

SOCIETY OF SAINT PAUL
The Secretary General



«As we have been united in the profession of the faith, so let us keep ourselves united in suffrage and intercession».

(Fr. Alberione)

At 10:50, local time, of 29 August 2016, at the *Divina Provvidenza* Community of Alba (Italy), has returned to the house of the Father our confrere Disciple of the Divine Master

BROTHER GIOVANNI PIO RIZZO

94 years, 82 of Pauline life and 77 of religious profession

One of the last witnesses of the Pauline foundational era has just left us, one who would leave for the mission in distant countries and build from nothing banking only on the word of the Founder. Tenacious and lively faith, in the face of adversities of every type and combined with a capacity of service and silent sacrifice, has supported the vocation journey of Brother Pio until his call to eternity. We saw him that way, just 26 years old, living out his first obedience to Primo Maestro and embarking on the ship named *Duilio*. It was November 1948 and the ship was headed to Mumbai (Bombay at that time). Arriving at the port, on 6 December, Fr. Alfonso Ferrero was there to welcome him, who himself arrived in India in 1937, two years after the first Paulines, Fr. Domenico Ambrosio and Fr. Guido Paganini, were sent by Fr. Alberione. The arrival of this humble and meek disciple is, for the future India Province, a true sign of Providence: if from 1935 to the outbreak of the Second World War (1939), very little could be done because of the initial difficulties to be welcomed in the diocese, still less was it possible to work during the war, mainly because the Italians belonged to the enemy party. After 26 hours of journey by train from Mumbai, Brother Pio arrived with Fr. Alfonso at Allahabad where, with Brother Bernardino Ruffoli, they rolled up their sleeves and helped to the growth of the work just started without great means.

Let us make a flash back: Brother Pio, baptized as Giovanni, was born into a peasant family in Torre Bormida (Cuneo), on 12 July 1922. Papa Carlo and Mama Teresa were the parents of nine children, including himself. Giovanni felt his vocation since as a child and was insistent with his parents to follow Primo Maestro. So he entered, just 12 years old, in the Mother House on 8 September 1934. Here, in those first exciting years, he made the initial formation and made his first profession on 8 April 1939, which was later confirmed in perpetuity on 9 April 1944, at the height of the war. In two successive years we saw him engaged at the paper mill in the Mother House and, before moving himself until his embarkation for India, he was

in Turin to carry out the apostolate at the warehouse and the shipping department of SAIE.

We found him again, as mentioned, at Allahabad, where he remained for six years engaged in the local press. Skilled and an experienced mechanic, in April 1954 obedience called him to Mumbai, where for 27 years exercised his Pauline ministry in the local book centre, the then *Examiner Press Book Shop*. As his companion of apostolate for 22 years, Brother Vincent Alemcheril, who left us for eternal life on 13 January, recalled the figure of Brother Pio in 2014, on the occasion of his 75th anniversary of religious profession: «For me he was an ideal Pauline in every sense. His exceptional patience and kindness with each person have always impressed on everyone. His fidelity to the daily spiritual life has been extraordinary. I have never heard him grumbling about the food, the climate or culture». Other Indian brothers who have known him closely defined him in the same happy occasion as «one who spoke little and did much», «hidden and generous», excellent interpreter of that “Pauline symbol” who comes from our healthier tradition, model and inspirer of many Indian brothers who, in past decades until now, have followed in his footsteps.

The story of the life of Brother Pio, after 33 years in India, then continued from 1981 to 2008 in Ireland as Director of the Athlone book centre until, in 2010, his return to the Mother House in Alba due to poor health, recommended his repatriation so he could enjoy a better health care. Since 2010, Brother Pio lived as always, in humility and silent hard work, this time with the holy ministry of intercession and reparation.

With the departure of Brother Pio our Congregation in heaven is further enriched with its 580th member. We entrust this to our confrere’s intercession before the Divine Master: that the vocation to holiness of every Pauline be increasingly alive to the benefit of the recipient souls of our apostolate of communication.

Rome, 30 August 2016

Fr. Stefano Stimamiglio

The funeral will take place today, Tuesday, 30 August, at 15:30 (local time) at the Church of Saint Paul in Alba. His mortal remains will be interred in the city cemetery of Alba.

The Superiors are to inform their communities for the prescribed suffrages (*Const. 65 and 65.1*).