovereign queen on high throne, and the virtue of charity will make you to prostrate in front of charity in the august Eucharist, love in essence. Make space for charity in the deep of your heart and you will not be bothered by the humblest tasks of charity, rather in those functions, so hard for worldly people, you will find relief and happiness. Why not? Doesn't faith assure you that charity is God and that he who lives in charity lives with God and God with him, the child of charity?"

(Come with me, p. 76)



HOLINESS ... FOLLOWING THE LOGIC OF GIFT AND CROSS.

When, in God's presence, we examine our life's journey, no areas can be off limits. In all aspects of life we can continue to grow and offer something greater to God, even in those areas we find most difficult. We need, though, to ask the Holy Spirit to liberate us and to expel the fear that makes us ban him from certain parts of our lives. God asks everything of us, yet he also gives everything to us. He does not want to enter our lives to cripple or diminish them, but to bring them to fulfilment. (GE 175)

Since her childhood Sr. Chiara was acquainted with the Crucifix, as if were to say that, unknowingly, she was going to spend her short life on and around the Calvary. Her mother Rosa took the little girl to Dongo on a feast-day and asked her to choose and buy some little object as a souvenir. The girl, looking at the stand of religious objects, was seized by a small cross and asked the mother to buy that one for her ... she would keep it with her always. A simple event apparently, but deep for the light it sheds on Sr. Chiara's life and her physical and internal suffering. Complaint was unknown to her, she always overcame everything with heroic virtue, because God had entered all the aspects of her life. Following the logic of gift and cross, we can also give space to the Holy Spirit, that he may free us and help us to fully live our mission in the world.

Concluding prayer

Climbing the mountain of happiness we are accompanied by prayer and suffering, as was the practice of Blessed Clare. May she also guide us in trusting Providence, accepting suffering, desiring to be merciful like our Father in heaven. Through Christ our Lord.

"I can't resist his loving invitations anymore, my heart can't stand seeing the Lord in pain, in sorrow, in agony in the most heart-breaking way and all this for me, and I remain cold, indifferent, unmortified and thus reluctant to suffering. I hold unto my heart the sentence of blessed Alacoque who said, 'Do you want to know who enters into the inmost of the room of the Heart of Jesus? The humblest and the most despised ... the most charitable will be the most loved'".

(Scritti e Documenti, p.97)



HOLINESS ... CARRY YOUR OWN CROSS.

In living the Gospel, we cannot expect that everything will be easy, for the thirst for power and worldly interests often stands in our way ... Whatever weariness and pain we may experience in living the commandment of love and following the way of justice, the cross remains the source of our growth and sanctification. (GE 91.92)

After Jesus said to his disciples: “if anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him take up his cross and follow me” (Lk. 9:23), the cross has become the seal put to authenticate the Christian way. The cross can be narrated with different words, according to times and experiences, but it cannot be put away or discarded. And it is not enough to bear it with patience, it needs a loving embrace. There are personal crosses and those coming from the world; there are crosses one looks for in order to follow Christ’s footsteps more closely, and others who come unexpected. Mortification belongs to the mysterious world of love for the cross and changes together with the historical period of the Church, but it cannot be refused or, worse, fooled. It is an authentic experience of the saints, therefore surrounded by the light, sometimes dazzling, of God. Better for us to be guided along this path, which is hard and sometimes dangerous. But the Spirit and his bride the Church will not fail to show us the way.

Concluding prayer

O God, in the life of Venerable Aurelio Bacciarini you showed us practically the “Job of suffering”: help us to face all the trials of our days, not spurning suffering, but offering it to You, the example of how one can love in sorrow. For Christ our Lord.

“Saints always suffered. Like us, they had the sorrows of this miserable life, but, not satisfied, they burdened themselves with fasting, abstinence, mortifications of all kinds. Saints suffered, groaned, wept: yet they cherished these sufferings, fearing only that God would remove from them this bundle of pain. Saints were not stingy with God, as we are, they didn’t look for their wellbeing, but to God’s glory, and, in order to have God glorified, they were ready to live a crucified life”.

(Anime, p. 201)



HOLINESS ... LIVING THE MISSION ENTRUSTED BY GOD.

You too need to see the entirety of your life as a mission. Try to do so by listening to God in prayer and recognizing the signs that he gives you. Always ask the Spirit what Jesus expects from you at every moment of your life and in every decision you must make, so as to discern its place in the mission you have received. Allow the Spirit to forge in you the personal mystery that can reflect Jesus Christ in today's world. (GE 23)

A most typical trait of don Guanella's life was the search for the way marked for him by God or, as he said, "waiting for the hour of Providence". He lived this search by carefully observing "the signs that he gives you". These signs were found in the events of life, in the encounter with some saints and in the obedient listening to the voice of the Church. When from Rome the word of Pius X was raised, it sounded for don Guanella as an unavoidable proposal. The programme "Instaurare omnia in Christo" was a call to mission for don Guanella. He understood that restoring everything in Christ meant nothing else than spreading the fire of charity in the world. First his invocation, then his work moved on following these two steps: "May the light of truth come down from heaven ... May the fire of heavenly charity descend". For this mission he devoted all his strength and he invited his followers to embrace it: "The members of the Istituto on their part should understand this very well, and firmly, knowledgeably and indefatigably put forth their hands to promote the kingdom of Charity".

Concluding prayer

Charity should characterise my words and my actions as a Christian. I also would like, as Don Guanella, not a philanthropist, but a missionary of charity, sent by You to the least as a defender of their rights and their persons. Through Christ our Lord.

"Oh, that the fire of divine charity may come as a holy blaze! May the Lord send the spirit of his divine Charity, and the world will be renewed! The admirable Pope who governs us indefatigably cries like the Apostle that it is necessary to 'Instaurare omnia in Christo', that is to renew and establish everything in Christ. In order to restore persons and works, we must fulfil the desire of the Divine Heart, Who, appearing in the form of an immense light of fire cries out: 'I have come to light a fire of Charity on the earth'. May the light of truth come down from heaven to scatter the darkness of error. May the fire of heavenly charity descend and stop the plague of vice. The members of the Institute should understand this and put their hands to promote the kingdom of Charity".

(Regulations of the SdC 1910, WFG, Vol. II, p. 11)



HOLINESS ... A CONSTANT COMBAT.

The Christian life is a constant battle. We need strength and courage to withstand the temptations of the devil and to proclaim the Gospel. This battle is sweet, for it allows us to rejoice each time the Lord triumphs in our lives. (GE 158)

As all other saints, Sr. Chiara was not born perfect. She became so through a journey, a short but very hard one. God has purified her through struggle, to make her ready to wear the bridal garment for the final encounter with him. Sometimes we are upset and bewildered seeing how God works and the inner pains provoked in Sr. Chiara, and we are also surprised by her way of responding, in total abandonment to Him. Impulse toward holiness requires a gradual inner purification, led by the Holy Spirit, up to the free choice of the Cross as the prove of the highest love. In 1910 Don Guanella wrote of her: “God led her by the way of strong souls; a hard and in itself dangerous way, by he guided so that her foot would not fail”. With Sr. Chiara’s existence the Lord gave us an authentic witness of how the encounter between human weakness and the strength of grace is fruitful. Let us look at her, pray to her, try to imitate her.

Concluding prayer

Grant us, Father, to imitate Blesse Clare Bosatta by uniting a healthy ascetical way with a deep commitment to contemplation, to assimilate the sentiments of Your Son who climbed the Calvary not refusing the Cross by embracing sorrow as an example of expiation and obedience to Your Will. Through Christ our Lord.

“And so, let us work, let us labour with energy, with strength and happiness and with continuity, without ever getting tired, until the happy day comes when the Lord will say: ‘Enough with earthly life, now come to the heavenly and immortal one’. Let us do everything for only one goal ... to please only God and for our sanctification”.

(Documenti e scritti, p. 82)



HOLINESS ... JOURNEYING WITH MARY.

Mary does not let us remain fallen and at times she takes us into her arms without judging us. Our converse with her consoles, frees and sanctifies us. Mary our Mother does not need a flood of words. She does not need us to tell her what is happening in our lives. All we need do is whisper, time and time again: "Hail Mary...".
(GE 176)

Christian life is first of all and essentially being children of the Father "from whom every fatherhood, in heaven or on earth, takes name" (Eph. 3:15). But it is also, in a subordinate way, being children of Mother, Mary together with the Church. The Christian journey crosses the last will of the Son on the cross: "Seeing his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing near her, Jesus said to his mother, 'Woman, this is your son.' Then to the disciple he said, 'This is your mother'. And from that hour the disciple took her into his home" (Jn. 19:26-27). Every authentic experience and every growth in holiness finds this word of Jesus, and one cannot avoid to accept its value. A "true" devotion to Mary is not made of sentiments, but of operations. "Mary our Mother does not need a flood of words", but of a few true words. It is enough to listen to the Mather repeating "Do whatever he tells you" (Jn. 2:5). Prayer to Mary gives this strength: "Let us therefore be united to her with our loving and trusting prayer".

Concluding prayer

O Good Father, Aurelio Bacciarini's mother educated him to sentiments of affection for the Virgin Mary. As Bishop of Lugano he led uncountable pilgrimages to Marian Shrines, encouraging his people to a true filial devotion. May also my prayer understand Mary as my mother and the guiding star for my journey toward You. Through Christ, our Lord.

"Mary is our star, and God created this sweet star not in order to decorate heaven, but to make this life's sea less sad. Let us therefore be united to her with our loving and trusting prayer. Never begin nor close your day without asking Mary's blessing, so that the consoling light of this star may spread her brightness and her warmth on all the days of your life".

(*Anime*, p. 97)

