

Mariano Gerbaudo [September 11, 1929 - November 1, 2024]

The Word that illuminated Mariano's long journey was "I have made myself a servant of all" taken from the first letter to the Corinthians (9, 19).

Mariano was born in 1929 in Bene Vagienna, in the province of Cuneo, 95 years ago, and grew up in a Catholic family. At 15, he began working and then attended dental school, with the desire that his work "be at the disposal of others." At that time, he wrote: "I was thinking of consecrating myself to God."

In 1953, he learned about the Focolare spirituality from some friends in Turin: He said, "Everything was as if enlightened. Although I did not immediately follow what the spirituality had made me understand so well, my approach to work changed: first of all, seeing it as the will of God and then doing it with love."

In 1960, after attending the first formation school for focolarini in Grottaferrata, he moved to Sicily, and then was asked to go to the United States to open the focolare in Boston. He recalled: "In that focolare, there were only two of us: myself, an Italian, and another Chinese focolarino, Joe Ting, and we were both new to the United States. I was working as a dental technician, and Joe was studying at the university. Building unity among us under those circumstances was not always easy, but we managed to maintain a beautiful presence of Jesus among us because of the concrete love we had for each other."

Mariano stayed first in the United States and then in Canada for 46 years.

He recounted further, "I once asked Chiara how to grow in union with God and she responded by saying that for us there is only one way. We grow in union with God by loving others. So we go to God by loving our neighbour. For me, this is a daily conversion that allows me to see with new eyes whoever is with me. It is much easier for me to pray or go to Mass than to love someone who criticizes me or judges me unjustly." Even his work as a dental technician was for him always just an opportunity to concretely love his neighbour, so much so that in Toronto he was considered the best in his field.

His life was a continuous witness, up to the end, of this overflowing love, made up of small but always concrete acts of love. So even in this last period when he was in the focolare called "Saints Together", although always in a wheelchair, he welcomed with kindness those who came to visit him. He continued as much as possible to maintain relationships with so many both in Italy, in the United States and Canada. His motto, which he repeated on many occasions, was "as before, more than before."

On November 1st, right after a Mass was celebrated for him in the focolare, he left for heaven. What better day than the day when with the whole Church we celebrate all the saints, to be able to give to God this little focolarino who was passing from the focolare "Saints Together" to the saints in heaven!

A focolarino from the United States wrote: "I just heard about Mariano's arrival in Heaven. Immediately, I was reminded of this verse from Matthew's Gospel, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in the little, I will give you authority over much. Come, share your master's joy.'"