

Bl. Enrico Rebuschini
(Italy) 1860-1938

*Dedicated to the care of the sick.
Ministered to the sick in Verona, Italy 1889-1899,
then served at the San Camillo di Cremona nursing home
until his death in 1938.¹*



Enrico Rebuschini, professed priest, Camillian, was born on April 28, 1860, at Gravedona, Como, Italy, to Domenico and Sophia Rebuschini. He was second of five children. His father was an administrative clerk and then became the head tax official for Como province. Though his father accompanied his mother to the church door, he was not in favor of religion; therefore, he remained outside.

Enrico graduated from Como High School. His father opposed his entering the priesthood so he studied mathematics at the University of Padua. He studied there only one year because the anti-clericalism aroused in him bitterness and disgust. As part of compulsory military service, he graduated from the non-commissioned officer's school in Milan as a Reserve Second

Lieutenant. His superiors encouraged him to make the Army a career. Enrico opted, instead, to study accounting. In 1882 he received an accounting diploma and started working in the administration of a silk business, located 45 km north of Como, that was managed by his sister Dorina's husband. After three years, it was clear he was depressed and troubled. He confided to his father that this work in industry and commerce didn't suit him. He wrote his brother-in-law, *"The thought of forever remaining a burden rather than being a good assistant,... the fact of knowing at the same time, that my parents will never be at peace, as long as I remain in a path that doesn't suit my nature (and which makes me unhappy), has finally persuaded me that I have to give it up, for my Mom and Dad's good, for your good and for mine. I am telling you this with a painfully heavy heart."* (9 August 1884).²

Three months later Enrico enrolled in the Gregorian University in Rome to pursue ecclesiastical studies. His professors noted, "Edifying conduct, with a very good spirit of the Church." A visit from his parents and Aunt Magdalena found content and at peace. Unfortunately, from March 1886 to May 1887, he was overcome by a profound nervous depression. This may have been caused not only by his temperament but also by excessive mortifications. Enrico returned to his family and spent some time at a clinic. Eight years later when recalling this episode, Enrico wrote, *"I was sent to a spa. There God restored my health by giving me total confidence in His infinite goodness and mercy."* In May 1887, Enrico fully recovered his health though, he did experience relapses which were less prolonged and less serious. The trial was overcome by a progressively more correct understanding of God, which brought about a filial relationship based on trust. The best feature of Blessed Enrico's spirituality would, from then on, be the consideration of the infinite ocean of mercy found in the Heart of Jesus, of the maternal tenderness of our Mother, the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, whom the Church invokes by the consoling title of Health of the Sick.

During the summer of 1887, Enrico worked as an accountant at the civil hospital in Como but was dismissed after a few weeks because he was rarely in his office. Instead he went to the wards to visit the sick. He assessed their needs, helped solve their problems and supported them both morally and materially, sacrificing his last dime and even his own clothes. His aunt Lena, who was president of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, recommended that he visit the sick and poor at home which he found very rewarding. During this time he wrote in his notebook as he practiced the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola, *“The Most Blessed Virgin, to whom I have abandoned myself in order that she might find me a task suited to my weakness, obtained a position for me in the administrative department of the civil hospital, where I was working several hours a day. I spend the rest of the time alone, in pious exercises... Seeing as how I could not continue in this way and feeling called to embrace religious life, my spiritual father (when I revealed to him my attraction to the religious family of Saint Francis) suggested to me that of Saint Camillus, which seemed to him more suited to my circumstances and also because he feared for my health. I did it without discussion — I embraced it immediately.”*

Enrico entered the Camillian religious order in Verona at the age of 27 on September 27, 1887. Taking into consideration the studies he had already undertaken in Rome, he was ordained to the priesthood during his novitiate on April 14, 1889, by Bishop Sarto of Mantua, the future Pope St. Pius X. In 1890, Father Enrico was named Chaplain for the military and civil hospitals in Verona. The clerics, religious and soldiers considered him a saint.

He made his perpetual profession on December 8, 1891. He again suffered depression and spiritual trial in the years 1890-1891 — a perfectionist nature, he took on spiritual exercises that did not take into account his nervous frailty. He was too concerned about thought of eternity. As Chaplain of the hospital, however, he was able to recover his balance and calmness by attending to the afflictions of his neighbors. In 1895, he was named Vice-Novice master and Professor of Theology resulting in a state of constant tension. When relieved of these responsibilities his depression abated. One last bout of depression occurred in 1922 when he was again overloaded with work. This he overcame in a few months.

Though plagued with bouts of depression, Father Enrico admirably took upon himself heavy responsibilities with great generosity for over twenty-five years between the attacks of 1895 and 1922. And then from 1922 to his death in 1938, for over sixteen years, he more than ever showed a stable equilibrium and complete serenity. A colleague, Fr. Joseph Moar, who worked alongside him during the last seven years only learned of the depressions Father Rebuschini had experienced during the beatification process of collecting and reviewing documents. He wrote, “When I knew him, he was utterly balanced and always his same old self. It had never occurred to me that he might have been able to suffer from depression.”

In summary, Blessed Enrico Rebuschini ministered to the sick in Verona for ten years from 1889 to 1899. He then served at the San Camillo di Cremona nursing home the rest of his life - almost forty years. He served as treasurer for the community for thirty-four years and superior for eleven. He carried out these offices honestly, with integrity and accuracy. Every day he carved out time for a daily visit to the sick guests and for frequent visits to the sick in the city. The Decree from the Congregation of Saints states, “as an extension of the inexhaustible mercy and patience and goodness of Jesus, who bent over all the miseries of humanity wounded by sin through the care of painful bodies and gave peace and salvation to souls.”

Father Enrico Rebuschini died on May 10, 1938, in Cremona, Italy, from pneumonia. He was declared venerable with the promulgation of the decree on heroic virtues on July 11, 1995, and beatified on May 4, 1997, both by Pope St. John Paul II.³ (Memorial - May 10)

In his homily for the beatification, Pope St. John Paul II stated:

Throughout his life, Bl. Enrico Rebuschini walked resolutely towards that “perfection of charity” which is the dominant theme of this Sunday's Liturgy of the Word. In the footsteps of the founder, St Camillus de Lellis, he witnessed to merciful love, practicing it wherever he worked. His firm resolution “to commit his own life to giving God to his neighbor, seeing in him the Lord’s own face”, involved him in a demanding ascetic and mystical journey, marked by an intense life of prayer, extraordinary love for the Eucharist and constant dedication to the sick and the suffering. He became a sure reference point both for the Clerics Regular, Servants of the Sick, as well as for the Christian community of Cremona. His example is a pressing invitation to all believers to be attentive to the suffering and the sick in body and in spirit.⁴

*“‘To love him with the same love that God loves him.’
‘To love him as a creature of God;’ to be in his spirit
‘His lowest servant;’ to love his neighbor
‘before God so that my only thought about them is
to pray for their needs and to do the little that I can
in the spirit of a lowest servant, because this is my duty.’”⁵*

References:

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