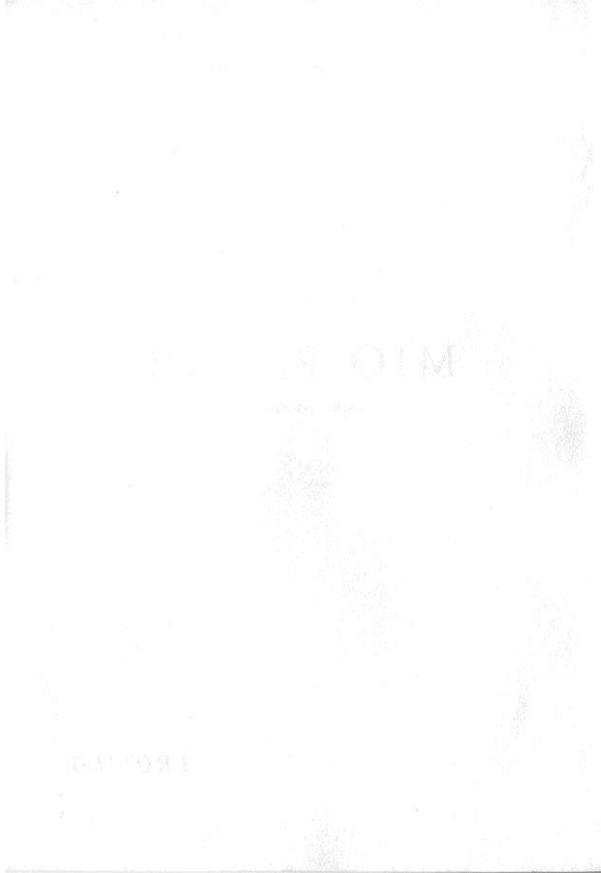


My Father

by Cardinal Giuseppe Siri

Translated by

Nellie Villegas



Translator's Note

When I received this book in 2005, I realised that I was holding a gem that, although originally published only for friends and family, would be a means of edification for all of mankind.

Niccolo Siri lived consciously to be a help to everyone, and he relied on God utterly. You will see that his life is a path to sainthood. He also was very close to his son, Giuseppe Siri, and would help this son through some of the most difficult times that he was to face as the hidden pope, Gregory XVII (October 26, 1958 to May 2, 1989).

In understanding the father, we come to know of the formation and character of the son. Niccolo's lessons to his son were direct and clear to understand. The father was also a man of prayer who put all of his trust in Divine Providence. He also passed this lesson onto his son.

There are no footnotes in the original text, as it was meant for those who knew Niccolo Siri intimately. For the reader's information, the footnoting is all my own, in an effort to help to clarify meaning and/or broaden the possibilities for layers of meaning. As the hidden pope, Siri was under constant constraint, and even this book would have been known about and gone over. I have encountered odd situations of capitalisation and so I have decided to keep the capitalisation

exactly as it appears in Siri's original Italian. Perhaps this will help to deepen meaning if it is there. All intrusions on my part are in square brackets so as to separate them from the text. I have kept to Siri's wording rather than a breezier translation.

I offer this work to the Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of Mary, for the triumph of her heart in my heart and in the hearts of all mankind from the beginning of time to the end of time. Deo Gratias!

Nellie Villegas

September 1, 2008

Only after he died, considering at the same time his life, have I discovered the true spiritual dimension of my father. Before I saw, I took note of, but it escaped me to look at it overall.

Uncovering it, I have understood that his profile should be outlined, not only for the comfort of the many who have wanted this very much, but so that his figure may teach something. A humble man, who remains consistent to himself for another ninety-two years, with his virtue he reveals the infinite possibility born from a life in God, without any worldly intention, no fame, no earthly boasting.

I.

The Source

On July 16, 1887, at only sixty-three years of age, my grandfather, Joseph, would die. On that day, a simple and moving event occurred that marked a life. The old man had been persecuted with misfortunes. He had been married and he had had three children by his first wife. Immediately after the death of his wife and his widowhood, he remarried with Rosa Siri, my grandmother. This wife gave him another four children, the last being my father who was born on June 21, 1874. Only twenty-eight days after the birth of my father, my grandmother Rosa died, and another painful widowhood would open itself. The illnesses, the expenses, had destroyed almost all of the family estate. Only the ancestral house and the land around it was left. Until this moment grandfather's family lived in the town of Vara Superiore, in the region of Martina Olba. It had been like this for centuries: the first registries of the new parish of Martina, in the year 1621. Sick himself, grandfather searched for an escape closer to the sea and, for this reason, crossing the mountain, the family transplanted itself in Gamergna, a small town in Celle Ligure. Grandfather's death happened here.

And an interesting thing happened there. Grandfather, dying, called all seven children around his bed and said his last words: "Don't forget to pray, to

pray always.” My father was at this time only thirteen years old. Those words were the advice that my father took and that tucks up and explains all of his life. I heard him repeat those words of his dying father many times. He would repeat them even to me.

In front of the family home in Vara, my grandfather had planted an apple the same day of the birth of my father. I have always kept an eye on that very tall apple tree and that it died a little near to when my father died. Even the apple tree had passed its ninetieth year.

My father, a very young orphan, found himself around brothers. He liked them well; he was thirteen years old. The head of the family was Bernard, who was just thirty-two years old. This uncle of mine admirably took on the work of taking a large family ahead financially until everyone was on their way.

He was a unique figure. The honesty, the Christian sense about everything, the observance, the irreproachable example, the silver head of hair (when I knew him) have made him the patriarch of the Olba region. He had the tone of voice, the stresses, the speech sculptured epigrams, of the patriarch. His extraordinary memory allowed him to remember the internments of all the plots of the valley, to the point that his verdict in land disputes was regarded by all to be the verdict of a judge. His word was listened to by all. The misfortunes endured with perfect resignation added a venerability to him. He lost his first born in the World War I,

had a wife – the angelic Aunt Geronima – ill for decades, a daughter who was ill for many years and who preceded her parents to the grave. This context disturbed nothing in that house – it was grandfather’s house, where my father was born – and I, a youth, would go there almost every day during the summer for the sweetness and the peace that one enjoyed there. He died at seventy-five years of age, but he had not been the first to go away. The oldest of my father’s sisters, Geronima, had gone as a bride to Savona: she died soon; I heard speak of her as of a saint.

Anthony was another brother: he died little more than forty years old by one of those illnesses that always get cured today; but at this time the Olba valley had neither a doctor nor medicine. Annunciation – Aunt Nunzio – was married and very soon her family, the closest and the most dear to my family, set itself off to Sestri. She was truly a strong woman; she had to struggle all of her life. Her husband had to be many times, and for the longest periods of time, admitted to hospital and she confronted the situation so as to move forward with a family of six children (one died in World War I; another, my contemporary, died from a cardiac defect at seventeen years of age). I recall that when a cyclone uncovered the roof of the house, she had the courage and the skill to re-do it. This woman would merit a separate biography. Giovanni Batista (Baciccia) was fully a Christian and wise. The priests of the valley used to tell me that he was the best man in the valley. He spoke little, but his sayings were maxims. He was even called to

arbitrate and settle quarrels. Serious, patient, he was incredibly good. As a little boy, I spent some of my visits to Olba at his house. He too was left a widower when his wife gave birth to their fourth son. Many years later, he re-married with a simple and angelic woman – Aunt Angiolina –the last of all to die, before my father. Maria, the most gentle sister, and older than him by only two years, was always the closest to and the most like my father. Even this aunt was painfully hit with misfortune. Her husband died at a very young age leaving her with five children, of which one died while still in diapers. She kept going. She was received into Uncle Baciccia’s house, where she looked after her children and those of her brother’s that had been left without a mother. Everyone called her “Mom,” and when I went up there, even I called her “Mom.” My father was the youngest. This outline on the family permits one to know my father.

Right up to the end of his life, my father was never rowdy, giggly: the seriousness that was habitually on his face, his sweet expression was concealing a small shadow of melancholy: he had never known his mother! I have noted the same shadow in persons who also have not known their mothers. He avoided speaking of his mother; it was certainly a way to protect the intimate sorrow that he had carried with him all his life. As a youth, I knew well two of my grandmother’s sisters. The old ones told me that one of the two, Maria, looked very much like her dead sister. I remember her: almost in her eighties, she directed everything in the

manner of the all-confident, authoritarian upbringing that she had from the Canaloni side of the family from Olba. I would go every once in a while to find her and this gave her great pleasure. Her sister, Antonia, who died well into her nineties and was, to those here, from Olba in a place aforementioned Canai, she was a completely different type of person. She was reserved, almost disappearing, with her rosary in hand. I understand that my father's inability to speak of his mother must have been an incurable wound for the whole of his life.

The thirteen-year-old orphan had learned to read and write from a good priest from Gamerangna; he thought also of becoming a religious or a priest. But the [financial] conditions of the family were not favourable or ideal, and as soon as he saw this, [this dream] disappeared. For all of his life, my father would only have his rosary in hand, even he. He stayed in Gamerangna three years. After he understood that it was now time to start his own life and earn his bread. At sixteen he found a job as an errand boy in the greengrocer business of Domenico Servetto in the town of Voltri. Now he had the Virgin of Graces as his mother. The church of Our Lady of Graces in Voltri remained his ideal centre for this reason: for as long as he lived, he always returned. And for as long as Domenico Servetto lived, my father, upon exiting the church, would stop and give a warm-hearted greeting to his old boss. More than one time he even took me along. When, many years later, it fell on me to consecrate the old sanctuary at Our Lady of Graces, I was

happy. Another point of reference was the Sanctuary of the Holy Water [Acquasanta]. I believe there was a family tradition to pass the mountain and go up on foot to the Acquasanta; he himself conserved the devotion until the end. Once, when at ten years of age, I was about to enter the seminary, he wanted to bring me to the Acquasanta; perhaps to put me in the hands of the Blessed Mother. There I would buy the acquasantino that would make up part of my trousseau. So many times in my life I have felt the presence of the Most Holy Virgin: I believe I owe it to my father. What's more, when I was born premature and in danger of dying, he himself, he told me many years later, had offered me to the Holy Mother.

II

His Youth

It was a difficult youth; reserved, self-controlled. He did not know any of the pastimes, good or bad that there were. The mystery of this youth, conscious and already perfectly mature, slipped out of my already-elderly father's mouth when, talking with his confessor he had the occasion to tell him that he had passed his youth intact. The reference was to the unharmed baptismal stole.

The natural reserve of this man, absolutely shy to speak of himself or to make himself any kind of eulogies or to pick up that of others, certainly covers many things because the youth of an intelligent man, with a memory of steel, cannot be thought of as an undisturbed sleep. It only needs to conclude that this young man had a singularly intense and out-of-the-ordinary spiritual life.

As well as give memories of my mother, reflections of that youth brought him to speak to us of the vicissitudes of the external environment in which he lived. After some years of service in the cultivated vegetable gardens of Domenico Servetto, he went on to become dependent on Casa Viacava. The honourable congressman of this same name would spend part of his time in his two homes in Voltri. This was the occasion by which he met my father and hired him. The Viacava family would

spend the hot part of the summer in Voltri, in the villa of the Colletti high up, a little way from the mule track road that from Pra climbs up to then descend at the Sanctuary of the Holy Water. In autumn the family would descend to the house further down, on the same slope in front of Carnoli, in the locality called Serrea, which would later become the house of the Orphans of Mariners. In winter the family stayed in Genoa, in an apartment now luxurious situated at number 3, Piazza Marsala District. My father's occupations were as a domestic and at the same time as a man of trust; when the son of the honourable gentleman lost his mind in an unfortunate incident, and could have become dangerous in those moments, he was entrusted to my father's loving custody. He was known as Mr. Andrea. There was Serafina, the wife of the honourable gentleman, who, before being a laundress, was wanted for her beauty by the man who was now the richest man of Voltri. She was a woman of notable intelligence and wisdom, but she never lost the traces of her very limited education. The son Andrea had married Maria Avogadro. This lady would be my dear Godmother, a lady of balanced character, diplomatic, of regal bearing, but warm-hearted. The Viacava family was all here.

My father lived until his marriage in such a context, with such a complicated relationship easily foreseeable. The thing that today astonishes me is that I have so often heard with fond remembrance of this environment with persons of lesser importance who revolved around the little potentate: I have never heard a single

word of malicious comment, or sour gossip. For so many years it seemed to me, hearing my father, that to speak badly about others did not exist in this world. Much later I convinced myself that it did exist and only now have I learned to know the virtue of my father. Upon recalling these times, especially in colourful vivacity, to all of my mother's Romagnian ways, if there was danger that the memories of a time might take us down a less delicate path, father would have an incomparable art for diverting the conversation. His virtue never exhibited itself. And yet the memories of that time would show to be amusing types, perhaps debated, full of small contradictions and witticisms from a popular world seemingly inserted in the upper middle class.

Father came to know my mother in the Viacava home. I should introduce this singular woman. She was called Giulia [Julia] Bellavista; tall, distinctive, confident, and beautiful. This young woman's intelligence was effulgent. At only 17 years of age she had had to leave her country, Gatteo in the province of Forli, in order to earn her living. My grandfather's affairs had been going badly and he wanted to thin out the large family. My maternal grandfather, Joseph, then tranquilly dead like the grandmother Mariuccia at 89 years, was a good man. Noble and generous, he loved songs, making the trip to Bologna to hear opera, he would make boasts, like that one of dressing himself as a ladies' man and descending upon the village plaza, with a cigar, burning in front of everyone a

(now!) twenty-five lire note! This man, who of himself did not hold dishonest fantasies, if he had played at having a certain prosperity, never collapsed, never stopped joking, or helping others. He had a type of semi-serious superiority toward the painful businesses of this world, to which he never attributed much importance. An independent man of good heart that had fiercely and nobly carried the uniform of a jester or of a knight from Medieval times. In this way he was able to survive up to 89 years. It was a family tradition: his father (my maternal great-grandfather), when he was to die, called for a priest, received all the sacraments, then he wanted to again make a cantatina and he sang – a modern romance, I believe – “to die without a cent with the creditors nearby.” After which, fully satisfied, he fell asleep in God’s peace. All of this luminous, chivalrous, intelligent, ambiance would then have entered into my house with my mother.

After long years in which there was a way to study one another, the two became engaged and they married; it was on February 25, 1905, at 6 o’clock in the morning in the Basilica of the Immaculate, before the altar of the Holy Rosary. The Marriage was celebrated by Canon Gaspare Odino, the same who then would have baptized me and my sister.

The evening of March 5, 1948, forty-three years later, it happened. Mother died serenely at 9:10 p.m. Without a cry, we all withdrew from the bedroom, even father. But having arrived at the door he turned around to look at his life’s

companion and left with these words: “How happy I am never to have failed in respect at any moment”. This statement would enlighten a long road. With the marriage of 32 years would end a youth that had been strict and kept chaste for a secret labour both divine and human. One does not arrive at perfect equilibrium without having always looked after it. We, in the usual habit, have only much later been able to reveal it in pious remembrance.

III.

In Marriage

The bride and groom, from the apartment of number 3 Plaza Marsala Detachment descended to number 4, the caretaker's lodge, which they assumed. My mother would attend at the caretaker's lodge, my father would work: he was specialized in the maintenance of the exclusive apartments in which he did everything from the cleaning to the polishing, to the accommodations. This economic setup allowed one to live always within the bounds of modesty, but also in relative prosperity.

My father worked hard; he had a large and distinguished clientele and, until 70 years of age, worked not only during the night, but also in the mornings and, almost always, in the hours after dinner. The workday of this much sought-after labourer, held in esteem and loved by all, started at five in the morning and finished around 10 at night, and even later. At five in the morning he started like this: he made it a habit to go to the 5:30 mass at the Immaculate. This was how all the days started. Before leaving the house, when I was barely of sufficient age, he would get me up, because you might find me at the Basilica at 6 to serve the Mass of the Prevost, Monsignor Marcello Gardona. Of this, my incomparable parish

priest, I will have the opportunity to speak of at another time. Afterwards, it was work for him and school for me.

I do not succeed to explain how this man, who arrived fresh to the threshold of 93 years, had come to endure in so much work. There was never a complaint over the harshness and the continuousness of the work. He always worked when he was at home, except for the holy days, which he kept scrupulously. As he was also a very good cook, he would relieve my mother from domestic work on Sundays, and he would cook so that she could rest. Many times after dinner, in the evening, I would accompany him for his additional labours. We spoke on the way to and on the way back (we always walked the whole of Luccoli Street). What he spoke of was the great school of education for me: never longwinded, never gossipy, always good and wise in observing the more elementary things.

When he had a bit of time he went to a few sacred functions. It was characteristic: on Sundays he read “The Religious Week” from beginning to end (for many years he would read it aloud and in such a way that even I would be able to understand), he would memorize the last page which had a calendar of all the sacred functions throughout Genoa, and in this way he would know how to use all of his spare time during the week, as well as the holidays. He began to take me with him when I was two years of age, and it is because of this that I, even before going to school, knew all the big and small churches in Genoa, all the preachers,

all the decorations now in use, all the hangings. Because of that experience, in my first pastoral visit in the city many years later, I was able to ask for those candlesticks, for that piece of decoration, for those hangings, for that monstrance. It was a lot of fun to see the awed expressions of the parish priests. Afterwards I would explain the situation and all returned to normal. But it was like this that in some places they were able to recuperate valuable hangings, hidden and forgotten during the Second World War. No one ought to think that in all this there might be coercion: it was I who would want to go, because to be with my father gave me a sense of absolute protection, because from him emanated, radiated, something that, without revealing itself, would enthrall and, then, because all those things of the Church inexpressibly attracted me. It was so much so that I find myself a priest, as if it is for me the only thing possible and desirable in all the world. I have passed well over half a century and I have not had a change of opinion. Everything was so simple, natural and honest. I don't know why, but in all my life I never took any enjoyment from any diversion, that might be different from walking and from clambering, and perhaps never had difficulty and merit from leaving whatever sort of diversion, even if I sometimes played, with little passion, with contemporaries that my mother would permit. I see again those sermon walks, hanging on to my father's hand. I remember very well the Pontifical Vespers for the feast of the Immaculate, celebrated by Monsignor Pulciano: I was two and a half years old and

I would so enjoy the scene and the sumptuousness to the point that even today I am able to remember the smallest particulars of that ceremony. The swaying of the pastoral of the Archbishop, that came and went, would strike me. I was riding piggyback on my uncle Romeo's back, who had accompanied us. At the end of the function we pushed so much to arrive in the sacristy, to see that the Archbishop was removing his chasuble. For me, that figure is not blurred but more from my mind. With father I saw the Archbishop again, I think I was four years old, on the steps of St. Lawrence Cathedral; I think it was for the Procession of the Ashes of St. John the Baptist. I saw him again in the reception room of the Episcopal palace, dead of catalepsy: my father took me to see him, saying that if it had been for anyone else, he would not have taken a small child of five years old to see a dead man, but since it was about the Archbishop . . . I saw again, perfect and intact, that venerable Archbishop 55 years afterward when, in March 1966, the body was removed from the Chiappeto district and brought to repose in Saint Lawrence Cathedral. The esteem of all things ecclesiastical, the joy of the Liturgy, the greatest concept of the authority of the Church, the manner of seeing all these things from an exact and loving perspective are the fruit of these pious pilgrimages made with my father. When the new Sacred Heart Church in Carignano was inaugurated in the year 1910 (I was four years old), I was present and I recall all the particulars of the ceremony. Father had taken me there. I now understand that

the atmosphere created by that wise and far-sighted man has saved me from the worst of some such problems and has simplified my life.

It was the time “to come and to go”; evidently for him it was an empty point, in which, according to him, he would not act. He would make up for it in this way: he would hold the crown of the rosary in his hand and he would pray it continuously.[1]

This has been the working life of my father.

I do not remember that he had ever entered a bar (he would only enter the ice cream parlour on Orifici Street to buy me an ice cream as a prize, an occurrence that would not be frequent because he did not want me to get vices). But now I will go to the cinema, to the theatre . . . If he knew a cinematographer had to wait to meet him in some parochial sitting room, already old. It was, I think, in the cinema of the San Fruttuoso District, after my parents went to live in their apartment at #26, Giovanni Torti Street.

1. This sudden switch to Siri’s complicated life, the fact that “it was a time to come and to go,” could be a reference to changes in the sacred dogmas, liturgies, etc, imposed after the masonic takeover. His Father knows it, sees it, and responds by praying his rosary without ceasing.

He was always as I have described him, without a moan, without a recrimination, always serene, always sweet. God and all of us were enough for him. It would not finish here.

Every once in a while he would disappear to help or to heal anyone who was sick by way of keeping a vigil over them at night. And with this the picture is complete. Many years later I knew of a dear professional, already Diocesan President of Catholic Youth in Action, that after doing exhausting work, would, for a long time, go to the cloister of the Vineyards to fold up copies of "Youth Action" for dispatch. It was what he would do, but to us he said nothing.

Of this life, no one has fallen on earth!

At this point I should speak of my mother. I have not known a more complete marriage and of young people who were more perfectly confirmed than that our family might have been the happiest. I was born in 1906 after little more than a year of marriage. My sister was born five years after, in March 1911. This perfect union, even unto death, was founded on the grace of God, on virtue, and on intelligence.

My mother was a unique type. Her liveliness, daring and intelligence was striking and permitted her (with only a primary level of education) to converse easily with anyone. She had a sense of dignity and singular prestige. Straightforward, very generous, hale and hearty, she was the personage of good

humour. She would fill a room; with no fear and with no complex, she always saw the comical side to all things and she knew how to enjoy the moment. She had the temperament of a general and often the countenance and the accent.

One day a thief, I could have been five or six years old, stole a coat that was hung out to get air. She had the guts to chase the thief. He had the bright idea to choose at random a street with municipal guards. Two nabbed the offender and took him to the Doge's Palace, where the office of the police headquarters was. Here's the conclusion: when my mother was asked if she intended to press charges, she looked at the unfortunate thief for a long while. She told him, "You are hungry, isn't that true, you poor thing?" Two tears sprang to his eyes, because it was true. She opened her purse and gave the thief a shield of silver (if one thinks of the value of that today), saying, "You take it and go eat; but don't steal anymore." Then turning to the police she said, "I am not making any formal complaint. Can't you all see that he is hungry?" The two left the station together: my mother with the recovered coat on her arm, and the thief.

My mother would always sing whenever she could and she had a beautiful voice. She solved all problems, for herself and for others. She had the tone and the countenance of a great lady and she ruled with extreme ease. In the neighbourhood, which consisted of a plaza and some streets, she was the most famous woman. People continuously approached her to put peace between

litigants, for unforeseen ills, emergency help, and arguments in families. It was great fun afterwards to have her tell what happened, because she would repeat the scene to us at home with the same words, imitating all the gestures and all the voices; of course, without a shadow of mockery or of contempt. Her personality was so strong in our social circle, that some of the shopkeepers did not call me by my name, but simply called me Giuletto, because to everyone I was only a reflection of my mother. She knew how to make herself respected without ever becoming vulgar in her language. She was the opposite character to that of my father. You would have been under the impression that she was the one to take command at home.

My father was happy for everyone to believe so. He never had a word of reproach for my mother. He loved to humbly recognize that his wife was more intelligent than him. He watched and listened to everything with that serious face of his, or he would vamp a long, sweet smile and everything was fine. He accepted being completely integrated to his wife. Today I value that wise and humble patience and with a degree of uncommon virtue that I cannot properly express.

But one is not to believe that he would disappear. Quite the opposite: the brightness, the liveliness, the appearance of being in command, my mother deposited on him. Even though my father might leave more slowly with less picturesque manifestations from his wife in more situations, he had one advantage

over her: an incredible patience and a singular constancy. He would most sweetly finish with being right, where he would know that he should have it, and the two would hang together very well. Even when because it wasn't worth his while, father wisely did not engage in tension and he would leave things to disentangle by themselves. It was not a stupid submissiveness; it was a rare wisdom.

My mother was splendidly generous, dad preoccupied himself with the running of the house and did not worry about tomorrow. But then they were always in agreement about things.

I would like to recall some points about this singular and exemplary cohabitation of the two spouses.

It was about our education. It was territory upon which contrasts could have arisen, that instead never happened.

My mother had a strict way with me. It made me very good and I believe that if she had not used this manner with me, I would have become a delinquent. From endless slaps I have taken, all the twigs straight from our small garden that regularly ended up on my legs; when the straps weren't enough, she would grab the carpet beater. I was very lively and for a while I had also to learn how to contain myself. Today there are other theories. I know that my mother's method worked very well for me. One day -- I was seven years old and already in the third year of primary school, -- I was lazy to rise and everything came out badly. My

mother understood that I would be arriving late to school (the Discalced of Vincenzo Ricci Street). She came along to accompany me, so as to give me a lecture, knowing that the door would be closed. When we were in front of that door she took me by the collar, raised me, made me try the door and afterwards spanked me right there on the street in front of everyone. I died of embarrassment from my offended dignity. She ordered me to march in front of her; every so often she would stop me and, in front of everyone naturally, give me a couple of slaps. So it ended at home. If even today I am obsessive about punctuality, I owe it to my mother. My father was the one who discussed things with me, while my mother was the one who gave me the knocks. There was never a contrast: this is how the roles were divided. And in my mother it was a wisdom. With my sister in fact, who was small, timid and emotional, there was always a different system.

My mother never hit my sister in all her life; instead, she patiently trained her in all that which would be of value in avoiding a complex of timidity – and she managed to do it.

They [my parents] were always of one accord when it came to any subject; neither was a hindrance to the other and they complemented each other. My father was a widower for a long time and he permitted his children to do all that he intuited to be useful. He no longer preached; he maintained our relationship through that wise conversation, measured, as a friend, that I might know the

straight way of dealing with things and so that – being already a seminarian – I might not badly trip over any of the difficulties of adolescence; but he was very discreet. And then there was his example.

I recall an episode which, for me, was fundamental. One day he gave me money to take the tram, return trip, to do an errand, I believe. I did it and returned. He ordered me to leave again, and was about to give me the money necessary for the trip. I said, “Papa, I already have a valid return ticket, because, due to the crowd, the ticket inspector did not get to me to punch my ticket.” He looked at me. “Give me that ticket. Look, it is not important that he has not punched it. You have already taken the ride paid for by this ticket. It cannot serve you any longer.” And he tore it into the smallest pieces.

I believe I ought to report my sister’s profile of my father in full.

“He patiently put up with all the small setbacks in life, commenting on situations with a flowery smile on his lips and with his characteristically slow movement of the head; he would never judge by appearances, would never criticize other people’s actions. If sometimes I pressed to do so, he would look me straight in the eyes and reprimand me: “Do not ever say anything about someone, if you cannot say something good!” When, in the evening, he would come back at a late hour after a day of exhausting effort (Oh! That rhythmic step on the pavement, that tiredness renders slow and creeping!), I hurried to meet him and put my hand

in his great hand, which would totally envelope mine. His hand would answer me with a light pressure – a tacit agreement between us. Now I would feel serene, tranquil. He was tired, but he would serenely make me say my prayers, would keep me company as long as sleepiness did not win over me at the monotonous sound of the simple nursery rhymes that his elder brothers had sung to him when he was small and – with his mother dead – he had asked for that tenderness and affection. For all his life he wore the sign of that emotional loss: I rarely heard him laugh full-throatedly.

Later on, I have thought often on all of this and I have understood that by his example he would teach me not to make the daily, small, exhausting difficulties of life weigh on others.”

While I was in the Seminary, my sister resumes the profile from within family life, which he was able to enjoy right from the start of his marriage: “His life can be understood in three words: Religion, work, patience.”

“He demonstrated religion with daily actions: Holy Mass and Holy Communion in the morning, praying the Rosary in the afternoon, and attending the various functions at the main churches in the evenings.”

“Maria Varallo, mother of Sister Genevra, Superior General of the Ravasco Institute, purposely loved to relate how, more than a few times, she would find

herself with my father before 5:30 in the morning in front of the door of the Basilica of the Immaculate to wait for the sacristan to open the doors.

My sister continues: “The advice expressed in simple words was of a small amount and calmly given; they but betray a categorical imperative in the precise norms of his life that make invalid any allowance for the ambiguous or for evasions. All of his daily actions clearly pronounced an abandonment to the Divine Will. One was aware of such virtue in him, because it derived from the certainty that “everything was good in the end”, because God’s Will “could not bring evil”. It would not omit any effort, even though the most humble and modest, heedless of a false love of self, that makes a poor work seem dishonourable. He was attentive, methodical, precise, neat and, in his modesty, shy of praises . . . Patience, closely tied to the sweetness of his character, enriched from a born wisdom, made him often confident, almost a confessor and arbitrator in difficult situations. With his simple manner of expressing himself, almost excusing himself for his modest speech, he could strangely manage to clarify ideas with few words, and to suggest solutions.”

Another point that could become a question was religious education: my father always took me with him into the churches of Genoa. I never felt that my mother raised the least objection. On holy days it was he who would take me to

Mass, until when, having become an altar boy, I would almost always go to the parish church alone.

Charity was the greatest lesson learned in my house. My mother had it for everyone. If it would have occurred to her she would have taken the food out of her mouth.

The spectacle that I saw for such a long time in my house was the following. Many people knew me. Back then, with there not being in force any social system of protection and social security as there is in our time, it was frequently the case that persons would arrive at a certain age and losing their job, without children, would come to find themselves in very real and dire misery. I remember with tenderness a certain number. Whenever any of these had hunger – and they were respectable – they would arrive at our house shortly before noon. My mother would immediately understand, and with supreme delicacy, after having greeted them, would add a place at the table and automatically there was one more table companion. My sister and I would marvel when there was no one. Father would see, would say nothing, and would approve. It was the best education about charity that I have had in all my life. The two of them were different, but they never had to argue about giving help to their fellow man. My mother occupied herself very much with her parents, who came to live in Genoa. She did all good things for them and she was very severe with them when it was needed. When my

mother died many people that she had helped, directed, and even saved, one by one made the exclamation, “Long may she live!” We would ignore almost everything. When my father died the same thing happened.

The two, between them, could not have been more different, and yet they could not have been more united. In 1934 they left the caretaker’s lodge of the Marsala Plaza Detachment and withdrew to a small apartment in the same building. In 1937 they moved – in the meantime my father had been retired – to St. Hugo Street, number 8. It was only after this point that, after a life of strenuous work, my father agreed to go sometimes to live in the countryside.

My parents went one year to Rosano in Val Borbera, then two years to Vara. Then was the bitter war. Later, when he was with me in the Episcopate, he would agree to move again only in the last years of life. In 1964 he came with us to Trivero: he was ninety years old. The following year he also came with us to Peveragno. In the preceding years he stayed in the Episcopal residence of our faithful chauffeur Ugo, in the countryside, and he was happy because he would do the cooking, repair everything, do those repairs that he would discover and we had not seen. But, above all he had his Churches nearby for the adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament.

IV.

The War

After his conscription, father completed his military service in 1894. At this time it was two years of service. He was a member of the Italian Alpine Troops and came to be assigned to the mountain artillery. He spent almost all of that time in the province of Cuneo. He would keep a serene and almost enthusiastic memory of that time; going back [in his mind] to companions, superiors, situations and, to hear it from him, there was never boredom, never annoying people, never altercations, never remembrances relating to the likely moral miseries of military life.

Now I understand that that experience was reaching us filtered by his goodness and by his perfect moral composure. He did not know any eyesore and this he said to a confessor in those last years, conversing, with a full feeling of gratitude to God. For him, it was a straightforward experience.

He remembered everything: names of lands, of companions, episodes. When at ninety-one years of age he went to the countryside with us to Peveragno,

he wanted to see all of the places of his military life: Roccavione, Robilant, Vernante, Demonte, Vinadio, Cuneo. He was as happy as a child (he could be that way!), he wore his alpine trooper cap, that the mayor of Peveragno had given him.

It came to be reclaimed for a few months in 1898 at the time of Milan's so-called revolution, under the Pelloux government.

Libya's war in 1911 did not touch it. That disastrous year there was cholera. Father only stayed at home to work and to look after everything. He sent mother, my sister and me to aunt Annunziata's house on the heights of Sestri. The house was isolated: I recall that nothing else was done except for boiling clothes in order to avoid infection. As far as I can remember, Father, in order not to bring us infection, never came up there.

The First World War arrived. When the war carried away even Italy, in 1915, father was forty-one years old. When the conditions of war imposed the call to arms even from the lowest classes, my father again picked up the grey-green uniform. It was in June 1917. I had entered the Seminary at Chiappeto the previous October 16th. His first assignment, as a guard of the port, made him miserable. It was hard and dangerous work. My mother was heroic: she thought to everyone, to me who was in the Seminary, to my sister who was six years old, to my father who was at the port. As that courageous and indomitable woman, she would make attempts to pass the lines in order to take to my father something hot

to eat. I have never understood how she did it, but I know the intelligence and the incredible resources of my mother. In the summer, Colonel Dogliotti asked for my father to guard his office, situated at Carmine Plaza. The colonel was very good and humane; he had the art of avoiding unnecessary severity: my father could come home daily, although for short visits. I would go to see him often. I never saw him irritated, agitated, or regretful. He had the Church of Carmine just a couple of steps away and he would continually frequent it, as soon as he could. With him everything, in his mild serenity, would become normal, even if the war was hard. It ended.

In 1940 our country found itself at war for a second time. My sister had been married for seven years. My parents lived in their house on Giovanni Torti Street. On October 22, 1942, Genoa, that for the exception of the naval bombardment of February 9, 1941, had never again been seriously disturbed, found herself suddenly under carpet bombing. My parents, when they could, would find refuge in a tunnel, but they did not want to stand back. One day I tried to take them to Campomorone. They didn't even stay for forty-eight hours. One morning in which I was going from the Seminary to see what was of our house, I found the windows wide open and I understood that they had returned. I now thought to accept the offer of Mr. Adamini, so kindly made with such spontaneity; and, on November 11, on a trip that seemed an odyssey, I drove them to our house in

Montalto Pavese. Setting up the supplies was not difficult; they were on the hill, outside of the probable area of war damage. Immediately after Mr. Adamini's house they moved to the presbytery where they took some rooms to rent that were available. I persuaded them to return early toward the end of the war in 1945, at the end of winter, and I put them up at Fontanegli, the place secure and very close by, because I well understood that when the situation would be rushed at those areas in the nearby states, there would be frontal attacks or – more probably – ruinous retreats. [1] Anyway we would not have been in contact with Genoa for some time. In the meantime from May 7, 1944, I was Auxiliary Bishop of Genoa.

But before the exile concluded itself, something happened: my mother had broken a foot and I ran up; I was not able to get on with my service as Auxiliary Bishop.

On July 7, 1944, Cardinal Boetto sent me an order (at the Sanctuary of Guardia) to flee and hide myself: my fate was decided; the least that could have happened to me was internment in a concentration camp in Germany. With a trip full of ups and downs, I sheltered in the Liguri mountains at the home of my old school companion, Mr. Reggiardo. I took the care to tell no one that I was in

[1] The German commander in Genoa had been under orders to bomb Genoa's port (destroy it) before they retreated. Due to Siri's ongoing effort to have rapport with this Catholic commander, Siri was able to convince him not to bomb the city at all. In fact, it was the American forces, advancing to liberate Genoa, that did the bombing of that city.

hiding. Instead, I spread the word that I was sick from nerves and withdrawing for a period of absolute rest in the country. In Carsi Ligure, where I took refuge, I made sure to say to no one that I had fled. Because absolute silence was necessary, I had to shut up two students of mine who were up there as evacuees and who understood straight away. In fact, if I would have said anything to anyone, I might have been reported to Radio London, and this would have made everyone in the world know, and I would not have been able to go down to Genoa anymore to do my duty next to Cardinal Boetto. Secondly, by my calculations the events in the war were taking such a turn that the desire for Germans and Italians to be interested in me would have to be removed. Then I would be returned. I was at Carsi twenty days and no one recognised me, then, by night, I was transferred by means of a very adventurous journey to the Sanctuary in Guardia where I remained for a long time.

My absence was for two and a half months. I would write to my parents, posting the letters in different localities. Despite this, they learned of my situation, I don't know how, and their anguish was great. I did not see them for eight months: in fact, I would have needed three days in order to take myself to Montalto Pavese and I was not able to leave my job during this serious and most agitated time. It was just in June 1945, that my dear friend, Malcovati, who was always at my side, courageously took me to Montalto Pavese to see my family

again. From there we left to drive to Lombardia through snow, ice and aerial attacks as we looked to head for the city of Genoa.

At the end of February 1945, it was already clear that the war would not last much longer. I thought to immediately take my parents to a place nearby, away from Genoa. In fact, if the victory of the Allies in France had not intervened, war events would have been able to sweep away the Po valley, the adjacent hills, and even the hill of Pavese. For this reason, I provided my parents passage and transferred them to Fontanegli in some rooms I got to rent. There they waited for the end of the war; and the wait was short.

My father took all the ups and downs as if everything was normal: the Lord permitted such things and that was the end of it. The ups and downs signified hardships, even considerable ones. But his serenity was stronger: prayer and good works would stay despite inconvenience. Everything was for Him.

V.

The Righteous Man

The righteous man is not an actor. His justice is inside himself. For the larger part of his life my father would speak very little of himself: he liked to feel himself at the last step before God. For this reason, we have been able to know very little of his interior life for so many years.

His deeds were clear: we have never heard him say anything bad about anyone, never to refer to gossip, never to risk hard and unscrupulous opinions. All of this would lead one to finish on his extraordinary ability to control himself and to see things in a balanced manner. In conversations, when anyone would tend to condemn others, he was (always with discretion) the lawyer for the defence: he would like to look at the good that was there and in this way he would avert attention from the bad. We would see his usual serenity and, for us, it was so usual, that we did not think to the mighty support that serenity requires.

It was in the last ten years of his life that he began to speak of himself, not with me ever, but with some respectable Religious that he went to see and to get

advice and that visited him. It is from this that we have come to know the most about his interior life. Prayer, of which we would see oral prayer, and his diligence to works of piety was clear. Above all, the perfect absence of any worldly interests. I have already had occasion to say that he never frequented any diversion, and that he never showed interest or desires for worldly pastimes; sometimes he loved conversation with old friends, with our relatives and around these he was curious to know everything. It wasn't a light curiosity, it was a form of affection. I was the one with which he would least open himself. The reverence that he always had for the figure of the priest and after for that of the bishop would make him close down in a modest silence. To think further on this, in some moments, his comportment should have revealed to us an interior solidness. When I was made Bishop, he was neither moved nor altered; to me he only said, "You have work to do," and everything finished there. When notice of my elevation to the Cardinalate came, it was I who communicated it to him, having found him in the living room where all of us would gather together in any moment of the day. He did not lose his composure, and only gave me a light caress, telling me, "Poor son, now you will have to suffer most." Having said this, he returned to his bedroom, then came to lunch and nothing more was said about it. For him, it was a day like any other day. As he already was just seventy-nine years old, and it was January, I thought it more prudent not to expose him to the cold and sudden

changes of temperature of the Roman rooms. [1] I said that he might stay calmly in Genoa. When I returned he gave an unaffected look at my red garments and everything ended there.

But with others, little by little he spoke. And these, miserable with him dead, put down in writing as much as they would have known, doing that of their own initiative. And the mystery of a life so consistent, very ordinary, humble, and probably perfect, was uncovered.

Union with God was life in the soul of this orphan, all his life. Such a union was the reason for his unalterable patience, for the incredible dedication to work, without breaks, without holidays ever, without letup, without moans.

In this union the soul always stays in the grace of God. At ninetysome years old he unwittingly let it slip out that not even as a boy, nor as a young man, nor ever, had he stained his soul with a mortal sin: he had entered the age of the patriarchs with his baptismal stole.

In the most small things, he had the preoccupation of perfection. One day it seemed to him that he had not worked enough so as to merit his salary; he prolonged his work some hours and in this way he was satisfied.

[1] The translation of **ambienti** also allows for: circles and environments, possibly pointing to the upheavals going on within the Vatican. The year would be 1953.

This internal precision of absolute adherence to the Laws of God was taking over the outside: all of his life he had a propriety that has impressed everyone. I should speak of this again.

The sage would reveal the righteous man. He was a man of few words and rarely animated himself in conversation. Each word was, for him, a question of conscience and left his mouth after having been accurately pondered. In him, facts would assume an interior dimension that would last for a long time, but that sometimes would permit him to give at the moment the succinct, wise, and exhaustive piece of information.

At nine years old I had already obtained primary maturity (as it would now be called), and so I would become capable to start middle school. One evening I said to my father – and there was never anything new for him who had been discreetly observing me from the beginning – that I would be made a priest and wanted to enter the Seminary. He simply said to me: “You are nine years of age. Do you understand what you want? It is a serious thing to be a priest. Think about it carefully.” I replied: “Yes, father” and the discussion finished there. It had been talked about at home of sending me to the technical school on Vallechiara Street, where the good Canon Morelli from the Immaculate parish would teach sciences. Then he was convinced that I was much too young to send me with those

boys, all bigger, older, and often rude and rough. I heard him say these things. It ended with my being sent to audit the fifth year of elementary in my dear school of the “Descalzi”, where I found the one and only teacher whom I ever heard speak of GOD! It was Mr. Marcer, an exemplary Venetian, with whom I stayed in contact up to the end of his life. I remember the old octogenarian who would sometimes pass by to see me at the Archepiscopate and whom I would accompany to his home in our car.

A year passed. At the beginning of the summer I had a simple discussion with my father. “Father, I’ve thought about it and I’ve made my decision: I want to enter the Seminary.” He said to me, “You’ve really thought about it? Well then, now you can go.” And the game was ended. My mother made no objections. I remember when my father took me to the Provost to tell him of my decision. We were received in the Immaculate’s large parish parlour. I remember exactly the place where we sat: the thing was soon agreed upon. Of the rest at the Immaculate, which was my second home and where I served as head altar boy, they would all understand that there could not be another road before me.

The wisdom that rendered him an advisor for all, called upon and respected, was the radiation of the interior life.

Not that this was always easy and peaceful: there were moments of doubt, there were painful periods of scruples, and this he told me when he would speak to

me about wisdom and decisions with which his current confessor, Monsignor Marcello Grondona – my favourite parish priest – would have remedies for him. In old age he spoke with any priest and asked questions made to him by others regarding periods of temptations and moral persecutions. He never declined in the slightest, and he said it, because he always had his great weapon in hand: prayer.

The control that he had over his words when he spoke about his neighbour was absolute and did not admit infractions of any sort. When a gossip arrived from outside to our home he would disperse the conversation with a small wave of the hand – a typical gesture of his – accompanied by a small smile, and everything would be left there.

Just how much of a righteous man he had been we will see in the chapters that follow and in a time in which, with our mother dead, my sister and I were not the only ones to give testimonies of his most ordered, firm, serene and gentle spiritual life.

VI.

The Apostolate

He would always think to the soul and to when eternal life would approach. We have seen only something of that which he did. It was he who would look after persons who were friends so that they might receive the last Sacraments before dying. He prepared them. How he was able to persuade certain people I don't know because I never assisted at the scene, but he would manage it.

He was a specialist for the apostolate of Sunday Mass; how many people he has taken to Mass, this man who, to hear it from others, would hear more Masses on a holy day! I recall that he had the constancy to accompany a blind man for many years. If he dealt with a person truly without the faith, such was the patience with which he accompanied him on the way, the discussions were such, that the poor man would accept to begin to be a Christian and he owed to my father a serene end, completely illuminated by the grace of God. It was for a case such as this that my father hinted to me one time of the gratitude shown to him by patients before dying.

To charitably serve others in everything, with the art of hiding it from us, his preoccupation for their salvation radiated from my father in a way that I cannot call ordinary. He would hide.

In all those years in which I was in the Seminary, seminarian, professor, Bishop and, that is, from 1916 to 1948 when he came to live with me after the reconstruction of the archbishop's palace, I was not able to observe my father much: I was living away from home.

One day he went to visit Gaslini Hospital with Father Mino and here is the revealing scene of what happened. He was taken to the second floor ward for those with poliomyelitis who were facing a long stay, usually lacking family visits and for this reason desiring to talk with anyone. Father sat himself in the middle of the ward: a dozen children immediately went to him in turn and he treated them with such sweetness and amiability that they squeezed themselves up to him always closer; one found refuge in his arms. He asked them information about their fathers and about their mothers, he became animated and he responded to all of the questions that the children would put to him and he knew how to direct all of that conversation upon the truth of the Catechism.

All those who had been present said that they had heard a marvellous lesson on the Catechism. The children were at war to show him that they knew this or that about Religion, and they became so excited that the match was in danger of

never ending and the Vicariate of the hospital had to intervene in order to end it, by saying that it was already late. He was taken away promising that he would return. Those who were present were unable to understand – and they wrote me this – about the strength of attraction and of communication that this good old man, with so much simplicity, had had. This observation was made many times from trustworthy testimonies. And they did not know that that old man had not even gone to school and that he had had learned to read and to write from an old priest in Gmerangna!

I have seen very little of my father, but from that which I have seen I can deduce that he must have taught the catechism to someone for all of his life.

He took part in the Men's Association for Catholic Action, because this seemed to him an indisputable work: the Church wanted this thing and there was nothing to say about it, it only needed to do the thing.

He took me to Catholic Action. I now have present in my mind a distant evening in October 1914. He took me to the parish Circle of our local parish, enrolled me, left me there and he went. For many decades I have conserved that little book of enrolment where all of the registration fees were skilfully entered. In it, my registration fees stopped at my entrance into the Seminary. That evening I did not wish to be presented to the Assistant Canon Enrico Ravano; he knew me because for a while now I had been an altar boy in the parish.

But where he was at his place in life, the Franciscan Third Order was more intimate. He made us part of the Congregation of the Third Order with the Cappuchins of the Holy Father.[1] He never missed and his composure was exemplary. He even took me along when I was old enough to understand something of the Third Order, and he would hold me responsible. Every Sunday I would listen to the pious exhortations that some more scholarly Confreres would make. At home I would repeat everything that they had said. For as long as he lived, the lamented honourable Anthony Boggiano Pico, who made up part of that same congregation of the Third Order, always talked with me of how he had been edified by my father. My father would tell me of how he had been edified by Him. The same would happen with the lawyer, Guiseppe Sciaccaluga. We do not know anything about him, because the rule of this man, perhaps the most heroic was to hide all the good that he would do, but I believe him to have not been the only man to have come to be brought to the Third Order by my father. He had an admiration and a particular devotion to St. Francis of Assisi.

[1] St. Francis of Assisi

But there is another aspect of his apostolate: that of a tacit and confirmed supporter of whatever my mother would do. This tireless and generous woman would find a way to occupy herself body and soul about everything. She had her own style, completely different from that of my father. But all this highlights his silent virtue. He always showed approval, consensus, encouragement, then leaving for himself the more humble and less loud parts.

There was no objection for some measured amount of pastime for us boys. I had license to go to the Santa Marta Cinema every Sunday. [One time,] there was an appendix of the “Catechism of Perseverance,” a magnificent work based on the life of the good Canon of the Immaculata, Monsignor G. B. Pedersini. We were able to go because it was proven more serious than the cinema, and because it ended ten minutes before 4 p.m., at which time Vespers began in the Parish. I might have been unsuccessful and in trouble; but in fact, I never missed because I understood quickly, I would kick up my legs along Corvetto Plaza and Assarotti Street and at 4 p.m. I was always in choir with the Priests. I would like to say that, in all my life, I have never come out from that choir. I have remained there spiritually. While he was not with me in church, he was certainly with me to assist anyone.

The conversation, whatever the conversation, he would direct as soon as he was able to more serious things, more elevated, more religious. He was not

pedantic in this, but with that mild way of doing things, never impetuous, calm, inserted with eloquent silences, it would turn out well. He would willingly listen and he knew how to listen, showing interest even when that which was being said would not be able to bring him any fun or relief. Even when keeping quiet so that his good face barely gave a hint that a smile played there, he was by himself an organiser of when they would be together. His discreet, serene, calm presence was never a burden.

At a certain moment when age did not permit him to do that which he would first do, his apostolate took another direction: with a rosary always in hand, with the frequent and sometimes endless visits to the Most Holy Sacrament, he would help with the apostolic work of his son. The which, it will never be known on this earth how much will come to him and how much will go to his father.

VII.

In the Archiepiscopal Palace

The secret about my nomination as Archbishop of Genoa would end on May 16, 1946. Profiting from the fact that the papers would only leak the news late in the evening and that the radio would not have yet given the news, I went out so as to go to pray to the Virgin in my Basilica of the Immaculate. I found Father Cicali on the street, who accompanied me for a stretch. Then I took the tram and went to San Fruttuoso to give the news to my Parents. There were few words, they were not much amazed, they did not lose their serenity, and deciding that when the archiepiscopal palace had been reconstructed in part, they would come to live with me.

It was a two-year wait. In these two years, my mother would die and I would not have the joy of welcoming her and helping her in my house. After my mother's death, father stayed nine months more in our house on Giovanni Torti Street. On the evening of December 3, 1948 we found ourselves together in the archiepiscopal palace. From now on I have been able to follow my father every day.

We were short of furniture because the few pieces from my paternal home and those few pieces from my two rooms in the Seminary were certainly not enough to decorate a palace. I had the principle, with my father completely in consent, of not doing a thing about the furniture and of carrying on. When there were so many victims from the war and so many evacuees, I certainly could not spend money on me. I had to have it! A dear and old friend of mine came one day to find me and going through a room of the episcopate with me in which there was not even a chair, he asked me if I was not intending to decorate it. I responded that as long as there were poor people in Genoa, I, the Bishop, could not buy myself furniture. The friend – he was Comm. Luigi Frugone [1] – said nothing; but, the day after, taking away from his very rich collection, he sent me splendid furniture to decorate that room.

Our life in the Archepiscopate began like that, at the sign of the most authentic poverty. Father Mino, my pleasant and unforgettable secretary, was with my father. Little by little, the charity of these good men gave a dignified arrangement to the archepiscopal residence.

On the top floor, I have carried on an ordinary life, one of family, where service would remain facilitated and where I had reduced the habitation attics: We

[1] Commentadore: a title given to the holder of an Italian order of chivalry.

are still like that today. One would go down and one goes down to the first floor for formal audiences and ceremonies. I have never liked that formal atmosphere. Father – who at this time was getting close to seventy-five years old – occupied the room that now belongs to the secretary. When an advanced age would demand that he no longer be left alone during our frequent absences (the Sisters of Santa Serafina were in the meantime coming to take care of us and of the archbishopric) he moved to the confines of an apartment of the Sisters, where he even had, with immediate access, a small and cool terrace.

It becomes truly difficult to say what the presence of this extraordinary old man has come to represent for all of us.

Never sulky, never hard, he would enlighten anyone he might meet. He would go about on tiptoes, silently. He didn't want to be a nuisance to anyone. In the first years he insisted going sometimes into the kitchen to give – it was understood – some good advice to the person who was cooking. He never wanted to do this. I had trouble to understand it: it was his tact that understood to let each person have the liberty to do his work without interventions. When I finally understood what this was about, I did not insist anymore.

In the first seven or eight years we had to frequently change the staff who serviced the house and the car. Everyone was mastered by his serenity and his humility.

In these first years any number of problems would happen and inefficiencies were not infrequent. We noticed nothing: father would see, he would give it a try with the person, he would say nothing to anyone and everything was peaceful. More than virtue, he would have the intelligence to understand that in some circumstances nothing different could happen and he wisely found it better not to ask questions.

He would see all and in the family meeting after dinner, tranquilly, if there was a case, he would draw our attention to it. He would always leave silently; if one would find it there was a very gentle and discreet smile, which afterwards, would not be seen anymore.

He had an admirable sense of tidiness. Up until the end he was meticulous, with an extraordinary preciseness, and wanted to look after his room, which used to shine. He was of absolute propriety, even in the smallest particulars, up until the end. In the last years, in spite of a healthy and strong complex, he was in pain from a certain osteoarthritis to the fingers of the hands. This would render it more difficult to do any job brusquely. He would continue to do things and he would not complain to himself. We would only know that in order to be ready for Holy Mass at 6:30, he got up at 5:30 and even before then.

In this way, he was a presence that would block no one, but he was the light of everyone.

It is not difficult to understand that the presence of the father could of course constitute an embarrassment for the Archbishop. He himself resolved the problem. If he had been a consummate diplomat he would not have been able to do better. He would not put his nose into things and, except for the rarest case of a few of our relatives, he never acted as the “bridge” between myself and others. He would enter, leave, silent, modest, and dignified; he never struck up a conversation with anyone, just to greet all and just to politely respond to those to whom he would make the usual courtesies. He would have a very clear understanding and he was always able to understand the duty to safeguard with his composure the freedom of actions and the dignity of his son. For this reason, he was irreproachable in his dress and in his manner. He was the old gentleman who behaved as if he had been a guest in the Episcopate for some time. Conversation with him was always that of an enlightened sage guided by God. He ate with us at table even though when there were distinguished guests, he would speak little, he would keep his place. In the last years, if we had very distinguished guests, he would eat his meal in his room, in order to be more peaceful.

He was all light and never an encumbrance.

His day was all divided, when he would place the things he did, between pious reading and prayer. Almost to the end of those last years he would go outside two times a day. It was to go for holy adoration at Santa Marta. The

afternoon outing would have the addition of a meeting with his two contemporaries and great friends, Comm. Pizzorno (from the Olba region like him) and Mr. Gaggero. Sometimes there was some stop with some friend on the benches of Corvetto Plaza. In the last years, when he was almost a ninety-year-old, we did not want him to go alone on journeys so long and with so many difficult pedestrian crossings; he was conscious that anything could happen to him outside and for this reason he would always carry on his person a small wallet in which there was the request to call him a priest right away, if he were found in danger of death, the data for how to find us, and the appropriate pieces of information. His precision would reach even to there. He reduced his walks to the Gesu, where he would pass a long time in prayer and where I believe even today many remember his unmistakable figure. When in 1964, due to my serious exhaustion some months were spent in the modest Archbishopric in Righi, he came with us and the Chapel from up there became his place of habitual meeting place.

Our house, whose silence He would never violate, excluding meal times and daily brief conversations after lunch, was full of Him. I would have to say that I have had the physical sensation of when he was in the house and when he was outside the house.

The Archbishopric, logically, adjoined with the Priests' Residence, therefore contacts and encounters with them were necessary. Never a word, never a gesture,

never a negative comment about this courteous, venerable old man who would politely pass through, say hello, and smile even if he was going about his business. Little by little, although silently, he appeared to be the father of all.

If at our house we never heard a dispute, never a sequence of useless complaints, never a rude crash between different characters, we owe it to this silent and active presence.

I have always had the habit, if I were going out for functions or for other reasons, to present myself at his bedroom door. I would do the same when I would return. He was happy with this, but he never made a demand, such as to give place to outbursts if at some time, for whatever reason -- if only the haste or the delay -- they would make to speed up the protocols of going out: he was always equally tranquil. [1]

And yet he would see all. [2]

Even today I am not able to understand this fact. If something would happen, he would “feel” it; if there had been some small hitch at home, speaking afterwards in the evening we would notice that it was perfectly well known by him.

[1] For the first time we have the referral to a “they” who control Siri’s actions.

[2] His father sees all, as in he understands that Siri is a captive of his “caretakers” and must do as he is told.

Without recriminations and moans, naturally. We are used to perfection and we notice about this only today that he is no more. His perfect humility would render him great, but in a way that was not very noticeable. He would hardly receive anyone in the Archepiscopate: some relatives, but rarely. Augustine, the son of Aunt Annunziata, was the last one that he saw. He was the favourite nephew – and well he deserved it – since he would come often, even every day. I should relate that this dear cousin, so well-balanced and dutiful, so attached to my father, had a work life and life circumstances which were often unhappy. Morally, he looked a lot like his uncle. He had a very long illness which was a contained and silent torment for my Father. When I announced the death of this dear nephew, he said nothing, disappeared and sought refuge in prayer.

As to this silent life, comforting for everyone, we would glimpse (there could not be another explanation) his union with God.

My father, more than to see him, we would feel him.

He used to enjoy a small pension, which gave him a certain economic independence. But this and assets from our house on Giovanni Torti Street, would silently disappear in acts of charity. He would never speak of the good that he would do. By then his figure was not only a light within the house, but he was an honour, respected and heartfelt.

VIII.

His Prayer

This man, who for the major part of his life did not see himself financially secure, always busy in an even exhausting work, did not have work as his principal occupation. His true occupation was prayer.

But he carefully hid most of this deep and real life.

It is necessary to penetrate little by little.

It had been the characteristic manner of his faith to point at the interior reality of a divine presence. A witness writes that he had perhaps the best secrets of my Father: "I remain in admiration of his conversations so deeply Christian, of his heartfelt and experienced Faith; but what would hit me most was the equilibrium and the good sense, the sure assessment and objectivity that he would know to give to all of the facts of his life, small and large.

It would seem to me that for him human and Christian life might always stand harmoniously connected like this so as to never have a motive for conflict between duties of the Faith and commitments of the common life. His faith would enlighten him in individual problems of human life, that he would resolve with simplicity in the light of fundamental Christian truth."

The outer aspect, the attitude, even when he was busy in common things would always reveal a bright light within.

“In this life there was no fracture or disassociation between the man and the Christian; he had achieved a sort of interior unity, for which he would never have to work hard to find the right point of equilibrium. External order and harmony would conceal a continual internal liturgy, always covered by peaceful, intelligent gentleness.

One day he said: “The Lord with His grace and the Holy Mother with her protection have always saved me from all the dangers of the soul and for this I ought to thank God!” He lived in the middle of social movements that were often inflamed and even exasperated. He would love to speak of the times of his youth and therefore to not speak much of the emerging climate. He always refused to join movements which did not fully respect Religion: he had made his choice. Already an elderly person, he joined the Association of Men of Catholic Action.

I have already told of the Holy Rosary that, so as not to lose time, he would pray on the street on his way to work or returning from there. His greatest devotion was to the Most Blessed Eucharist. The visits to the Most Holy Sacrament, even when he could not go to stay long in adoration before the Lord in the churches of St. Martha or the Gesu, were frequent and very long. I believe that for him, being already old, this was to be the greatest employment of his time if

charity would not call him elsewhere. One of the greatest and true consolations given to my Father was to have gotten to be present at the daily Exposition of the Most Holy Eucharist in the church of St. Martha. He would hear all of the Holy Masses that he was able to, and when there was a shortage of altar servers, he would serve at them. His daily Holy Communion lasted for the greater part of his life. When, in the final years, we used to stop him from rising in time to hear the Mass of the Secretary at 6:30 a.m., his preoccupation was if there was anyone who could give him Holy Communion. He showed much pain if this divine meeting was denied that, when we all had to go out due to commitments and no one celebrated Mass at home, we entrusted to any of his priest friends that he would have the charity to come and administer to him Holy Communion.

His interior desire would reveal itself continually with such insistence that it has caused me to marvel more than one time. He would not ask for Holy Communion, he would beg.

One of the Religious that, us being absent, was coming to give him Communion writes: "I had happened by the Righi house. Full of devotion, he had been preparing himself a long time for this act. He received Communion always kneeling, in an act of profound humility and abandon to God. As soon as he had received Communion I asked him to sit down and this he did in a spirit of obedience, but with a little bit of regret, because his lifelong habit had been that of

staying kneeling before the Most Blessed Sacrament. He prolonged the thanksgiving another half hour; and even so, if he were not called he would have continued to be in the Chapel. Sometimes I would catch up with him at the Archbishop's residence and even in the afternoon I would always find him – if he was at the Righi residence either in the chapel or on foot at the point of the wall where the Cemetery of Staglieno was visible, specifically the end of the Gallery of St. Anthony where his spouse was buried.

When I would catch up with him at the Bishop's palace downtown, I would always find him in the Chapel. Only in the last years he would sit himself to the left of the altar, where he remained in profound meditation for long hours. Even at the end when walking was not very easy, any time that he could he was in the Chapel (it bears noting that in the Bishop's palace, the Chapel being on the first floor and all of us living on the top floor, required descending and ascending many steps). I recall one day in which the Sisters of the Archdiocese were looking for him everywhere; he was before the Most Blessed Sacrament . . . His comportment was habitually dignified and refined, despite the humility of his condition, but when he would withdraw to the Chapel this attitude would take on a special aspect (it was even evident from the door): he was always dressed in every detail as if he were going to a party: he would never permit himself to go into the Chapel without the propriety that the Divine Presence required and that his Faith imposed

upon him.” Now he had great humility in his external attitude, that expressed an interior abandonment, prayer would appear to be very much alive on his lips (except that which we will say next), and he would inexplicably assume an attitude of majesty in the posture of his body. He knew that he was before the Lord, Creator and Redeemer. He often understood the gladness that his character would assume in those moments.

In the spiritual conversations that he would have with religious that would happen into the office of his Director he was longing to know the profound effects that the Eucharist produces in the soul and in the body. One of these conversations concludes thus: “he was a Eucharistic soul.”

There is something more profound, that we can vaguely grasp from the external man, but which his Directors have well known. To this point I cannot do other than give them the word.

“His heart was generally united to God. He would interest himself the most with divine truth. His prayer was not just a talk with God, but it was above all a loving and filial search about God. At times the search became a spring of profound suffering . . . The more usual expression of his prayer was meditation. His mind was brought to think on Jesus Christ and to make his life conform to that of Christ.

A Religious who was very close to him in the last years writes: “In my conversations I have been able to ascertain how his meditations would match in everything an evangelical simplicity. One day he asked me: ‘But what do you do when one is in Church and has his glance fixed upon the Tabernacle, or his eyes half-closed?’ My reply: ‘I watch the Lord, I Adore Him and I think about Him’.

He would want to even use books of spiritual reading, that would serve him especially in periods of aridity; but then, little by little, he left off all reading, because they had become a weight to him. For him it was very simple, in the privacy of his bedroom, in the long hours of night time insomnia, to close his eyes and let himself be transported to the loving contemplation of his Lord. But often his mind was afflicted by tribulations against the Faith and from temptations with which Satan would want to disturb the prayers of this holy soul. Now he would turn to vocal prayers: his Rosary and his book of prayer were equally consumed utilised, because he would have an admirable fidelity as much to one as to the other.”

One day he asked a friend how to be able to pray the “Our Father” well. This friend brought him the comment on the “Our Father” of St. Francis of Assisi and from that day his prayer and his meditations became more profound, more filial, more simple.

He never left the Rosary and, even in his last days, the Rosary would constitute his “daily Breviary” – as He would say – because it would put him in contact with the Most Holy Virgin. In all his life, if he made any outings, it was to piously visit Marian Sanctuaries. He would prefer the “Graces” of Voltri because he would say that he had received the most signal graces, particularly one, of which we have not succeeded in getting the particulars from him. As a Third Order Franciscan, he was most faithful to the reciting of the twelve Our Father’s and the twelve Hail Mary’s; it was a serious sorrow for him when, in the evening, he sometimes had not managed to remind himself to have them recited.

A confidant permitted himself at times to ask him how talks with God would happen in the long hours that he would pass in the Chapel, especially in that one in Righi. He would not render an account of himself of the spiritual heights that he would reach in these long prayers and he would say: “I adore the Lord, I thank Him, and I ask of Him graces for the living and for the dead.” He would pray very much for the Dead, especially after the death of mother. When speaking with them he would come right to the point and would carry the conversation to the topic of prayer and to the topic of prayer for the Dead. How many people this man has taken into Church teaching about the prayer of adoration and the spirit of reparation.

One who knew him long writes: “He had a period of around two years in which his soul had a very strong spiritual aridity: the thought would persecute him that his prayers and his works would serve no one and that God did not want him very much. In this period he had the greatest sufferings, but he always continued his vocal and mental prayer. This state of internal sufferings, that he accepted with humble submission, he conquered by relying on the word of a Priest. It served to further purify him and to render him more worthy of a profound union with God. The confidant of his soul attests that he arrived at the grace of contemplation!

The same relates: “In the last months of his life, when he was barely able to go to Church (and to go there he was indomitable), I went to find him one afternoon. I slowly opened the door of the Chapel and I saw him engrossed with his glance fixed on an image of the Blessed Mother above the altar. He did not notice that I had entered into the small Chapel (that one at Righi) and I remained to observe that old man in that act of loving prayer. He was still like a statue, with the head slightly relieved and his eyes fixed on high. After a few minutes he rested a hand on a shoulder, but he did not move. I stayed a few minutes and after I shook him: he seemed to be waking himself up from a deep sleep. I told him that I had been there for a little while, but that I had not wanted to disturb him in his prayer. He told me lovingly and with such humility: “I was distracted.” Well I

remained full of astonishment and I believe that, in these moments, he came close to the state of ecstasy. In this manner I was surprised by him more times.”

Of how much I have been able to understand and of how much I can attribute to others, I have held his prayer in the greatest place. The merits of my education are all owed to my mother and I have certainly come to understand how much I owe to that most singular and firm woman; but he always accompanied me, from birth, from when I left to understand my intentions, from when I entered into the Seminary, from when I was made a priest, and from when I had responsibility in the Church.

In my father, the spirit of prayer was the forger of everything. It would reflect itself in his manner of conceiving work, so much would prayer surround him. For him work was a sacred duty, a loving penance, a way of life for itself and for the family, an exercise in personal virtue and in fraternal charity. It was a way of liberation, a fountain of gladness and of serenity, always asked and saddled as a gift from God.

Prayer was the reason for his detachment from things. This detachment was edifying; it would not scorn the good in the world, but all things would be considered as a way to go up to God. He never ever looked for himself – and this would prove him well in the nineteen years that he lived with me in the episcopate; he rejected everything, for his bedroom he did not want that the furniture from the

old house, that he had shared with my mother, be changed. He remained in the most absolute modesty. He wanted propriety in his appearance, because – he would say – “one should not make a bad impression on the archbishopric.”

This detachment, in a life that was for the most part not easy, not comfortable, always kept in him the virtue of hope. His recourse to Divine Providence was continual. The mention of This would seem an ejaculation, even when I was a little boy and I remember that, many times, my sister would call him by the nickname “Providence”. All of this we would gather together from conversations that we had when we were living together in the archbishopric.

On the subject of “hope”, one of his Spiritual Directors writes of the last times: “One day he told me that as a young man he had heard speeches, made by even trustworthy persons, in which it was discussed if it was possible to avoid mortal sin. These speeches seemed strange upon the lips of persons who were Christian and wise. He then remembered the ‘Act of Hope’ that he had learned as a small boy and in which he immediately found the answer to any doubts caused by the rash speeches of others.”

He would say: “I have always confided in the goodness of God and with prayer, I have had all that God has promised. He has given me more graces than I had ever asked for, and greater than what I would have ever hoped.”

Prayer would have remained logical to him in a singular manner: we have never noted a dissociation between that which he would believe and that which he would do, between that which he would look to instill in others and that which he himself would practise. We now have the strange sensation that all that which for our entire lives from our infancy appeared ordinary was, instead, perfection. His simple prayer would have – I don't know if created – but certainly maintained, his simplicity of heart, to the point of giving the impression that everything was morally obvious and easy to him.

It was not like this: it had been preceded from the abnegation and from the sacrifice with which he had maintained the spirit of prayer. He was like a light that little by little would have thawed things, removed the ruggedness, and constantly offered the heat of his luminosity. And yet he was very quick – I have already said it – to see everything, in immediately being able to grasp (and without effort) the substance of everything, in the putting himself in prudent positions to dish out his even diplomatic replies, but always true, sincere and clear. That light, that would come forth from his person by the gift of prayer would, in turn, create in him an atmosphere of satisfaction, of order, of peace. We have even grasped this when he was unsuccessful! Everyone has felt and told – how many have come to know him in the last years – that this old man would seem an authentic aristocrat of the spirit. It was only the luminosity in which he would live. It was natural that the confessor

would no longer find in him (of this we have the attestation in the final years) not even venial sins or the smallest defect.

He would enjoy when we would tell, in the brief encounters after meals, but he had a singular control of his natural curiosity: he rarely asked for particulars and when it was time, just like a clock, he would say goodbye, he would give his good night and he would remove himself to his bedroom. In the eighteen years, that we have passed together in the archbishopric, he never asked for information relative to the ecclesiastical government. It was not indifference, because he would like to know; his curiosity gave him a way to exercise a virtue in an uncommon manner.

Up to the last years he would never go away from the episcopate, not for a single day, going only to the house of my brother-in-law and my sister, to Vara Superiore, the country of our old people. He was happy to stay there with the sole company of our chauffeur; now he would become part of the kitchen, he would make revisions to the whole house, he would make adjustments, clean, reorganize. Upon our return we would find everything made new. Only at ninety years did he come with us to Trivero, in the period in which I still had not recovered from a serious exhaustion. The following year he came with all of us to Peveragno: it was the last trip.

At home he would walk as if to skim past things, always silent and gathered together; one never heard him speak loudly; because of that sweetness that would never abandon him, he was the refuge of everyone. But he would see everything; up to the end, we were not able to notice any dying down of his intelligence, of his extraordinary memory, of his intuition. In the last years, atrophy to the fingers of the hands would oblige him to a slow manipulation of things. We do not know if it was painful, because we had never heard him complain. For he remained fresh of mind up to the end. His sense of humour never changed, he would know himself to be close to the end, but he would enjoy the right of a hope that he had cultivated all his life.

IX.

The End

Upon declaring in the spring of 1964, I decided to go to Righi, to the archbishop's residence, as we had usually done now for three years. This modest residence, sufficiently restored, had been for years inhabited by evacuees from the war who had had difficulty in having a place to live. I must have told myself that it would never be any use, but with the time of year being when the severe smog of Matteotti Plaza and above all that of San Lorenzo Street began to produce malicious flu on all the ordinary inhabitants of the Episcopal Palace, I understood that I must nevertheless act to protect the health of as many who were with me as possible, and I decided to take the residence at Righi for a few months out of the year. That year father did not show enthusiasm to leave from up there; he made any difficulty, going against his usual character. I grasped later that he was expecting his death and that, being in Righi, such an eventuality could be more demanding for us and for the doctor. Nevertheless he became serene and quiet: in the final count, the Chapel at the Righi residence was more handy and his stops in that one must have occupied a part of every day. When sometimes he would go out to take four steps in the villa's small park, he would reach the corner at the end

of the garden where one could easily go up a small landing of rock that would go with the same wall, much elevated on the street level outside. From that point one could see all of the Staglieno Cemetery and, on the left, one could identify the roof of the St. Anthony gallery, where in the second cell was the tomb of mother and where, next to Her, was the place prepared for him. He would remain there to pray. The bones of so many acquaintances and even of our relatives were in that Cemetery: he would not forget anyone. One would have the impression that over there he would be in the best company. That view was familiar and sweet to him. If he was not in the house, then yes, one would find him there. He would be there even on the day in which he anticipated his going to bed at night never to get up again. The call of the Lord was close and the response was perfectly peaceful.

Later, in the late evening we found him with an attack of fever. It was Wednesday. Professor Menghini, his doctor of whom he was extremely fond, came: the situation would not seem to be alarming.

His doctor, Professor Meneghini writes: "It appears to be a case of fever: I visited him and, dismayed, I became aware of a pneumonia. It is certain that he read it on my face or, perhaps because I did all possible to hide it from him, his heart understood it; while I listened, it beat grief-stricken. That time and in the days that followed he did not ask me anything more about himself: it was soon.

And I for the first time did not tell him my little lie, submerged by the great truth of that hour of sorrows.”

He in reality was waiting, confident that the Holy Virgin would help him “because – my sister said this – he had been a good soldier and certainly She would have taken him by the hand in the serious step.”

Seated on the bed he would have his friendly smile for everyone; that big thick hair of his, of darkened silver and that great peace of his would make an impression. He would speak peacefully, even of the most and of the least, when he was with anyone of us, not omitting to reaffirm the most minute dispositions for his corpse, his burial near mother, the suffrages. Death came up to him softly on tiptoe and with all respect.

Thursday morning, I peacefully went about the usual work in the Episcopal palace. The pneumonia was still outlined – and I don’t know why – we were not worried; father was not at all depressed, he would talk and this also seemed to us a good safe-conduct for health.

The truth appeared underdone to us on Friday the 17th. That morning I would, as usual, attend the audience in the Episcopate, when I came to be informed that father had had a collapse. I feared this word was a pious lie to tell me that father had stopped living. I immediately flew to the Righi residence and already found the prompt Prof. Meneghini: father was recovering.

I thought it prudent to immediately administer Extreme Unction and I asked father without embarrassment if I could proceed. Without any emotion, peaceful and grateful he said, “Yes, yes.” He received it with an extraordinary concentration and responding to all the prayers. His serenity nearly joyful reflected itself upon us. After he was better and began to be himself again, or so we began to hope.

We passed the days of Saturday 18 to Wednesday 22 with alternating fears and confident waitings. That day Father sent to get his cloak as Confrere of the Confraternity of the Immaculate. Through many years he would have purchased it and he had always said that he would like to be buried covered by that sacred uniform. That Wednesday he clearly said that it was good to have it ready at the Righi residence, because by now he would have wanted to wear it. He would know.

His prayer, when there wasn't anyone to entertain him, was serene and continual: every morning he would continue to receive, with a moving piety, Holy Communion. All of us, the house, were immersed in His serenity and in his peace. He wanted to confess himself again and he stayed a long time with his confessor. These two days that preceded the end assumed a solemn dignity. He received everyone, one by one, even the husbands of the grandchildren: he gave his last advice to all and mementos with farsighted wisdom, with an assured tone of voice, penetrating, sculptured as if he might speak from eternity. He even spoke with me

and he recommended me to pray and to have courage. I had the impression that he might refer to a conversation [1] made to me three years before. He did not say another thing, because in me he always saw his son, but above all he would see his Bishop. The reverence that he knew to unite to his affection in the long years of my episcopate, now appears to me in a light of a most singular Faith. On the 23rd his strong fibre would again resist; Prof. Meneghini said to me: “He again makes a step, we will pull him out of this.” On the evening of the 23rd we were serene: no one would make to expect the immanent end.

From the open windows I heard the bells of the Metropolitan, announcing the solemnity of St. John the Baptist. He said: “It is the last time that I hear these bells.” We retired peacefully after the nightly farewell. At a certain hour he stayed along with the Sister nurse; night passed without incident, without worry until he dozed off.

At 6:20 in the morning, Father Giacomo Barbarino, my secretary,[2] passed

[1] The word “discorso” could also mean speech. As Siri’s father was a soft-spoken man of few words, one can hazard the guess that the speech was made by another and related by the son to the father. The fact that the father speaks no more of it out of the respect that he has for his son’s authority as his Bishop leaves one in no doubt that the “conversation” of three years ago, 1961, related to the governing of the Church.

[2] A young Giacomo Barabino was the first of the jailers placed as secretary in order to constantly monitor this Cardinal of high stature, Pope Gregory XVII. Press photos over the years show him smiling broadly, at the elbow of a dazed (drugged?) Siri, with nearby lay people looking on with surprise or worry on their faces. Siri was only ever allowed to “consecrate” Barabino as a “bishop,” in 1974, which, it is said he did, so as to get him out of the way.

by to see him so as to ask if he was ready to receive Holy Communion as usual. He found him completely in himself, lucid and serene, seated in bed and ready to receive the Lord. While Father Giacomo would make the preparatives, he lowered his head and without any movement the already weak flame of life in him blew itself out.

The sister inspected him: he would seem to sleep, she informed Father Barabino, who was preparing himself to take him Holy Communion; Father Barabino informed me, who immediately became aware of the truth. He was almost seated with his back leaning to the pillows, with his head reclining forward.

I gathered all the Episcopal family together for the final duty: when Mother had died and I had shortly before intoned the “Salve Regina” and after the recital of the “Credo” father had touched me on the elbow: “Do that also when I die.” I followed his wish faithfully. He was now with God, he had found the Most Holy Virgin and I believe, after almost a hundred years he had found his mother that he had not known on earth. Finally!

It was the solemnity of St. John the Baptist. I telephoned that I was not able to have the Pontifical mass that day and I went to celebrate Holy Mass for the soul of my father, for the common humility with which he leaves the earth, but with the powerful trust that that Holy Mass would serve others.

We arranged the corpse in the room that from the Sacristy leads into the Chapel in Righi. When I saw him on the funeral bed, he was serene, rejuvenated, as if he had turned back half a century.

The Funeral was held in the Metropolitana, with Archbishops and Bishops present, the Authorities with, at the head, the Minister of the Interior, the Clergy. I celebrated and God gave me the strength to get to the end.

Afterwards another commemoration began; one by one testimonies to his charity and to his dedication were made vivid, revealing that which, with him alive, we had never known. He lies in the same tomb as that of mother and he repeatedly, even in the final days, had recommended that his coffin not be put simply parallel to that of mother, but parallel in the opposite direction, as if to be able to see each other in the face. I myself watched that it be placed like this. Next to me was Monsignor Alberto Castelli, Archbishop of Russia and secretary of the CEI. Now even he, holy soul, is with God. [1]

[1] It is an odd way to end the book on one's father, speaking of another man. Castelli was very important, with world-wide recognition it is true. Regardless, the ending leaves the reader in no doubt of how alone Siri is at the writing of this book. Has he anyone to confide in at all? Is this his message to us, that He is all alone in carrying the weight of the Hidden Papacy? The year when this book is published is 1975.

