



At 8:00 PM on 26 February 2019 at the Community Timoteo Giaccardo of Rome, our brother priest passed away

FATHER GIUSEPPE LETTERIO SPURIA

96 years, 85 of Pauline life, 79 of religious profession and 71 of ordination

Father Giuseppe Spuria left us in the silence of a cold Roman evening, in the fullness of his years, taking with him in heaven his gentle character along with many memories of those early tumultuous and extraordinary times of the Society of St. Paul in Italy.

Giuseppe was born on 26 April 1922 in Pezzolo, Sicily, a characteristic hilly village with vast terraces of citrus groves located about twenty kilometres from Messina. The first born in a family that includes, besides his father Placido and mother Caterina, two other sisters and a brother, he attended elementary school in his hometown. On 25 September 1933, just 11 years old, he entered the threshold of the community of Messina (now closed), where he attended middle school. With the opening of the community of Catania (15 September 1936), he moved there with many other boys in formation to attend the Junior High School, before moving to Sanfrè, in Piedmont, to live the novitiate and here after a year, 8 September 1939, publicly professed the religious vows, in which he assumed the name of Letterio. He attended classical studies in Alba (1939-1942), a time of indelibly defining his *paolinità*: he was assigned, in fact, to assist Maestro Giaccardo in cleaning the premises and in assisting him with his precious and hidden secretarial work. Then followed the theological studies in Rome which begun after perpetual profession (8 September 1942) and completed before the presbyteral ordination, taking place on 13 July 1947 by the imposition of the hands of Bishop Luigi Traglia, Vice Regent of Rome, together with the Paulines Father Giovanni Battista Manfredi and Father Rosario Esposito. Those were years in Rome in which the future priest began to engage in pastoral activity collaborating with the Office of the Cooperators.

The year 1948 marks the beginning of his missionary experience in Latin America, which will last 14 years. Initially assigned to the community of Santiago de Chile, he remained there until 1957, assigned in bookshops, then as Master of the boys and, finally, in the direction of the *Alba* periodical. In a politically destabilized country, living the prodromes of the future Pinochet coup, he experienced the first periods of our presence in Chile (the community had, in fact, opened its doors in March 1947) with all the enthusiasm but also the typical hardships of foundational times.

In 1957 Father Giuseppe, even though suffering psychologically for the prolonged distance from Italy, continued the missionary experience by moving to Buenos Aires, the capital of Argentina, where, sharing with the people the suffering of the politically very tense climate of those years, he remained until

1962, dedicating himself to teaching the young and to the direction of the magazine *Madre de Dios*. During his years in Latin America, he had time to write three books: *La Virgen, el mundo, tu y yo*; *La Via Crucis y el problema del dolor*; *Los mensajes marianos y el Evangelio*.

In 1962, he returned to Italy, assigned to the community of Bari, where he dedicated himself to teaching the young in our formation house. He remained there for seven years, until 1969, when he asked for and obtained a sabbatical formation period that led him in 1970 to obtain a license in Sacred Theology at the Pontifical Lateran University. Obedience later led him to Catania, where he resided until 2002, serving as a teacher of the young in formation and dedicating his body and soul for many years to enhance the growth of the many groups of Cooperators of Sicily. Here also opened some Bible circles, in which he offered help to many people in their spiritual growth, starting from the meditation of the Word of God.

In 2002, at the age of 80, due to his health situation, he was transferred to the *San Paolo* community of Rome, where he dedicated himself to various community services, until he was allowed to do so, before being entrusted to the competent care of the community infirmary of Rome (2012), who accompanied him until his death, probably due to a cardiac arrest immediately after dinner.

Father Giuseppe wrote to the Founder in September 1941: *«I have now reached the end of my second year of profession and I ask the Divine Master to constantly ascend the mountain of perfection, to persevere and to die as religious in the Saint Paul Congregation»*. May the Divine Master, who accepted and fulfilled the prayers of the young professed, now bestow upon him what He promised to the righteous who served Him in his poor (Mt 25:34-40). And to all of us, who have gathered the witnessing of the Pauline mission, grant us perseverance and joy in serving Him to the end.

Rome, 27 February 2019



Father Stefano Stimamiglio, ssp
Secretary General

The funeral of Father Giuseppe will take place on 28th February 2019 at 3:00 PM in the Sottocripta of the Shrine of the Queen of Apostles in Rome. After the funeral, his body will be transferred to the cemetery of Pezzolo (Messina) and buried here in the family tomb.

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