



Fr. Antonio Paladino
(1936-2021)

Antonio Paladino was born at Centuripe (Enna, Sicily, Southern Italy) on August 21, 1936, to his father Angelo and mother Maria Senfett. He entered the Sicilian-Neapolitan Province at Aci Sant'Antonio (Catania) on September 21, 1948. He entered the novitiate at the OASI at Aci Sant'Antonio on September 7, 1952; he made his temporary profession on September 8, 1953, on the day of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, at the Camillian community San Giuliano (Verona), and his solemn profession on Sunday, December 8, 1957, the day of the Immaculate Conception, at Acireale (Catania).

He was ordained a priest on July 31, 1960, at the Church of Santa Maria delle Grazie, commonly known as St. Camillus of Acireale, by His Excellency Monsignor Francesco Ricceri, prelate of Santa Lucia del Mela (Messina).

After the priestly ordination, in the month of August in the same year, he was sent to the Sanatorium *Tomaselli* in Catania. In June 1963, he was appointed Chaplain at the Santa Marta hospital in Acireale, and at the end of the month he was transferred to Naples as Chaplain at the Antonio Cardarelli hospital (*Nuovo ospedale moderno di Napoli*) commonly called by the Neapolitans still today as *23 Marzo*. In the same year, he was transferred to the Civil Hospital *Santissima Annunziata* in Taranto where he worked as Chaplain until 1966. During the years 1966-1968 he was Chaplain at the INAIL of Capodimonte (Naples), today's CTO hospital of the *Azienda dei Colli di Napoli*.

In 1968, he was appointed assistant parish priest of St. Camillus parish in Messina, and in 1970 he was appointed to help in the formation of the seminarians. Overwhelmed by various commitments in the parish, he resigned, and the Provincial Superior, Fr. Camillo Quartulli, asked Fr. Gino Cisternino together with the deacon Antonio Puca to help in the formation of the young seminarians.

From November 1972 to 1978, he was the parish priest of St. Camillus parish in Messina. During these years, with the *Comunità Maria del Rinnovamento Carismatico Italiano* he experienced the power of the Holy Spirit and the *Mysterium iniquitatis*. In this regard, the

Archbishop of Messina, Ignazio Cannavò, gave him the mandate of exorcist of the Diocese because of a manifestation of the presence of the Evil One during Confession to a woman from Messina. At the end of the responsibility as a parish priest, he was transferred to the Camillian Community of Santa Croce in Orsolone, carrying out the ministry at the *Federico II* hospital in Naples.

On September 3, 1985, he was transferred to the community of *Sacro Cuore di Gesù* at Monaldi hospital, former Sanatorium of the *Istituto Principe di Piemonte*. On May 3, 1986, he was appointed Superior of the same Community. In 1991, he was transferred to the *G. Pascale* Foundation National Cancer Institute of Naples, and he exercised with passion the ministry of consolation through the internal broadcasting “*Voce Amica, una voce accanto chi soffre*” (‘Friendly Voice, a voice near to those who suffer’) and the publication of the periodical of spirituality, information and prevention “*Primavera. Aiuta a fiorire il benessere*”. In 2001, he was transferred to the Community of *Sacro Cuore di Gesù* at Monaldi hospital (Naples), because he needed more care after he suffered a heart attack and the treatment in cardiology department.

Within the life of the Province he assumed various roles including Provincial Councillor; in-charge of the Secretariat for Pastoral Care; Bursar and local Councillor of the Community to which he belonged; contact person for formative meetings of the confreres in the first five years of perpetual profession or priestly ordination. Within the communities in which he lived, Fr. Antonio has always been a very expansive Religious; he loved to joke at times with strokes of irony thus opening the curtain of the *avanspettacolo* (Totò theatre). The writer himself, many times could not understand the seriousness of the speech or the joke. It was his way of giving life to and harmonizing the Community; many of us Religious have passed through his *avanspettacolo*.

His gaze was always turned to Christ crucified, to the sick, and in his last years he developed a very strong sensitivity to the suffering of others, including animals. A lover of beauty, of flowered balconies and windows, of painting, music and singing, but above all a lover of the Blessed Virgin Mary; his priesthood was a continuous hymn of praise to Mary, especially to Our Lady of Tears of Syracuse. Because of this immense love for her, we the religious community, jokingly conferred on him, in recent years, the title of ‘Professor *ad honorem* in Mariology.’ In fact, this is what he said on the day of his 60th anniversary of priesthood: “I asked God to make me strong in order to carry out great projects: He made me weak in order to preserve me in humility. I asked God to give me the health to accomplish great things: He gave me the pain to understand it better. Lord, I received nothing of what I asked for, but You gave me everything I needed: the gift of gifts, the treasure of treasures, Your Mother Mary!” (July 31, 2020).

His whole life was given to the service of the Camillian Province of the Southern Italy, the Order, the sick, the charismatic community he founded and entire generations of faithful. He was a Religious well-liked by all, and the years he lived were really spent in great style, even if they were caressed by long periods of suffering and illness. From the nasal polyposis to the surgical intervention of appendicitis in process of peritonitis at *Santa Maria della Pietà* hospital in Casoria (Naples), from the renal problems to the implantation of pacemaker, from

the cardiovascular problems to the various intestinal occlusions and continuous dental problems... the list would go on.

In 1978, he brought to Naples the strong charismatic experience lived in St. Camillus parish at Messina with the *Comunità Maria del Rinnovamento Carismatico Italiano*, and when he was transferred he founded the *Comunità Guarigione e Liberazione del RnS* at the *Policlinico II* Hospital. He used to tell the young people about the wonders that the Holy Spirit performed among the people of Messina, how the amazement, enthusiasm and love of many young people invigorated the faith of many others, to the point that on days of prayer there was discontent among the municipal authorities: the whole city of Messina was invaded by a “river” of people who flocked from all over and everyone experienced the Holy Spirit, living moments filled with incredible grace.

The young people of Naples recorded his sermons, which were not exactly concise, and still today many keep “piles” of C90 and C120 cassettes. The faithful remember him as a priest always welcoming, ready to help those in need; but the first members of the charismatic community called him “angry bull” when collegiality and mutual communion of roles, gifts and charisms were not respected. Many times, thunder and lightning would come out of his mouth, and as a joke he would say “the new Moses has come down from the mountain”.

I remember the evenings around him, in the religious Community of Santa Croce in Orsolone (Naples), on that iron ladder, he used to narrate the experiences as a charismatic, and as an exorcist lived in Messina and in the Diocese of Naples, by mandate of Cardinal Corrado Ursi, a mandate that was not renewed by Cardinal Michele Giordano, because he refused it with insistence and responsibility, due to his commitment as Chaplain of the Monaldi Hospital and Superior of the religious community.

He had no other ambitions or goals than to love and imitate Christ and be accompanied by the hand of his Mother Mary. “This is the fascinating adventure of the Christian life,” he said, “starting over every day with new enthusiasm, new projects of goodness, of giving, of love.” Every day he asked the Lord for enthusiasm and emotion as if it were his first Mass. He taught each one of us that in the evening we need to ask “Jesus, are you happy with me?” and the answer is always negative, because every day the Lord demands more and more.

Suddenly at the dawn on September 9, 2021, we heard a noise and found him lying on the ground; he had an “attack with fall”. Radiological investigations showed “femoral fracture”. He was admitted to the CTO Hospital in Naples only in the late afternoon after several attempts of persuasion by the writer. On September 20, 2021, he underwent a surgery by Sergio Rinaldi, orthopaedic-trauma specialist.

On September 29, 2021, he was discharged and transferred to the Nursing Home *Alma Mater - Villa Camaldoli* of Naples according to the rehabilitation protocols by the local health authority. On October 22, 2021, his physical conditions required urgent hospitalization for the intensive care. Thanks to Professor Antonio Corcione, director of post-operative intensive care, he was transferred to the Colli-Monaldi Hospital.

His health condition worsened day by day; his organism now debilitated, attacked by three viruses compromising the whole immune system ... He was placed in the isolation room because he was infected. Gradually he faded away, and at 19.00 hours of November 21, feast of Christ the King of the Universe, Fr. Antonio returned to the house of the Father.

The funeral chamber was opened on Monday, November 22 in the church of Sacro Cuore di Gesù at Monaldi hospital surrounded by his family members, his religious family, doctors and nurses, and hospital staff.

The funeral was held on November 23 at 16:30 in the Parish of *Santa Maria di Costantinopoli* in Cappella Cangiani in Naples. The ceremony was officiated by the Provincial Superior, Fr. Rosario Mauriello. Members of his family, his confreres from the Province of the South and the Benin-Togo Province, his priest friends, the Sisters of the *Angeli dell'Ospedale Pascale*, the Daughters of St. Camillus of the Hospital of Casoria, friends, and those who knew and loved him were present at the funeral. At the end of the ceremony, the *Comunità Guarigione e Liberazione del RnS*, which he founded, paid their last tribute to Fr. Antonio by singing a song in his language. His body will rest at the Cemetery of Chiaiano (Naples) near the Chapel of the Camillian Religious.

His wishes were respected; he wished that the whole liturgy be a hymn of praise to the Risen Christ. In fact, he affirmed: "Remember, that in every occasion of life, beautiful or ugly, we have always made the experience of the living and Risen Jesus".

We thank the Lord for having given us the gift of this confrere. From heaven, he will continue to love and pray for his Order, for the Province and for the *Comunità Guarigione e Liberazione del RnS*, but especially for vocations, as he always did in life.