

In the Father's House

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



At 7:30 AM (local time) on Wednesday, 6 December 2023, he died at the Fleury hospital in Montreal (Canada), following complications during surgery,

BROTHER REMO STEFANO RIZZO **87 years, 71 of Pauline life, 65 of profession**

Remo was born in S. Giorgio a Liri (Frosinone) on 27 July 1936, the second of five children, four brothers and a sister, to parents Vittorio Amedeo and Orsola Varrecchione. He entered the community of Alba on 20 August 1952, began his Novitiate on 7 September 1956, made his First Religious Profession on 8 September 1958, taking the name Stefano. He was definitively consecrated with perpetual profession on 8 September 1963.

Brother Stefano (Étienne) began his apostolic activity abroad, in Sherbrooke, Canada, in the bookshop. In 1977, he was appointed Superior of the community and from 1988 he will have both roles, Superior and Director of the bookshop until 1993, when he moved to the community of Montreal where he will take care of the Diffusion. In 1994, he returned to Sherbrooke, where he alternated various roles: Director of the bookshop, Regional Vicar, Delegate of the Regional Superior for the community. In 2018, he faithfully continued his apostolate, dedicating himself to administrative services and in 2023, he was again appointed Regional Vicar.

Brother Étienne – in the community he was familiarly called “zi Remo” by his baptismal name, older brother of the Canada-France Region – left us suddenly. “His departure to heaven creates a void that will last – says a brother who lived with him – because Étienne represents an important chapter in the history of the Region. Until the end, he gave his contribution to community life and the apostolate with enthusiasm and dedication.”

Brother Étienne was endowed with a clear and positive personality, extremely valuable in the context of community life. His apostolic responsibilities were concentrated essentially in the bookshop sector, as Director of the Sherbrooke bookshop, to which he gave exceptional development. In this role, he brought out his best skills, in particular he had a strong commercial intuition, a sixth sense for opportunities and a talent for disciplined organisation. Always open to dialogue and collaboration in the apostolate, he fully assumed his role in decisions and orientations. “His” bookshop, through commercial initiatives, has gone beyond territorial limits, also reaching a large US clientele. Commercial and economic success is the result of the gifts with which the Lord has filled him, with the contribution of the brothers involved with him.

Brother Étienne is the example of the Disciple aware of his role in the context of the Pauline mission, a tireless worker, always listening to the needs of the client, always vigilant to seize opportunities for apostolic development.

Étienne's human qualities were expressed in the form of brotherly good humour. He had fine culinary skills and did not disdain conviviality. "We will not forget the beautiful summer or winter evenings at the chalet on the lake shore where, perhaps with the help of a good glass, he improvised as a poet!," says a brother.

A great worker but also a person of prayer, especially in the period of withdrawal from apostolic responsibility. Étienne humbly prepared himself for the meeting with the Lord. A brother testifies regarding his sudden passing: "We cannot keep him, we only ask him not to forget us."

In August 2016, reflecting on his 80th birthday, Brother Étienne wrote a short message on a postcard to the Superior General: "Thank you for your good wishes, thank you for your prayers. May I get ever closer to the limpid water of the fresh Source that is Jesus."

In the message of greetings on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of his profession, the then Superior General Fr Valdir José De Castro wrote to him as follows: "Thank you because you still spend yourself today for the apostolate, giving your all, now in diffusion, but for most of the time in the bookshop. Thank you for your personal testimony, for your service to the community."

May the Lord welcome this brother of ours and reward him with the abundance of his gifts. May his dedication to God, to the community and to the apostolate be fruitful in spiritual and apostolic fruits and vocations, especially for Canada which he served and loved for so many years.

Rome, 7 December 2023

Father Vito Spagnolo, ssp

The funeral will be celebrated on Saturday, 9 December in Montreal. The body will be buried in the "Le repos Saint-François d'Assise" cemetery, also in Montreal.

The Circumscription Superiors should inform their communities for the prescribed suffrages (Const. 65 and 65.1).