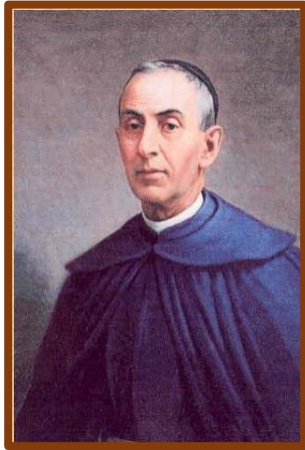


Bl. Luigi Maria Monti (Italy) (1825-1900)

Layman. Studied nursing.

Worked with the sick in the cholera epidemic in Brescia, Italy in 1855.

*Founded The Congregation of the Sons of the
Immaculate Conception, men who served in hospitals
and as travelling nurses to the scattered, impoverished farmers.¹*



Luigi Maria Monti, layman, founded The Congregation of the Sons of the Immaculate Conception with Father Luigi Dossi.

Luigi was born on July 24 1825, at Bovisio, Masciago, Diocese of Milan, Italy, the eighth of eleven children. When he was 12 years old his father died. He helped to support the family by making wood craft items. He formed a prayer group with other devout craftsmen and farmers calling themselves The Company of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The people of Bovisio referred to them as “The Company of Friars.” In addition to praying together, this group cared for the poor and sick. In 1846, at the age of 21, Luigi took private vows of chastity and obedience, dedicating his life to God.

Not everyone in the town was able to grasp the spirituality of Luigi. Some people in the small town, together with the parish priest, mounted a campaign of opposition which led to slanderous charges of political conspiracy against the Austrian occupation authorities. In 1851, the men were arrested for conspiracy and imprisoned in Milan. They were released 72 days later at the end of the formal investigation, the authorities realizing they were a religious, not a political group.

Docile to his spiritual director, Fr. Luigi Dossi, Luigi Monti joined the Sons of Mary Immaculate, the congregation founded by Blessed Ludovico Pavoni only five years earlier. He spent six years in this congregation as a novice. He studied and loved the constitution written by Blessed Pavoni. Here he gained experience as an educator and learned both the theory and practice of nursing care, which he placed at the service of the community and those stricken by cholera during the epidemic of 1855 in Brescia. At this time, he willingly accepted to be isolated in the local asylum with the sick.

At age 32, a miraculous event occurred as he continued to search for the concrete realization of his own consecration as related in Vatican documents:

In a letter dated 1896, four year prior to his death, he evoked the night of the spirit which he had lived at that time: “I would spend hours before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, but they were all hours without a drop of heavenly dew; my heart remained arid, cold, and unmoved. I was on the verge of abandoning everything, when, alone in my room, I heard a clear and distinct inner voice saying to me: ‘Luigi, go to the choir in church and present your tribulations once again to the Blessed Sacrament.’ I heeded this inspiration and hastened to follow it. I knelt down and after a short time—what wonder!—I saw two personages in human form. I recognized them. It was Jesus with His Most Holy Mother, who approached me and in a loud voice said to me: ‘Luigi, much indeed will you still have to suffer; other varied and greater battles will you face. Be strong; you will emerge victorious from everything; never lacking to you will be our powerful help. Continue the way you began.’ Thus did they speak and then disappear.”²

Inspired to start a congregation for the care for the sick, Luigi Maria Monti traveled to Rome with the idea of establishing a congregation to care for the sick in Rome called the Congregation of the Sons of the Immaculate Conception. His colleague Pezzini met with the Commendatore, the highest ranking authority at Santo Spirito Hospital where the Capuchin chaplains were also in the process of creating a sort of Third Order of St. Francis for the bodily assistance to patients. When Luigi arrived, he was humbly admitted to this group and was initially assigned tasks reserved today to practical nurse assistants. He also worked as a phlebotomist and was certified, receiving a diploma from La Sapienza University in Rome.

In 1877, at the age of 52, following the unanimous wish of his confreres, His Holiness Pope Pius IX placed him at the head of his own Congregation, where he remained until his death in 1900. As Superior General, Luigi Monti prepared for the Congregation a rule of life. The community of Santo Spirito Hospital lived this rule, "Nourished by the Eucharist and meditation upon the privilege of the "Lady all Pure," the Brothers dedicated themselves with heroism to the care of the sick. They served at times of mass admissions due to epidemics of malaria and typhoid and also in the aftermath of armed conflict. The Brothers did not hesitate to surrender their own beds for the comfort of the sick and infirmed.

Luigi founded small communities throughout the region where men served in hospitals and as traveling nurses to the scattered, impoverished farmers. In 1882, a Carthusian monk came to see him at the Santo Spirito Hospital and said he had been inspired by Mary Immaculate to do so. The monk came from Desio and presented Monti with the pitiful case of his four nephews who had lost both their parents. This was a sign from the Spirit of God, and Luigi Monti expanded their mission and founded orphanages with attached schools.

Luigi Monti died prior to receiving ecclesial approbation for the congregation he founded. Thus, though he was known as "Father" by members of the Congregation and those whom he helped, Luigi Maria Monti remained a layman all his life. He died at the age of 75, on October 1, 1900, in Saronno, Varese, Italy, of natural causes and is buried there. In 1904, Pope St. Pius X approved the new model of community foreseen by the Founder, granting the ministerial priesthood as an essential complement for carrying out an apostolic mission addressed to the whole man in both assistance to the sick and safe haven for youth in need. In this community served both ordained and lay 'Brothers' in equality of rights and responsibilities, where elected as superior of the community was to be the Brother deemed best suited.²

His beatification miracle involved the rapid, instantaneous, and permanent healing of Giovanni Luigi Iecle, a farmer from Bosa, Sardegna, who had three operations, including a subtotal gastrectomy, multiple fistulas, and an intestinal occlusion and was in a septic state. This miraculous cure occurred on December 26, 1961, in Bosa, Nuoro, Italy. Luigi Maria Monti was declared venerable with the promulgation of the decree on heroic virtues on April 24, 2001, and beatified on November 9, 2003, both by Pope St. John Paul II.

In his homily for the beatification, Pope St. John Paul II stated, "Blessed Luigi Maria Monti was entirely dedicated to healing the physical and spiritual wounds of the sick and the orphaned. He loved to call them "Christ's poor ones," and he served them, enlivened by a living faith and sustained by intense and continual prayer. In his evangelical commitment, he was constantly inspired by the example of the Holy Virgin and placed the Congregation he founded under the sign of Mary Immaculate."⁴

(Memorial - October 1)

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