



FR. TONY LALLI, SX

Biography of a Missionary

1939 - 2021

Xaverian Missionaries USA
OUR LADY OF FATIMA SHRINE, MA
AUGUST 2022

Fr. Tony B. Lalli, SX

1939-2021

On December 3, 2021, the Lord called Fr. Anthony B. Lalli home, December 3, the feast of St. Francis Xavier, is a day of great symbolic significance. Some people say that dying on a particular day is a special gift, a rare gift. Fr. Tony, as we usually called him, received this gift reserved, I believe, for those who lived their vocation faithfully, even when their life often seemed like a roller coaster ride. When the journey became difficult, Fr. Tony was supported by the words of St. Paul, which he often repeated: "God is faithful. God does not take back his gifts or revoke his choices" (Rom 11:29; 1 Cor 10:13). He firmly believed in God's faithfulness, which in turn supported his faithfulness.

There are always two ways to get to know a person: listening to those who knew him and listening to the person himself. This "profile" will draw on both sources, and we hope this will allow us to appreciate and get to know Fr. Tony and, at the same time, thank God for his life. He loved the missionary life and the Xaverian family even when relationships and situations made him feel at the margins of it.

The Beginning

Tony was 82 years old, born on September 26, 1939, in Castiglione Messer Marino (Chieti), a small town in Abruzzo, central-eastern Italy. He was the second of eight children of Francesco Lalli, a tailor, and Eleonora Verna. He was baptized on December 2, 1939. His childhood was marked by hardship, hunger, war; the behavior of German soldiers who caused irreparable physical damage to the last born: Arnaldo. He valued a simple life, strong faith, and deep friendships; the passing of the seasons marked by the passage of the sheep through his village. These memories were forever engraved in his mind and his heart.

After elementary school (1946–1951), Tony entered the Minor Diocesan Seminary (1951–1956) in Trivento (Campobasso - Abruzzo).

Fr. Germano Antonio, one of his classmates, writes:

"By Fr. Tony Lalli I keep the image that has remained imprinted on me from my teenage years in the Episcopal Seminary of Trivento (Cam Pobasso, 1951–1956). Lalli had excellent sensitivity and equally superior intelligence. For us, his classmates, he was the exemplary seminarian: diligent, intellectual, in perfect self-control, and devoted to prayer.

We were born in the same year (1939) and in the same month (September), and, perhaps, precisely because we were born under the same constellation, a great friendship tied us.

In those years, precisely in 1954, we both had good fortune and the grace to meet the first Xaverian. It was none other than Fr. Alfeo Emaldi, who, in those years, toured all the

seminaries in Italy to tell the painful and extraordinary story of his missionary life in China. The meeting with Fr. I think Emaldi was a milestone in our common missionary vocation. Since 1954, we have subscribed to the Xaverian magazine "Faith and Civilization." In 1957 I entered the Regional Seminary of Chieti to continue my studies, while in 1956, Tony and his whole family emigrated to the United States "(Fr Antonio Germano SX, Chuknagar - Bangladesh, December 8, 2021).

Years later (Wayne, NJ, June 30, 1994), speaking of his missionary calling, Fr. Tony will write:

Would it be presumptuous of me to say that my vocation as a 'missionary' was born as a 'Xaverian'?

It was April 29, 1953, the Saint Catherine of Siena feast. In the Diocesan Seminary of Trivento (Campobasso), we had just received the news that the parish priest of two of my classmates had tragically died on that day.

First, while preparing to celebrate the patronal feast, we gathered to console our two friends. One of them, Antonio Germano, said: "I will take his place. I will be a missionary like him" (The pastor had been a missionary in Alaska for some years). Three of us volunteered, repeating, "I'll go too!" So, we secretly formed a "missionary group" and kept this decision hidden; the rector had threatened to expel anyone who talked about becoming a missionary. There were thirty of us in our seventh grade. Only the four of us "volunteers" have reached the Priesthood, two as diocesan priests and two as missionaries.

I received "Faith and Civilization," the then Xaverian magazine, and, in my mind, "missionary" became synonymous with "Xaverian." Sometime later, this feeling was reinforced by the visit of Fr. Alfeo Emaldi, who inflamed our imaginations with the stories of his life in China, his imprisonment, and how he cut his tongue and showed us the film "The Great Beehive" and "The Nagasaki Bells." In 1956, I accompanied my family to the United States. Felice Fangio, Romano Ciotola and Antonio Germano moved to the Diocesan Major Seminary of Chieti. Only after ordination did I learn that Germano, too, towards the end of his theological years, could go to Parma. In contrast, as I discovered last year (1993), Ciotola emigrated to the United States with his family and is now a diocesan priest in Cleveland, Ohio. Don Fangio remained in Italy.

The desire to be a missionary did not die out even when I attended Classical High School in Springfield, MA. I had spoken of my desire to a priest friend. One day, Fr. Egan called me: "Tony, there is an Italian missionary here for a missionary day. Do you want to meet him?" So, I did it. It was Fr. Rocco Serra, a Xaverian! I visited the Petersham, MA community. It was 1957.

At Petersham, there were Frs. Alphonse Begheldo and Fr. Serra, who a few months later left for Sierra Leone, and Fr. Valeriano Cobbe. That evening, Fr. Begheldo led the community in Eucharistic adoration, including three or four Xaverian nuns who lived near us. And he spoke of God's loving will, which had led me to the Xaverian Family.

Later, after dinner, Fr. Begheldo and I were alone in the living room; he played the piano softly, humming while I warmed myself by the fireplace, reading a biography of Guido Maria Conforti (Fr. Tony Lalli).

Fr. Tony joined the Xaverian Missionaries in Holliston, MA, on December 1, 1957. A few days before the feast of St. Francis Xavier. He attended college in Holliston (1957 - 1959) and studied philosophy at the Marist Seminary in Framingham, MA (1959 - 1961). On August 31, 1961, Tony began his Novitiate year in Petersham, MA, and concluded it by making his First Profession in Franklin, WI, on September 1, 1962. Novice Master, Fr. Lino Pellerzi.

On July 17, 1962, Tony wrote to the Superior General, Fr. Giovanni Castelli, asking to be admitted to the First Profession:

I humbly come to ask you to be admitted to the religious profession of the three simple vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, as understood by the Constitutions and the Superiors of this Religious Society. I resolve to accept and solemnly embrace religious life as it is and as it will be presented to me by the Rules and by my Superiors, in whom I recognize and will recognize God Himself, regardless of who they are and how great or small their authority is.

By giving my name to this Pious Society of St. Francis Xavier, by the grace of God, I want to renounce all of myself, completely, genuinely, and forever, for all that this Society represents, that is, to honor and glorify God through my sanctification, and the salvation of many souls in pagan lands.

I acknowledge, though not adequately, my misery and indignity for such a sublime ideal, and I sincerely acknowledge that I could be much better prepared to take this step. Still, I feel the Lord wants me to follow him on this path. That he has chosen for his favorites.

This year of Novitiate has strengthened the certainty of my religious, priestly, and missionary vocation, which the Lord has kept alive for about ten years.

As I look forward to your decision, I will fervently pray to Jesus and the Holy Spirit to enlighten your minds regarding the decision for the greater glory of God, for the good of the Church and this Pious Society, for my good and my sanctification.

Thank you for the love you carry me in Jesus, I humbly assure you of my filial love, respect, and obedience, and I promise you a daily reminder in my prayers.

On July 27, 1962, Fr. Angelo Frosi, Regional Superior of the United States, in introducing Anthony B. Lalli for admission to the First Profession, wrote:

The young man works on himself better and better. He loves the community and absorbs its spirit. He is generous with the Lord and his confreres and is animated by a spirit of faith in his relations with the Superiors. He is ready for the Holy Vows "(Fr. Angelo Frosi).

About the words of Fr. Frosi, "The young man... loves the Society and absorbs its spirit", it is worth reading what Fr. Tony wrote many years later in "Seeing God, to seek God ... to

love God in everything ... As I have heard the often-repeated melody of Conforti” (June 30, 1994):

It was then (1957) that I noticed for the first time the insistence of the Founder that the missionaries take religious vows. Fr Begheldo explained that Archbishop Conforti resisted attempts by the Church authorities to join some other missionary congregation, which did not require religious vows from its members. Conforti wanted his children to join religious vows to the missionary charism because he believed that vows were a bond that kept his missionaries united and strengthened the community and the family spirit. Sent to distant mission fields, they would need to form communities for this; the vows would help keep them together as a family. At the time, I didn't quite understand what it meant, but somehow the idea of "being missionaries together" attracted me. It suggested a "sense of belonging and working together" that resonated with me. This was the "charism" that the Founder transmitted to me since that distant eve of St. Francis Xavier and that "initial" impression of the charism has "colored" since then the meaning of my being a "Xaverian missionary." It has been a long journey, not always smooth, with many ups and downs, but always done with that in mind. This way of seeing and understanding was the yardstick and measure of my fidelity to the congregation and of my questioning the sense of belonging and the place I occupy within it " (Father Tony Lalli).

After the First Profession, Fr. Tony continues his theology studies, attending the St. Francis de Sales Major Seminary, Milwaukee, WI, (September 1962 - June 1966). Speaking of those years, Fr. Domenico Caldognetto writes:

"I met Fr. Tony in 1962 when I arrived in the United States with Graziano Rossato and Ivano Marchesin. One thing I remember very well and will never forget was his ability and willingness to help with whatever was needed, especially with the English language. He and his family had arrived in the United States years earlier. He had attended high school and college in the United States. He already spoke English very well as if it were his "mother tongue". It turned out to be a blessing from God. God knows how helpful he has been, especially during my first year in the United States. He was always available and kind in helping us. I think he knew what the three of us newcomers were going through, as he had walked the same path only a few years earlier. In the beginning, our life could have been much more difficult without his presence.

I don't know how difficult it was for him to accept and adapt to the three of us. Despite being "foreigners," we could easily communicate with each other ... Fr. Tony was the new presence among us. Over time, we felt more and more at home, and our class was no more than three but four Xaverian confreres. It was an outstanding experience. We were ordained priests together on January 22, 1966” (Fr. Dominic Caldognetto).

Fr. Ivano Marchesin adds:

"We arrived in the United States in June 1962. We met at the Franklin house in Wisconsin. Together we began our theology studies. Of course, Tony knew American English very

well and went out of his way to help us. I remember him as an earnest, hardworking, committed, competent person and friend." (Fr. Ivan Marchesin).

In the letter of July 22, 1963, to the Superior General, Fr. Giovanni Castelli, to ask for the renewal of temporary vows, Tony thoughtfully examines himself: he recognizes the greatness of the call, its unworthiness, and, at the same time, the openness and desire to collaborate with the grace of God. He writes:

"Most reverend and dear Fr. General, my first year of religious life ended on September 1, 1963. With this, I come to ask you, humbly and in the name of the Lord, for permission to renew, for another year, my vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience.

I recognize that I am not worthy of that privilege, especially since I could have been a better religious in the past year. However, following the advice of my direct superiors above all, I dare to ask for permission to renew my vows.

With the help of Divine Grace, I promise to live my duties as a religious king by collaborating more with God's grace, with tremendous enthusiasm in his divine service, in which I pray to persevere for all the days of my life.

I assure you and all my Superiors of a constant remembrance in my prayers; I am devoutly yours in Christ Jesus" (Fr. Tony Lalli).

In the presentation (February 11, 1965) of Anthony B. Lalli for admission to the subdiaconate, the Regional Superior of the United States, Fr. Angelo Frosi, recognizes and underlines the positive elements in Tony's life: piety (good), discipline (good - faithful to commitments), charity (good - willing to help others); religious vows (good - he takes care of his spiritual life), zeal (good - works with dedication and precision, sense of duty); study (he succeeds very well - of superior intelligence). It also points out the good progress made by Tony in improvement of his character (a bit difficult, led a bit to melancholy and discouragement). "Overall opinion: favorable."

Writing to the Superior General, Fr. Giovanni Castelli, on February 24, 1965, for admission to Perpetual Profession (April 2, 1965), Tony writes:

"Most reverend and dear Father,

On April 3, if, by the will of God, you accept my request, I will receive the Sacred Order of the Subdiaconate. Since I am professed only with temporary vows, I would need to be incardinated in a diocese, unless you obtain for me the dispensation (five months) from the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, since the three years from my first profession will expire. on September 1 this year.

For this act I would be very grateful and grateful to you. Therefore, with the help of God's grace, I humbly ask you to admit me to the Perpetual Profession of the simple vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience in our Pious Society

of Saint Francis Xavier. Almost eight years have passed since I joined this Society that I have come to know and love and of which I long to be a perpetual member. The grace of

the missionary vocation, to which I have consented with gratitude and joy, I wish to ratify publicly and forever before the representatives of the Church in this Society.

I strongly feel that the spirit, the form of service, the way of praying of this religious Society will allow me to best accomplish the task for which I was created, and which is mine by the grace of God. Unworthy as I am of this grace, please grant my request. Remembering you daily in my prayers, I am devotedly yours in Christ" (Fr. Tony Lalli).

In introducing Tony Lalli, for admission to the Deacon (July 28, 1965) and to the Priesthood (December 24, 1965), the Regional Superior of the United States, Fr. Angelo Frosi, wrote:

"Admission to the Diaconate:

From the time of his ordination to the Subdiaconate, nothing has happened that could have changed our favorable judgment regarding his continuation towards the Priesthood, in our Xaverian Congregation" (Fr. Angelo Frosi, SX)

"Admission to the Priesthood:

He has a good religious spirit and a good prayer life. He is observant of the rules and obedient. He fulfills his duty well and faithfully, whatever the task that is given to him; he can be trusted in fulfilling his office." (Fr. Angelo Frosi, SX)

Regarding the words of Fr. Tony: "I strongly feel that the spirit, the form of service, the way of praying of this religious society will allow me to better accomplish the task for which I was created and which is mine by the grace of God" and what Fr. Frosi: "... he always loves being a living part of the community and cooperating in community projects," it is worth continuing to read what Fr. Tony in "Seeing God... seeking God... loving God in everything... As I have heard the often-repeated melody of Conforti" (June 30, 1994):

"We Xaverians are missionaries as a religious community and a religious community in view of the mission. The love of God, which I proclaim I must concretely live everywhere in the community. Jesus called and gathered people into community. Wherever he went, Jesus formed a community. We recalled the event: at night, Jesus went up the mountain to pray, spent the night with God and in communion with him; in the morning, Jesus called the apostles around him and established a community; and in the afternoon, together with the disciples, he proclaimed the Word of God. And this is the order: we believe that our first call is to live in communion with God and that communion always calls us to live in community and that community always makes us suitable for ministry and mission" (Father Tony Lalli).

Along with his three classmates: Domenico Caldognetto, Graziano Rossato and Ivano Marchesin, he was ordained a missionary priest on January 22, 1966, in Milwaukee, WI. After ordination, he was assigned to the community of Holliston, MA (1966 - 1975). At Holliston, Fr. Tony put his talents to good use (poet, tailor, carpenter, cook, wood engraver, artist), the time at his disposal and his energies especially in three directions:

Pastoral Service in nearby parishes, especially in Millis, MA (where he also held the role of chaplain of the Knights of Columbus); librarian and history teacher (MA at Boston College - May 15, 1970) in our Minor Seminary and, finally, editor of the "Xaverian Missions Newsletter."

Remembering those years, Fr. Francesco Signorelli writes:

"Fr. Tony has been my partner for many years. I was ordained in 1959 and he in 1966. I was present at his ordination in Milwaukee, Wisconsin ever since. It was destined for Holliston where I was Bursar and Director of various benefactor groups in the Fatima Shrine League. He as a teacher, librarian and studies at Boston College for a master's in history. He then joined me in Brazil in the Parish of Bujaru, PA. Both then and then here we were in an adjoining room, so the communication between the two of us was easy and continuous. We got along very well.

He was well liked by all the lay brothers and teachers. As Director of the Fatima League lay groups, I returned home very late after attending meetings of the various groups I followed. And I found the light on in his room late at night. He loved to read and always enriched a nice collection of books. His sickness and death shocked me a lot. I miss him so much. I always felt it here in the neighboring room until late at night.

RIP" (Fr Francis Signorelli, SX, December 18, 2021).

The Mission in North Brazil

At the end of the 1974–1975 school year, Fr. Tony was assigned to our missions in the North of Brazil. Fr. Edward Zannoni, the Provincial - USA, in his letter (Wayne, NJ, June 14, 1975) introducing the Regional Superior of Brazil wrote:

"... After the order.... He was destined for Holliston... He attended Boston College and was awarded the MA degree in Modern European History. He was also a teacher and librarian in our seminary in Holliston ... he carried out his priestly ministry in neighboring towns to the benefit of many who knew him, including various baptized persons to whom he gave religious instruction.

In 1972, Fr. Lalli was appointed editor of our bulletin "Xaverian Missions Newsletter", a position he held until June 1975. In this capacity he distinguished himself for his ability to grasp the significant aspects of the contemporary missionary problem, the clear exposition, the order, punctuality, and the desire to keep up to date. He generously lent himself to the preaching of missionary days and visits to the Directors of the PMS. (Pontifical Mission Societies), where he has always left a good impression.

The health of Fr. Lalli is good. Except for a few colds and flu, he has never been sick ...It will also be good that, especially at the beginning, he knows how to find a good human relationships with some confreres of the community.

The attitude of mind regarding his departure for the Mission is positive. The province is counting on his return after the experience in Brazil, in agreement with Fr. Lalli himself,

the General Management and the Regional Management. Fr Lalli will take part in the refresher course offered during the month of July at St. Michael's College in Toronto, Canada (New age of Mission). In September and October, he will have a pastoral experience in the diocese of Providence (Rhode Island). After a period of family holidays, he will reach Brazil in the first weeks of 1976. He wishes to spend the first 4 months of his stay in Brazil studying the language and culture in Rio de Janeiro: Centro de Formação Intercultural...

The US Province is so grateful to Fr. Lalli for his presence, his contribution and his precious activity. He joins the members of his family, the many and unforgettable friends made over the years, in wishing him good health and a fruitful apostolate" (Fr. Edward Zannoni, SX).

In an article that appeared in the "Xaverian Missions Newsletter" (1975), Tony shared both some thoughts and the reaction of his people to the news of his destination to Brazil:

"The heart has its reasons ... When I told my parents a few days ago that I would be leaving for the Amazon at the end of the year, I think, for the first time, they grasped the meaning of their son being a missionary. And their reaction was understandable: "Why do you go to a foreign country when we need priests here? Just look around to understand". I understand their feelings, but how do you, in words, give a satisfactory answer?

Every missionary, I'm sure, has his own answer. Some emphasize that the great number of those who do not know Christ call them; others are moved by the great needs of the peoples of the Third World; some feel this is the best way to fully experience their Christianity. My answer is simply this: "I am a missionary because God wanted me this way. And that's how I want to spend my life. I cannot tell you anything else except that I consider my being a missionary priest as a Divine call".

The answers to why each person pursues certain goals can never be fully expressed, sometimes not even by the person himself. And words rarely tell the whole story of who we are or where we are going. The truth of our beliefs is better revealed in what we do than in what we say. The heart has its reasons.

Those who gratefully confess faith in Jesus Christ as their greatest good, the deepest truth known, find that it must be shared. If they love our Lord, if He is really important in their life, they MUST try to communicate something about Him to others.

It is true that there is no need to go to foreign lands to discover that the values of the gospel are well known to too few. But here, the possibility of knowing the Christian message is easily accessible. God calls some men and women to witness Christ and his message in areas where it is not easy to find. Gratefully, I accepted God's call to be one of these people. As the editor of this Newsletter, I have been able to come into close contact with many missionaries and, thanks to them, I have been able to appreciate the meaning of the mission, the service it requires and the challenge it offers. We are not called to live a theory, but a life: a life full of the concrete realities that make up people's daily existence. As I prepare to leave for my new mission, the inevitable apprehension evoked by my

limitations and the magnitude of the task that awaits me is offset by the knowledge that I am not going alone: I carry with me the support, the love, the prayers of my family, many friends and Christians. May God bless our common efforts in the years to come" (Fr. Tony Lalli, SX)

On September 21, 1975, Tony received the crucifix from the hands of the auxiliary bishop of Boston, Joseph J. Rocco, in the parish of St. Mary in Holliston. During the homily, the bishop emphasized:

"We are a community and, as a community of Christians, we are happy, honored and privileged to deliver to Fr. Tony the crucified, so that he can go in the name of Jesus to serve our brothers and sisters of the Amazon – Brazil." (+ Bishop Joseph J. Rocco).

On that same occasion, Fr. Tony added:

"During the formative years, we learn and live. In subsequent years, we live and learn. We are not called to live a theory, but a life: a life full of the concrete realities that make up people's daily existence. In all this, awareness of the meaning of mission grows. I sincerely thank all those who in various ways, spiritually and materially, have contributed to making this moment possible. May God be with us as we work for His Kingdom" (Fr. Tony Lalli).

Tony loved Brazil, the country, the Church, and the people. Writing to family and friends on the occasion of Christmas (December 1, 1976), Fr. Tony shares his missionary life and ministry with them:

"How am I? From a health point of view, I am much better than expected... although the heat has a debilitating effect and has contributed to some weight loss. Spiritually, I can honestly say that I am happy and have a sense of "liberation" that strengthens and gives joy. Even the hard process of acculturation is made, by this, not only acceptable, but also fruitful and pleasant. What I do? Literally: "I am available for my people". On the starting ticket for the mission, I wrote: "A life as a missionary": "No watch to look at, - no gain to measure, - apart from the time given, - the shared experience: it is being there that counts."

I find the reality true to the letter and the experience very challenging. The life of the missionary is truly like "a tapestry woven from daily experiences - of time given freely: - and of life at the Lord's disposal, perceived in the needs of my brothers". This being "available" means being available to them 24 hours a day, every day and every night. It is a reality freed from all the frills of previous expectations of adventure, of heroic labors or of imaginary undertakings of the apostolate. Thus, free, this reality is no less demanding physically, mentally, or spiritually.

Our parish of Bujaru, in addition to the center itself, includes about 40 villages or communities scattered in the endless forest and along the numerous rivers. It has about 25,000 people and is constantly increasing. This year alone we have had over 800 baptisms. Reaching everyone, even if only occasionally, requires hours and hours of boat,

canoe, or jeep, and then hours of walking in the forest, along narrow and often muddy paths. Usually, to visit the communities one travels together (a priest, a nun, and some young people). Upon our arrival in the village, there is always a big party. We stay at least a couple of days in each community, forming, baptizing, celebrating weddings, confessing, visiting the sick and listening... listening to their stories of suffering, problems, and joys.

People are generally very poor, with little or no education, but with a keen sense of humor, always eager to learn how to help others and themselves. The ever-present sign of their condition is discolored hair and swollen bellies. Symptoms of malnutrition and worms. The staple food is cassava. It has practically no nutritional value, but they say, "At least it fills the belly." The water they drink is mostly that of rivers, full of all sorts of harmful germs. Many of our missionaries are also full of worms and suffering from dysentery. We all know that drinking water should be boiled, but the situation doesn't always allow it. When in tropical heat you are in the middle of a river, on a forest path or at a mission station and people only have river water stored in a jar or can... what can you do? One solution could be a "pocket filter" that is easy to carry and can purify the water you need. Anyone know a company that produces such filters?

As for our people, rather than giving material help - which for us missionaries is very limited - we must share life and together reach a higher level of human and Christian "conscientization" in order to become more communities, and more available to each other. The others. The seed of this "Christian love" is penetrating and is already bearing its fruits. Listen to one of their experiences: "Last July I visited a very sick man. His house was falling apart... I felt bad. So, at the meeting of the catechists, I told what happened. We have decided to build a new home for our brother in need. We worked on Saturdays. This month we gave him a simple house, with walls made of sticks and mud... His whole family was very happy. We also collected 40 cruzeiros (about \$ 4) and some groceries. The whole community has contributed..."

This experience is by no means rare, and it is even more significant in a situation where the need to survive forces everyone to protect themselves and look to their own interests. Many of our communities remind us of the early Christian communities, and they are truly an inspiration to me, a "longtime Christian".

Thank you for letting me come and visit you during this time of birth, uncle. I can't promise to write to you again soon or often (hope you understand). I will keep in touch through remembrance and assiduous prayer. And you? May the Lord who comes be the "king of our hearts". May he keep us united... bless our efforts... let us participate in his work and give us joy.

A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to you and your families from Fr. Francesco Signorelli (my parish priest - you remember him, right?), And of our Brazilian sisters: Rosa, Ivone and Ana... and for my part with all my heart" (Fr. Anthony Lalli)

On another occasion, Fr. Tony writes:

"Our parish team includes, in addition to me, Fr. Carlo, who has just arrived from Italy (Fr Francesco Signorelli has been elected Provincial Superior and now lives in Belem... I miss him!), And three Brazilian sisters Ana, Angela and Joanice. Once or more times a week, a father, a nun and a layman go inside. When both fathers travel, the lay leaders (called Monitores) organize the Sunday liturgical service in the city. Usually, traveling by jeep, we leave when the weather is favorable; by boat, we are at the mercy of the tide that here in Bujaru rises and falls by about two meters every six hours. Boats travel when the water goes in the desired direction. We often have to leave in the middle of the night.

We visit around 30 communities once, twice, three or four times a year, depending on their size. The father's visit is the culminating moment of a religious life sustained throughout the year through the guidance of the "Monitores", our lay catechists. In our parish there are almost 200, and they participate in weekly courses or workshops, three or four times a year, both at the level of parish that diocesan. Every week they lead "evangelization groups", meetings of seven or eight families in their homes. They read a passage from the New Testament indicated in our monthly bulletin "Somos Irmãos" (We are brothers) and explain a situation in life, or they take a fact, an event, a situation of the community and interpret it in the light of the Gospel. All my biblical and theological studies have not given me the competence and closeness to the Word of God like these meetings that I strive to attend every week.

On Sundays, everyone gathers for community prayer in chapels or community centers. In the seven main chapels where there is the Eucharist, a lay minister distributes communion. In these communities, every week, there is Eucharistic adoration. Everything is led by the Monitores. The moments of prayer are occasions of solidarity for the community and a stimulus to face and solve social problems, such as mutual help in working in the fields; the sowing of "pimental" (cultivation of black pepper) in the cooperative's land, all to obtain financial aid for the whole community; the collection of products for families affected by diseases or other ills; efforts to diversify crop types; the formation of small cooperatives to better cope with commercial exploitation and so on. In this way, the Word of God penetrates the life of our people to the point of becoming an integral part of it, without which life would have no meaning.

We often find ourselves in the midst of communities that are real "primitive Christian communities", as we find them described in the first chapters of the Acts of the Apostles. Where God's Word has the greatest impact is in the family. Cultural mind, family life here is very unstable ... There are many "amasiados" (companions), couples who decide to live together as long as it is convenient, without any marriage, civil or religious bond ... But where the Gospel has had an impact we meet "regular" families of such Christian goodness and such an example as to make even a priest blush; often I would not be able to live a life of such dedication and authenticity. I see that the paper is about to end, and I have to close... Thank you... See you next time... and every day united in the Lord" (Fr. Anthony Lalli, SX).

In 1982 Father Tony was asked to go to southern Brazil, to Sao Paulo, to Vila Marina, and to undertake studies of Pastoral Theology (1982–1983). Ultimately, the lack of continuity and lack of clarity about the future cause him pain and suffering... questions and doubts. He will never return to the diocese of Abaetetuba but will continue his ministry in the archdiocese of São Paulo on the margins of the Xaverian community (1983–1987).

Return to the United States

Tony returns to the United States in 1989. He enters the Institute for the Living (Harford, CT), a residential center that offers counseling and therapy for nuns, priests, bishops, etc. After a visit to Fr. Tony, Fr. Robert S. Maloney, Regional Superior of the United States, writes:

“I am happy to have met you together with Fr. Gill and Doctor Iger at the Institute for the Living... You have completed six weeks in the Institute. Yesterday's meeting was intended to help you clarify future choices. I know that after your trip to Brazil in November for the renewal of your visa, you will continue the therapy with Dr. Iger for some time. I will try to describe the current situation as I see it: in the past, within the congregation, you have known deep wounds ... you feel the need to belong ... you were asked to do many things that were not of your choice, and you have done them at the request of superiors ... in all these positions you have always done your job well ... but you have not always been understood or appreciated ...

This seems to be the past appearing: obstacles to your future... as Doctor Iger seems to point out. Fr. Gill... tried to guide your attention to the Lord rather than to "superiors" or others. Over the years, you have faced difficult choices: your desire to belong against the apparent refractory response of the congregation ..., your need to belong against the apparent betrayal you felt ..., your Priesthood and your priestly ministry full of confirmations (in Brazil and in Millis) and your being in apparent "limbo" regarding the congregation ... I encouraged you to stay with the Xaverians ... You said you will go to Brazil to renew your visa and to seek solutions both inside and outside the Xaverians. In Brazil, I suggest you contact Fr. Pedro de Silva. He could point you to a pastoral area that would allow you to find, within the Xaverian structure, the satisfactions you need as a priest. Whatever you are looking for, do not make too binding contracts, because you will have to continue the therapy in any case and find solutions here too.

I don't know what to tell you ... I agree with the Doctor. Iger and P. Gill: even if it is painful, you have to close the book of the past. You are a person of many talents, highly regarded in the priestly ministry, you are comfortable with people both inside and outside the community. You have invested a lot in yourself, be practical in your choices and not too idealistic...don't be too pessimistic. The prophets invite us to choose life... often the answers we encounter question us... we often find darkness and pain... but life, hope and light are possible. "I am the Lord..." is the concrete reason for Conforti's "seeking, seeing, loving". You can reflect, question, consider and choose... and all of this freely. We hope with you and walk by your side while you begin the process of discernment which should open up some brighter glimpses of your future. Remember the considerations of Fr. Gill,

which seem to be spot on. Best wishes... in prayer. Bob” (Fr. Robert Maloney, October 18, 1989).

From 1991 until the day of his passing to a better life, Fr. Tony lived in Holliston - MA, carrying out various services: Editor of the "Xaverian Missions Newsletter" (1998–2008); director of the Shrine of Our Lady of Fatima (1995– 1998); Knights of Columbus chaplain in Millis; pastoral service among Brazilians and Portuguese in Hudson, Milford and Framingham (1991–2021) and member of the Provincial Council at various times (1993–1996; 2012–2021).

In a letter to p. Francesco Marini, after many ups and downs, we begin to see the first "lights of the dawn.” Fr. Tony writes:

"Dear Fr. General:

It has already been a month since I returned to the United States. However, the memory of your kind hospitality is still very much alive in me. As you know by now, I arrived at Viale Vaticano with a lot of apprehension, but, after only a couple of days, I felt so at ease among you that, every time I went to visit Rome and other places with my two cousins, I wanted to "go home" and "home" was Viale Vaticano 40. Yes, "home" was being with my brothers! After 10 years of confused and painful "absence", this desire surprised and edified me. Thanks for being there.

Your cordial presence and your sensitivity in listening expressed a lot. Here p. Maloney was understanding, patient and supportive. However, my sense of belonging and the value of my person in the congregation is still very shaken. Will time and grace be able to heal wounds and remove fears?

Please remember me in your prayers. And he greets all the confreres present there, with special thanks for Fr. Zucchinielli and Fr. Ibba. Fraternally yours" (Father Tony Lalli, Wayne, NJ, August 12, 1991).

During the visit of Fr. Francesco Marini to the Xaverian communities of the United States (October 1992), Fr. Tony writes on Fr. Francis:

"Dear Fr. General:

Thanks for your visit. Short but full visit... Despite this, your visit was appreciated by all of us, and by me, in particular, who are still searching

for the reason and meaning of my place in the congregation and in my Province. I have always loved our congregation and have tried to serve it faithfully but, as you now know, in recent years I have plunged into a crisis vis a vis my life as a Xaverian. Following unhappy experiences still fully integrated, I feel more a guest than a member by right, occasionally taking part in the "dessert" of community life, but not entirely part of the "family dinner," a sign of full belonging ... And this challenges me and anguishes me a lot. Since... March 1986 when I was in São Paulo, my life has never been the same, and I have

gone through a difficult period, often alone... I have asked advice from qualified and significant people; I asked for "miracles ..." But, many times, things seemed to get worse ... But... "miracles" did occur, although not the kind of miracles I expected. God did not miraculously intervene in my life to improve things or pave the way... I continue to do the demanding and painful work of seeking; I keep looking for my destination and my direction.

Striving to be attentive to external signs and His inner voice, I continue to discern how God invites me to respond to life and all that life contains, and gives me the strength to live life, one day at a time, in the presence of grace. Sometimes, when I lack hope and feel helpless, surprising opportunities appear that respond to my problems. Friends and "significant" people crossed my path with an outstretched hand and an unexpected wisdom that questioned my questions and gave me clarity and a sense of direction.

Coming to my house on your own initiative was one of these opportunities, and this reassured me. My brothers and sisters-in-law, present on your short visit, and especially my mother, were very happy. The simple welcome and refreshments, our sincere "thank you." For my part, I appreciate your presence in this moment of my life, for having listened to the painful loneliness fruit of an unhealed memory and no one to share with. Since we first met in Rome last year, I have thought of you as a brother I can trust and trust. Which does not appeal to pure authority to impose its own thinking. Your reassuring words have heartened me a lot.

Thanks for attending! I hope that you will continue to be present on this path, for me, still so painful and often so dark. And please pray that I may be ever more willing to surrender my will and my life into God's hands, and to let Him guide, instruct and empower my choices and decisions. For my part, know that I have you in my heart when I place myself before the Lord. I hope your visit to our communities in the United States has been an enjoyable one and that it bears fruit for both you and us. Upon your return to Rome, please convey my greetings to all the confreres present there, in particular to Frs. Zucchinelli, Ibba and Pelizzo, and to Br. Giovanni Frizzo. Once again, I ask you to pray for me as I pray for you. Sincerely in Him..." (p. Anthony Lalli, SX. Wayne, NJ, October 14, 1992).

In his reply, Fr. Marini writes:

"Dearest Tony, back home, still a little half asleep, I want to send you a few lines, mainly to thank you.

Your own company was a gift to me because it gave me the joy of a friendship that is confirmed. I was able to rejoice (and even suffer a little) with you and this unites much more than many other things. I hope and wish you with all my heart, that the past difficulties end, both as regards your family situation, in the long run, so serious and heavy, and for your relations with the congregation. If I can do something about it, don't hesitate to talk about it freely and maybe suggest something that I don't see on my own initiative. Feel good and try to care for your health. A bunch of cheers to all of you... and Wayne's brethren. We hope to see each other again soon: in the USA first and then in

Italy. Here the confreres remember and greet you, especially Fr. Pelizzo and Fr. Ibba..." (Fr. Francesco Marini left, Rome, October 17 1992).

On the occasion of his appointment as editor of the "Xaverian Missions Newsletter" (1998), Fr. Iurman Emilio, general councilor, writes:

"Dearest Tony, reading the newsletter from your Regional, I learned about your new position ... Director of the Newsletter ... I wanted to be present to wish you my best wishes for this new position ... During my stay there we talked for a long time, but you must not think that this has bothered me, on the contrary I have greatly appreciated your availability, as well as the story of your misadventures and the difficult situation in which you find yourself struck me. I seem to have felt you very close and God knows if I would have liked to have been able to do something more for you, as well as listen to you with sympathy.

In reality, the proof that the Lord is reserving for you upsets the whole missionary dream that you reasonably had for yourself. During your stories I have sometimes thought of certain pages of bitterness and inner rebellion (?) From the book of Job. ... trust in God, despite all appearances ... on the line of the paschal mystery, so as to pursue and find the light at the end of the tunnel? I wish you and I pray. So I wanted to congratulate you on your future work and assure you of my poor participation and solidarity... I feel you close and brother. Thanks again for the CDs. A hug." (Fr. Emilio Iurman left, Rome, June 4, 1998).

In recent times, her health was slowly deteriorating, and sister death knocked on his door on December 3, 2021. During the funeral Mass, Fr. Carl Chudy shared the following words:

"Already before November 28 (first Sunday of Advent), Fr. Tony was waiting, struggling with his body slowly succumbing to disease. His mind and spirit that transcended all the extraordinary joys and difficulties of a long life: from Italy to the United States, to Brazil and back. He hugged, resisted, and fought until his last breath. I noticed this when, shortly before he entered the rehabilitation and palliative care center again, I had a conversation with him about the next steps. We talked about the possibility of having dialysis and how it could have given him a little more time. He thought of taking that time to be with family and friends and say goodbye to them for the last time. I told him, "Tony, if you decide not to have dialysis, the doctors say you have maybe two or three weeks left." He looked at me and stopped for a moment, smiled and we shared gratitude for his life and his willingness to embrace eternity ... It was Fr. Tony, with his humanity and his compassion, to enter the life and problems of many people, in different parts of the world. Likewise, from the frail child in Bethlehem to the cross in Jerusalem, who in the end entered deeply into our chaos, our shame and our suffering. However, what Fr. Tony struggled the most, as I believe all of us, it was embracing not the conflicts of others, but his own personal conflicts, as a locus of healing, for himself and for others: wounded thaumaturge. He did what he was meant to do: to give his life with self-denial and generosity.... In my relationship with Fr. Tony, I felt deeply, and in many ways, like all of you... his giving

himself. But for me, the gift that stands out most is the way in which his joys and conflicts, his relentless missionary commitment have softened him and not hardened him. He, like us, held bitterness and forgiveness in his hand. Changes happen to all of us, and most of them aren't easy. But the way Fr. Tony faced himself and every commitment asked was in the best possible way: navigating in the midst of all the uncertainties that are often at the center of a missionary who enters the unknown, not only geographic ..., but he also leaves us the gift of his forgiveness, which is the very compassion of Christ.

The gift of his life and death was to proclaim a truth that dwells in us all, because Christ was at the center of what Fr. Tony was and consequently we belong to Christ: how precious we are to each other and precious to our God ... and in the end, there is nothing here on this earth that can fully satisfy us ... " (Fr. Carl Chudy, Parish of St. Mary, Holliston, MA, December 13, 2021).

The Legacy of Fr. Tony Lalli

I think we find it well expressed in his writing: "Seeing God ... seeking God ... loving God in everything ... As I heard the often-repeated expression of Conforti" (Wayne NJ, June 30, 1994):

"Whatever else the community may be, for Conforti it was a 'religious' community where the vows give its members the deep-rooted consistency of family ties. And this is the place from which I announce the love of God. I must live my communion and the gift of myself to God with the brothers with whom I build community; to whom I must be accountable and who are accountable to me; who feed my heart and with whom I can talk about what I have done and how I have been faithful; brothers who support me, who love me and who take care of me; with whom I form a union in weakness and forgiveness; who offer their support, protect the deep individual loneliness so that our loneliness does not make us do things that destroy us; the community is that sacred place where the impulses of my body, of my heart of my mind, can be placed under the blessing of God; a place where I return, when I get home, people who ask me "how did it go? what did you do, what did you say?... did you go well?... Someone who takes care of me as a person, but who at the same time sends me "on mission and service."

I can be faithful to the proclamation of the Word only if there are people who welcome me into the community, who give me security, who send me and welcome me again. And, in the long run, people will hear the Word of God's love clearly, without confusing it with "ideologies" or other ideas, when it is proclaimed from that place where it has already lived. Because the proclamation of the Word and missionary service are first of all testimony. It's not telling people what to do, what to believe, or how to behave. It is sharing with people what one has seen with one's own eyes, heard with one's ears, touched with one's hands. It is telling people, "I saw something and I'm sure you would like to see it too." This is announcement. This is mission. And people will say: "I want to be there; I want to be part of it..." If I say, "I have seen the community," but I say it alone and go on alone, I may be good at telling the story, but I am not living it. People will say, "This story gives you a living, but it's not your life!" If our Founder constantly resisted the urges to

join other missionary Congregations without vows, it was because he wanted his children to be fundamentally trained to be priests and brothers, that they were well trained, well educated, but that basically each work individually. . They would leave for mission fields and activities that would often scatter them and require constant temptation, individual initiative, and creativity from them. The religious vows would have helped them to build that place from which the mission starts and within which individual efforts, initiatives and creativity are born and confirmed.

I believe that for the Founder, mission / ministry and religious community are indispensable to each other. For those confreres who know a little of my history, this shared vision may surprise or seem like an "apologia pro vita sua". However, it expresses my point of view, my understanding, and my expectations regarding the charism of our Founder, even if I know I lived it imperfectly.

The last twelve years have been, for me, particularly hard and painful ... Yet that melodic background often repeated by Conforti continued to buzz in the ears of my soul and supported my uncertain step. My sweetest joys as a Xaverian, as well as my greatest pains, were born from that vision and from seeing myself included or excluded from the community called to live that charism. To a confrere who questioned me, I once wrote: "One accepts to live in isolation, only when he knows that he can always return to community. One does not adapt to living in isolation nor does he enjoy solitude, even when missionary work is most intense, when he is truly cut off. Then he really hates him... ". The soul is always looking for a "family". We can find it in many places, even at work or with friends. And the soul needs a family experience in almost everything it does. For me, that "family" was the Xaverian family, in which I took my vows on September 1, 1962.

Bishop Conforti made this clear when he affectionately referred to his congregation as "our family." Through the "family spirit" a culture is created which strengthens fidelity and commitment and which allows "superiors" to overcome roles and face the "mission" with a unity of purpose. All this starts from attention to the needs of the individual. The members are then willing to take on the mission and work hard. This is a fact. But they can't feel their ministry and commitments if they don't touch their hearts and take their abilities into account.

In religious life, fidelity to one's own congregation is a pink strength. Loyalty, however, cannot be had only on request, much less can it be expected. It must be earned by both sides. So, I feel free in freedom. I feel happy. Not because I did a good job, but because I was chosen by God to carry on God's work as part of the Xaverian family. And the beauty of this is real, because in this "family" the brothers are mutually grateful, they support each other, they help each other to carry their own pain and to live their frailties under God's protection. and to love God in everyone, God first loved us, and his benevolence extends over us. And if everyone were to abandon us, God would never do it.

One day a few years ago, when I felt abandoned by a brother whom I had trusted blindly, to try to overcome the pain, I began to paint a beautiful rainbow on the wall of my small office in São Paulo. Among the colors of the rainbow, I wrote: "God is faithful. God does

not take back his gifts, nor does he revoke his choices.” (Fr. Tony Lalli, SX. Wayne NJ, June 30, 1994).

Remembering Fr. Tony:

"I appreciated his friendship and valued the insights he shared. God has given him a good mind and a very sensitive and compassionate heart. Thanks also to his constant work, he achieved a lot and was able to help many people who turned to him for advice. He was very good in the priestly ministry. He prepared his homilies with great care. I have heard several people compliment Fr. Tony for those homilies. They always offered good spiritual nourishment.

One regret I have is that I was unable to greet him or attend his funeral. I would like to thank him for all he has given me as a classmate and brother. God blessed him with many gifts and talents, which he knew how to put to good use in his ministry. May the Lord grant him the reward for his work here on earth. May he rest in peace” (Fr. Dominic Caldognetto).

“We are very sorry for the death of our great pastor and friend Fr. Tony Lalli. Our eternal gratitude for the time you have given with great affection to the Community of Santa Rosa de Lima, São Paulo, Brazil” (Oscarina Rodrigues).

“Rest in peace dear father and friend! The Brazilian community already misses you a lot!” (Juliana Campos).

"The Redmond family is deeply saddened by the loss of Fr. Tony. It has been an integral part of our family for nearly thirty years.

Fr. Tony will always be remembered for his keen intelligence and cordial understanding. He was a prolific scholar and writer with a keen sense of the public. His ability to convey the Gospel message and relate it to daily life was lively and inspiring. While he was director of the Shrine, I met many faithful who attended him for his homilies. I was one of those faithful. We are all grateful to have shared his journey on this earth. It will be forever in our hearts and in our prayers" (Claire Redmond).

"In his family, there were many brothers, all younger. Furthermore, his parents had left the youngest in Italy. He needed special, professional and long-term care. Perhaps for this reason, Antonio (Tony) preferred this brother to stay in Italy, where he was receiving good care. Antonio was also convinced, and he said it, that in the long run the parents would not have the health and the opportunity to provide what was necessary. His siblings would eventually marry, and then take over from their families. It would certainly have been Antonio's turn to take care of his brother both in time and in services, and in all that would be necessary. That's exactly what happened.

Antonio committed himself with all seriousness, virtue, and quality to what he perceived as God's will for him and in his life. I have always been impressed by her commitment, her availability, her trust, her human, family, religious and missionary quality, Xaverian. He always did it with all dignity, professionalism, quality both in the United States with

his family, with his brother until his death, in the congregation, in the ministry, as well as in his mission in Brazil. Fr. Antonio Blaise Lalli was much appreciated everywhere for his presence, for his contribution, for his serenity and joy, for his life. For my part, I am as grateful to him for what he has given me, how much he has inspired me, for how much he has supported and helped me. He had been trained to be professionally 'Master.' He did it well, and we are so, so grateful to him. Thanks. Thanks. Thanks!" (Fr. Ivan Marchesin).

"Fr. Tony, we miss you and we will miss you; may the Lord welcome you as his good and faithful servant" (James and Carol Adesivo).

"He was a calm man, of great compassion and faith. Thanks Fr. Anthony for honoring all of us by knowing you" (Quintin Jordan).

"We met Fr. Lalli many years ago. He was a wonderful priest, really "special". He was young and my mother called him when I was sick and in the hospital. Fr Lalli was a blessing when a few years later my sister Rita was diagnosed with cancer. We will never forget his kindness. May God bless him and his entire family. Our sincerest condolences. Sincerely" (Joan and Charles Sinclair).

"His deep spirituality and his gentle presence will be greatly missed. I am sure that his life of love and service will be remembered forever" (Mary Aktay).

"A wonderful soul, I am grateful for your ministry and for your heart, Fr. Tony, rest in the peace of Christ" (Jamie D. Medeiros).

"Fr. Tony has given joy and serenity to many. May he rest in the embrace of our Savior Jesus Christ, and God grant him eternal peace. We will miss you, dear p. Tony. Thank you for all your work in the Lord's vineyard" (Paula Renaud O'Brien).

Fr. Carl Chudy and Claire Redmond have pointed out that Fr. Tony "was a scholar and a fruitful writer..." so now let's read on. Tony, poet, and writer:

Christmas 2003

"Mary and Joseph trusted a lot in accepting God's extraordinary request to welcome the Baby Jesus into their family. They gave us a great example. Trust God in every circumstance of your life: 'Our time and the future of the world are illuminated by His presence.' He is 'the Living One' (John Paul II) and, thanks to this presence, 'everything will be good, and everything will be for good!' (Juliana of Norwich).

The strength you receive as a gift at Christmas, give to everyone you love and meet, both during this Christmas season and throughout the new year 2004! This is my prayer and my wish for you" (Fr. Tony Lalli).

"Father wait for me! Father, I have sinned against God and against you!' Father, you have given me all the riches of your kingdom and all the love of your heart; do not lose patience with me, if I have become a prodigal son, ungrateful and forgetful of your goodness! And when I imagine a 'distant land' to have my stupid experiences, away from 'my father's house.' I ask you, Father, do not turn your back on me, but wait for me! When I'm tired of

myself and I don't appreciate the gift of life you gave me, and I end up dragging my youth and my existence in waste and neglect, Father, wait for me! When I devalue your friendship, your grace, and the covenant you made with me in the blood of Christ with pleasures that never take the place of your love or calm the ardent desires of my heart, Father, wait for me! When the hunger for bread, for the bread of life and welcome knocks on my door and the lack of affection tears my life apart, Father, wait for me! When false friends disperse and fellow adventurers abandon me along the road of bitterness, Father, wait for me! When I reduce myself to 'taking care of pigs' or dealing with useless and unworthy business of my being your son, Father, wait for me!

When my dreams of pleasure and glory fade and I am alone, in the presence only of myself, afraid to face the future, Father, wait for me! When despair drives me towards dishonesty, anger, violence, towards degrading and aimless behavior, Father, wait for me! When, finally, 'I repent.' and I decide to break free, repentant of my follies and yearning for your home that never ceases to be my home, Father, wait for me! And when the ardent desire for your embrace takes hold of my heart, and despite my ingratitude, I come to claim the kiss of your forgiveness and mercy, Father, do not leave me in the cold, but wait for me! Wait for me, Father, because I will return to you!" (Fr. Tony Lalli, SX).

"Dear Tony,

Thank you for your life and your friendship.

Thank you for your faithfulness, even when life and human relationships have not always been fair.

Thank you for reminding us that "God is faithful. God does not take back his gifts, nor does he revoke his choices" (Rom 11:29; 1 Cor 10:13).

Taiwan, June 16, 2022.

Written by Fr. Joe Matteucig sx