



## Fr. MERLO PIETRO

### Obituary

Pietro was born on 11 Dec. 1929 in Montebelluna (Treviso) to his father Vittorio and his mother Erminia. The eighth child of eleven, and the younger brother of Fr. Francesco (the second child), in 1937 he became an orphan because of the death of his father. After elementary school, at the age of eleven he was presented – with a view to entering the seminary – by the Prevost of Montebelluna, Msgr. Bortoletto, as a ‘good, lively boy, full of determination and good spirits’.

His mother in a short letter to the head of the seminary wrote in 1940 as follows: ‘It is my duty to announce to you the wish and the vocation of another child of mine...every day I approach my son with many phrases to see if his vocation can be resisted and he promises me that he feels it in his heart and his spirit’. There thus began his itinerary of formation for consecrated life amongst the religious of the Order of St. Camillus and for the priesthood.

In 1940 he entered the seminary of Besana Brianza (Milan); in 1946 he was a novice in Verona; and in 1951 he made his perpetual profession in Mottinello di Rossano, Veneto (Vicenza), the place where in February 1953 he was ordained a deacon and in June of the same year a priest at the hands of H.E. Msgr. Bortignon, the Bishop of Padua.

During the days when he celebrated his first Holy Mass, Fr. Pietro wrote as a ‘youngster’ about his happiness of being with his loved ones and with the Monsignor, an Archpriest, as well as his trusting readiness to help, under the local authorities. He left the Provincial Superior by writing ‘awaiting your orders, I express to you my reverential good wishes’.

At the end of July 1953 we encounter Fr. Pietro working as head of the office for ‘admissions’ of the St. Camillus nursing home of Milan. This appointment meant that he was ‘nailed’ to the counters, in contact with the general public, for eleven years.

In August 1964 there took place the turning point in the life of Fr. Pietro. He asked to leave with the first group of religious for the mission in Colombia in Latin America and this was granted to him.

Fr. Vezzani tells us: ‘after various years of exemplary service in the community of St. Camillus in Milan he left, following his wish...Fr. Pietro expressed the precise wish to be a missionary and to dedicate himself to sick poor people’.

In Colombia he began his ministry as a chaplain at the national hospital of Bogota and then at the hospital of Barquisimeto in Venezuela, in the State of Lara.

But Fr. Pietro gave the best of himself at the Military Hospital of Bogota which he served for over twenty years, bearing witness to the charism of St. Camillus and loving the sick, amongst whom were many mutilated or wounded young servicemen whose injuries had been caused by the guerrilla war that was at that time widespread in Colombia.

The army recognised and appreciated the ministry of Fr. Pietro and awarded to him various medals of merit. Still today, we are told by Fr. Roccabruna, his companion of the first ‘expedition’ of fifty years ago, at the military hospital they say that ‘after Fr. Pietro no chaplain has been as appreciated, loved and esteemed as he was’.

In 1995 he returned definitively to Italy, he settled in Mottinello, and he had to address by no means few problems in the field of health care. Despite everything we find him ready to help for another five years as the chaplain of the Cittadella Hospital (Padua), until his final retirement in Mottinello, and then, given the advance of his illness, in Venice, where he remained until his death which took place on 29 August, in the early morning...‘at the time when courageous women were already stunned and troubled at the empty tomb of Jesus’. Fr. Pietro had imitated Christ by whom he had allowed himself to be guided throughout his life.

He sought to transmit to his suffering brethren and to all those that he encountered on his pathway that light that helps us to face up with courage to the difficulties of life, taking advantage

of his simplicity of spirit, his smile and the small and innocent 'jokes' which sought to make the burdensome moments of life less dramatic.