

An Ordinary Living image of Christ

*By Fr. Augusto Luca, SX from "Bishop
without Frontiers, Guido Maria Conforti*

***Brief characteristics of Bishop
Conforti's spirituality and
guiding principles of his life as
founder of the Xaverian
missionaries, and bishop of the
diocese of Parma, Italy***

It is extremely difficult to summarize in a few lines the characteristics of Guido Conforti's spirituality, or adequately to express the guiding principles of his life.

He was above all a man of faith. His faith in God was that of an exceedingly active man who saw Providence in every event of life. In the darkest moments, even when faith in himself wavered, he clung to his faith in God, and to the conviction that Divine Providence was without limit.

His spirituality was centered on the person of Christ. Christ was always present in his thoughts and in his heart. Christ was his constant companion in all the actions of his life: in prayer, in his apostolic ministry, in every encounter with every person and in every place, in his moments of sadness, suffering and temptation.

It was from Christ that he drew his inspiration counsel and guidance, and to whom he turned in moments of difficulty and distress. His who being reflected the truth that Christ lived within him.

The motto that he chose as Bishop of Parma, "*In Omnibus Christus,*" was a fitting testimony to all that he practiced and preached. His close union with Christ, above all in the celebration of the Eucharist and in contemplation before the Tabernacle, nourished every fiber of his being and led him to see Christ in all, and especially in the poor, the lowly, the suffering and the sinners.

Conforti's love of God was transformed into an intense, gentle but noble love of human beings to the point of complete self-forgetfulness and self-sacrifice. In his commitment to God was generous, his commitment to others was no less, and he gave himself unsparingly to all whom God allowed him to meet.



His friendship knew no barriers. It extended beyond those who were close to him his priests, his students and the people of his diocese, to embrace the whole world.

His constant desire was to give God to all, and especially to those who lived in the remote corners of the earth and for whom also Christ had died and risen. Making Christ known to them was a central and consuming concern. For them he prayed, worked and sacrificed himself.

Among the more striking qualities which people loved were his gentleness, his humility, his honesty, his serenity and his wonderful ability to lay aside all grudges. If he had any differences with anyone, he brought the dissension into the open, fought the battle and then, win or lose, brushed aside all hard feeling.

Such was his charity that even when rebuking someone he could still make them feel completely accepted. In whatever activity, whether it was his daily prayer or daily work or the patient listening to those in need, Guido Conforti displayed remarkable faithfulness in the pursuit of God's will and the good of the people.

His life was not made up of extraordinary things, impressive achievements or spectacularly heroic acts. Those events which might have appeared to many as extraordinary and miraculous were made light of by a humility which turned attention away from himself and sought to give credit only to others.

His heroism consisted simply in doing the will of God with faithfulness and love in whatever way it was made known to him. If a comparison with any of the Saints of the past were appropriate, then it must be that offered by his clergy and the many people who knew him when they claimed that "he is another St. Francis de Sales."

Ordinary people who knew nothing of St. Francis de Sales compared him to the person of Jesus himself. In their simplicity, they expressed the greatest truth that could be said about Guido Maria Conforti: he was a living image of the goodness and love of Our Lord.