

Father Giuseppe Iacona 1942-2019

Father Giuseppe Iacona was born in Centuripe (EN) on 22 January 1942 to his father Salvatore and his mother Isabella Boscarino. He entered the Camillian Province of Sicily and Naples at the 'Mercede' of Aci Sant'Antonio (CT) on 16 October 1954. He began his novitiate on 7 September 1960 at Aci Sant'Antonio (CT). On the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, on 8 September 1961, he made his temporary profession at the 'Mercede' of Aci Sant'Antonio and on 24 September 1965 he made his perpetual profession.

After his perpetual profession, to further his studies he was transferred to the Province of Lombardy and Veneto and received various minor orders (7 November 1966-6 November 1969). On 15 November at the St. Julian Community of Verona he was ordained a deacon with the prayers and the laying on of hands of His Excellency Msgr. Maffeo Docoli, the Auxiliary Bishop of Verona. On 28 June 1970 he was ordained a priest at the Mother Church of the Immaculate Conception of Centuripe.

Various transfers marked the religious life of Father Giuseppe Iacona: from the St. Mary of Pity Hospital of Casoria (NA) to the 'V. Monaldi' Hospital and former sanatorium of the *Istituto Principi* of Piedmont (NA), and from the Mother of Good Counsel Community of the 'Frederick II' University Polyclinic of Naples to the community of Acireale-Mangano (CT). In each of these communities he was always the financial administrator and chaplain.

Inside the communities in which he lived he was a very silent religious, proud of being a Camillian; he loved the Order, the Province, and above all chaplaincy – service to the sick was at the centre of his entire religious life.

His life was marked and caressed by physical and moral suffering: cardiovascular problems because of diabetes, a number of heart attacks, the fitting of a pacemaker, operations for cataracts, transitory ischemic attacks (TIA). But his greatest suffering took place during his last years, in silence and in submission to the wishes of Bishop Antonino Raspanti: he was suddenly and without prior notice removed from his position as chaplain of the St. Martha and Saint Venera Hospital of Acireale (in June 2017). After 97 years, the Camillians left the hospital, accepting the decision with total obedience and readiness to do what they were told to do, albeit with some displeasure. Father Giuseppe Iacona gave way to the new chaplain, Father Paolo Giurato. However, every so often, thanks to the friendship that had grown up between them, he often went to the wards to help the patients and meet old 'friends' of the hospital staff.

After the opening of the *Casa di Carità*, the days of Father Giuseppe Iacona were spent between the community of Mangano and spiritual assistance provided to the patients of the *Casa della Carità*: this was the only engine that kept a flame alive in his heart. During the personal conversation of the canonical visit he manifested great suffering and inner loneliness. He asked to be transferred when the building works at the community of Acireale had been finished. This request was accepted but the rebuilding work on the floor of the religious had to be completed before he could be transferred.

On 22 January 2020 Father Iacona reached the age of 78; he had spent 50 years of his life as a priest. For the occasion, he asked the Superior to have a new religious habit that could be worn for the event and...it was precisely this new habit that he wore for his meeting with the Lord. Before saying farewell to the Lord, he was happy because he had visited his family on Christmas day. He spent this day with his sisters, nephews and nieces, and all his loved ones. I can now think in the light of that event that he had gone to say goodbye to his family for the last time, a final embrace of his sisters, nephews and nieces, as well as grand-nephews and grand-nieces: a simple goodbye.

On 28 December 2019 the Camillian religious of the Province of Naples and Sicily announced the death of their confrere Father Giuseppe Iacona at the age of 77. His sudden death took place at the *Istituto Giovanni XXIII*: at 20.00 Father Giuseppe returned to the House of the Father. When the Superior, Father Mario Allegro, went to his room he found him sitting in an armchair with his head drooped.

His funeral took place on 30 December, at 10.30, at the chapel of the *Istituto Giovanni XXIII*. The final farewell took place during the celebration presided over by the Provincial Superior, Father Rosario Mauriello, at the chapel of the institute, in the presence of many confreres, his family relatives, members of the AVULSS (Association of Volunteers of Local Units of Socio-Health-Care Services) and of other associations of volunteers of the hospital of Acireale, as well as those who knew him and loved him. His coffin was laid to rest in the cemetery of Centuripe in the aristocratic chapel of his family, accompanied by Brother Carlo Mangione, women Ministers of the Sick, novices, and their teacher Father Hubert Hgoudjinou.

We give thanks to the Lord because ‘The Lord gave, the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord!’ (Jb 1:21); we give thanks to the Lord for the gift of this confrere of ours. From heaven he will continue to love and pray for his Order, for the Province and for the sick, as he always did when he was alive.

The Provincial Superior - Father Rosario MAURIELLO M.I.