

Preparation novena to the beatification of the martyrs

Uvira (DR Congo) August 18, 2024

Conduct of the prayer

INTRODUCTION

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen

SHORT READING

Changes according to day

XAVERIAN READING

Changes according to day

MEDITATION

Changes according to day

CONCLUSION

We pray for the intercession of the martyrs of Baraka and Fizi

Holy Father, rich in mercy,
you gave the Xaverians to your Church
Vittorio Faccin, Luigi Carrara,
Giovanni Didonè and Abbé Albert Joubert,
pastors and missionaries after the heart
of your Son Jesus Christ.
Burning in charity,
did not abandon the flock in danger
but defended them to the point of martyrdom,
because of the universal brotherhood.
Through their intercession, grant us the grace
we humbly ask you.
To you be praise and glory for ever and ever. Amen

May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil, and lead us to eternal life. *Amen*

May our Lord Jesus Christ *be known and loved by all.*

St Guido Maria Conforti and St Francis Xavier, *pray for us.*

First day (09 August)

Turn yourself in

SHORT READING

Rom 12:1-2

I urge you, brothers, by God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your spiritual worship. Do not conform to the mentality of this century, but be transformed by renewing your minds, that you may discern the will of God, what is good, pleasing and perfect to him.

XAVERIAN READING

From the 'Discourses of Departure' of Saint Guido Maria Conforti, Bishop

(La parola del fondatore, Parma 1966, 102-106; Disc. 12, Parma Cathedral, 16.11.1924)

Give yourselves unreservedly to the good of the people

"The Missionary is the most beautiful and sublime personification of the ideal life. He has contemplated in inspiration Jesus Christ who points out to the Apostles the world to be conquered by the Gospel, not by force of arms, but by persuasion and love, and he has been enraptured by it. And to this ideal he sacrificed his family, his homeland, his dearest and most legitimate affections, solely in search of souls to be conquered to the faith of Christ; not armed with sword and rifle to flatten all the difficulties he encounters and to strike down those who would try to cross his path, but armed only with the cross of Christ, always ready to shed his own blood, if this is necessary for the good of his brothers, indeed with the desire in his heart to seal his apostolate with martyrdom. (...)

Let your apostolate be long, let it be glorious, and above all let it be fruitful, so that it may compensate in usury for the greatness of the sacrifice you have made. The chalice you are about to drink is the

chalice of Gethsemane: you will not lack pains and sorrows; the spirit of darkness, whose reign you seek to overthrow, will leave no stone unturned to cross your path; human perfidy will raise against you the storm of persecution, you will be hated by many for the name of Christ and you will experience what the Apostle of the Gentiles experienced, who preceded you on the glorious path of evangelising the infidel peoples. But fear not, for that grace which sustained Paul will also sustain you in the arduous trial. In hanging at your side the adorable image of the Crucified Jesus is your sword, your strength, your invincible weapon, the secret of your victories. By it you will make yourselves superior to your own frailty, you will triumph over superstition and human perfidy, and you will proceed forward in your peaceful conquests for the expansion of the Kingdom of God".

MEDITATION

By Fr. Fernando García Rodríguez, General Superior

Missionary life finds in martyrdom the most eloquent expression of fidelity to the Gospel. Consecrating oneself to the Lord means putting one's entire life in his hands.

"Following Christ, in the Xaverian Family, every Xaverian is called to surrender himself for the sake of the Gospel of the Kingdom in the totality of self-giving and in the holiness of life up to the supreme moment of martyrdom" (*Ratio Missionis Xaveriana* 17).

Our brothers Faccin, Carrara, Didonè and Joubert were men of flesh and blood, with their qualities and faults, but above all they were animated by a great passion for the kingdom of God. In their human frailty, they loved God with all their heart, soul, intelligence and will; and they loved the Congolese people to whom God himself had sent them. This love for God and for the Congolese people was deep and all-encompassing, to the point of facing the very real threat that accompanied them. What a testimony of Christian, consecrated and missionary life! What a beautiful legacy for each of us!

Second day (10 August)

Earning Christ

SHORT READING

Phil 3:7-8

What could have been a gain for me, I considered a loss because of Christ. Indeed, everything I now consider a loss in the face of the sublimity of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for which I have given up all these things and consider them as rubbish, in order to gain Christ.

XAVERIAN READING

From the 'Letter to Parents' of Luigi Carrara, priest and martyr

(Epistolario, Rome 2024, 72; Parma, 01.01.1962)

The missionary leaves with the affection of his family

"Rejoice, rejoice, exult with me for I have great news and a great gift to communicate to you!!! The destination has finally arrived! The Congo awaits me! 1961 saw me a priest, 1962 will see me on a mission! Called to till the Lord's vineyard, to work directly in the most beautiful, most promising, most needy field.

A great Christian future awaits the Congo if many forces will be deployed there as soon as possible. If they wait it will perhaps be too late. I am called at this very solemn hour, at this very decisive moment, and therefore I cannot but be proud and thank the Lord with all my heart. You too must help me to thank Him. This is the great news that the New Year brings you, blossomed from the love of the Lord.

MEDITATION

By Lisa Zuccarini, author of the biography on the martyrs

I remember Luigi Carrara's good soul as he prepares to leave for the Congo in 1962. He feels the distress of his loved ones even at a distance, imagines the terrible maternal thoughts of him dying in a thousand different ways in the distant land ready to welcome him. God is asking a big step from him but also from the hearts of two poor parents. He knows the sacrifices his family has made to support him, so he thanks them, more than usual. He reassures everyone of his happiness, invites them to pray and rejoice together. He has a granitic certainty, and with that confidence he tries to hearten the parents: God is faithful, He rewards richly, no offering made in His name will be lost, least of all that of an entire child.

The moment of her last embrace with her mother before leaving for Congo is certainly the most dramatic. Poor Elisabeth is desperate, she cannot stop crying, convinced that this is the last time she will hold her Luigino. And how can she be wrong. "I will never see you again", she keeps repeating to her son, and the latter reassures her with the proverbial smile, "but no mum, when I come up I will make you learn Swahili". By now it is clear, this young man of unshakable decisions is neither deluded nor a visionary. He understands very well the dangers he runs and the unpredictability of certain life projects. He also certainly and intensely experiences the wound of separation from the affections of home.

Third day (11 August)

Helpfulness and friendliness

SHORT READING

Phil 4:8.9b

Brothers, let all that is true, noble, just, pure, lovable, honourable, that which is virtue and deserving of praise, all this be the object of your thoughts. And the God of peace will be with you!

XAVERIAN READING

From a presentation of the life of Albert Joubert, priest and martyr

(Emilia Flocchini, Albert Joubert, <http://santiebeati.it>)

Helpfulness and friendliness: two attitudes of Albert Joubert

"On his way to priestly ordination, the young Albert worked hard on his character to make him humble and discreet. Everyone knew him as the son of Captain Joubert, but he was not interested in honours and wanted to grow in obedience and availability.

Immediately after his priestly ordination, conferred on him on 6 October 1935, Abbé Joubert made himself available to leave for the most distant missions. His first destination was Kasongo, 750 kilometres away from Baudoinville; he then served successively in eight missions. In order to meet the people of the most distant villages, he would walk whole days to bring them the Sacraments and train and encourage catechists. Even when he was assigned to teach at the minor seminaries in Lusaka and Mungombe, he made himself available in hard times to help his brothers in the tasks of the ministry. What distinguished him was his affability and cordiality with everyone, giving each one his particular dignity'.

MEDITATION

By Fr. Gabriel Basuzwa Lusunwa, Xaverian missionary

Like his fellow martyrs in Fizi and Baraka, with loyalty, Albert surrendered his life to the Lord, spending himself in solidarity with those who had been living in difficulty for many years in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Albert was honest and sincere. This gave him the joy of living transparently and earning the respect of those around him. His humility was acquired at the cost of much effort, thanks to his open-mindedness and acceptance of those whom the Lord put in his path.

Educated at the best school of the time, the Lusaka Minor Seminary and the Baudoinville Major Seminary, Albert provided an excellent education to the youth and people of God entrusted to his pastoral charity.

In his flesh and in his existence, Albert embodied interculturality, communion between the peoples of the world. Through his father of French origin he brought European culture into himself, through his mother he took the African culture well disposed to the Gospel values that united the different tribes present. The joy of living the equal dignity of children of God reflects in Joubert the spark of eternity that characterises a being created in the image and likeness of the Holy Trinity.

Fourth day (12 August)

Passionate

SHORT READING

Mt 28:16.18-20

The eleven disciples, meanwhile, went to Galilee, to the mountain that Jesus had pointed out to them. Jesus approached and said to them: "All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world".

XAVERIAN READING

From the 'Letter to Parents' of Luigi Carrara, priest and martyr

(Epistolario, Rome 2024, 171-172; Fizi, 11.02.1964)

The passion of the Gospel: fatigue and joys on safari

Father Luigi recounts his first 'safari', a journey into the branches of the Fizi mountains, which lasted 10 days. He has just reached the top of the mountain. "Before leaving, Father John had told me: 'You will arrive half dead, don't confess'. But how could anyone say no? It was some catechists and local people who begged me: 'Father, tomorrow there will be so many people, they will come from all over, there will be no more time, confess now'. I gave in. I opened the door and without even changing my sweat-soaked clothes, I grabbed a small chair, they knelt on the damp ground, I began, the confessional was ready. Fortunately they were few. At 7.30 p.m. they leave me, they go to eat. I boiled a small pot of milk generously given to me. I would have liked to start the breviary, say a little rosary and throw myself on the bed, sure that sleep would not be long in coming. Instead at 8pm I hear a

knock. It is them. Who? All the neighbours who naturally can't pass up the opportunity to talk, to ask the most curious news. I have to play it cool and keep them cheerful, I manage it well. This time they are very discreet, at 9.30 pm they leave me, so I do my things and go to bed'.

MEDITATION

By Fr Bernard Cibambo Rubibi, Xaverian missionary

As we approach the beatification of our martyrs, it is nice to pause in front of the painting that represents them all together. We can perceive the spirit that animated them in fulfilling that joyful and tiring mission they had received from Jesus. In the diversity of their characters, they were united by intensely perceiving the missionary ideal inspired by Saint Guido Maria Conforti: To make the world one Family. It is not a generic 'being brothers to everyone and to no one'. Faithful to the mandate of Christ who said 'GO', moved by the Holy Spirit, the Congo became their home.

Reading the accounts of their safaris, like this one by Luigi, we see the spirit that animated them. They travelled dozens of kilometres a day, in mountainous areas. The Christian-missionary life is a continuous climb to meet the brothers and sisters who are waiting, because they are inhabited by a thirst for God. A life spent for the last. In spite of the fatigue of the long journey, as soon as he arrived, Louis started to listen. How beautiful this empathic listening of one who knows he is in front of the other as a sacrament of the Other. Not to listen to what he liked to hear, but to what others had to say to him.

A good deed performed for the sake of the gospel has eternal value. Their martyrdom was the crowning achievement of many sacrifices, of those small daily choices of which their lives were made. May their witness inspire us to live our daily lives authentically.

Fifth day (13 August)

Perseverance

SHORT READING

Rom 8:28.35.37-39

We know that everything contributes to the good of those who love God, who have been called according to his plan. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Perhaps tribulation, anguish, persecution, hunger, nakedness, danger, the sword? In all these things we are more than conquerors by virtue of him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

XAVERIAN READING

From 'Letter to Cousin Vittorina' by Vittorio Faccin, religious and martyr

(Epistolary, Rome 2024, 171; Baraka, 26.12.1963)

Persevere by doing good: a sign of faithful love

"Dearest cousin,

Once again the Lord wants to prove your love for him. In this trial of his, be strong, endure everything for his sake so that abundant graces may descend upon your family, especially your children. There is no rose without thorns. In the rose, seek only beauty and perfume; the beauty and perfume will make you forget the thorns you take. Our life for Jesus must be only love. The Lord wants your soul to be more beautiful, more pure, more holy, and perhaps that is why he chose you to be the object of suffering and love. So He has given you time to pray to conform yourself more and more to Him.

I will remember you in my prayers together with your husband and children, that he too may have strength to endure everything for love of that God who became man to know and love us better.

United in Jesus and Mary the mother of heaven'.

MEDITATION

By Fr. Alfonsus Widhiwiryawan, Xaverian missionary

In the midst of trials and difficulties, dangers and unforeseen events, we missionaries also go through periods of loneliness, abandonment, lack of spiritual help, a sense of failure. The letter to the Romans asks us to "be victorious" in the face of these difficulties. How?

First of all, I would like to say that the Lord never allows us to be tempted beyond our strength. He gives everyone the grace needed not only to survive, but to live fully in Him. In my own strength alone, I would certainly fall. If I trust in him, everything contributes to the good: "I can do all things in him who gives me strength" (Phil 4:3).

Then, we win by 'sanctifying'. St Conforti said that 'the most terrible enemy of our works is self-love. I said that we must sanctify even the most ordinary works, such as rest, sleep, refreshments, recreations' (To the novices, 04.05.1921). Faced with today's challenges, a common tendency is to close in on ourselves and, little by little, build a wall that isolates us. Vittorio asks us not to be afraid of the "barbed wire": it purifies us and makes the soul "more beautiful, pure and holy".

Finally, we win by "also changing the direction" of the sails of our boat to allow ourselves to be pushed towards where the Holy Spirit is blowing. Sometimes we seem to put up resistance by relying on our own strength. Conforti reminds us that "perseverance" is a gift to be invoked: "Ask for the gift of perseverance: this is the great grace that must be the crown of everything" (To the novices, 15.06.1921).

Day six (14 August)

Fraternally

SHORT READING

Col 3:10-11

You have divested yourselves of the old man by his deeds and clothed the new man, who is renewed to full knowledge, in the image of Him who created him. Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcision or uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free, but Christ is all and in all.

XAVERIAN READING

From the 'Letter to parents' of Vittorio Faccin, religious and martyr

(Epistolario, Rome 2024, 136-137; Mutesa, 15.05.1962)

Fraternity has no limits

"On 12 April 1962 I was appointed to Mutesa where I was asked to replace the bursar for a period of time, here in the major seminary of the diocese of Bukavu.

There are 46 seminarians, all Congolese. The professors, three Belgian Fathers, a Brother also Belgian, a French Father, a Congolese Priest and, to close, me Italian. As you can see, there is no shortage of nationalities here. There is no French or Belgian among us: we all love each other! We spend recreation time together and we never say: You are... The love of Jesus makes us forget that we are French or Italian. Here we always speak French. In my spare time, which is not lacking here, I have started to study Mashi, the language they speak here, because many know Kiswahili, but not everyone."

MEDITATION

By Fr. Cesar Da Silva, Xaverian missionary

Some forty years before his spiritual children departed for the land they would wash with their blood, St Guido Maria Conforti emphasised a reality that later became a constant in their life and mission: fraternity. The Founder said: 'Brotherhood flourishes in the shadow of the cross of Christ' (To the Missionary Union of the Clergy, 20.08.1922).

The cross was always present in the lives of these martyred brothers of ours. From the cross they learnt to overcome their own limitations and to face the challenges of their time with courage. This fraternity that has sprung from the cross has made them models of the same fraternity desired by Christ on the cross: "when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself" (Jn 12:32).

On the cross "the love of Jesus makes us forget" (V. Faccin) the human differences that prevent us from living as brothers among brothers as Faccin, Didonè, Carrara and Joubert taught us by their example. With their spilled blood, they became for all witnesses of 'brotherhood that flourishes in the shadow of the cross of Christ'.

Seventh day (15 August)

Entrusting oneself to Mary

SHORT READING

Cf. Is 61:10

I fully rejoice in the Lord, my soul exults in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has wrapped me in the mantle of righteousness, like a bride adorned with jewels.

XAVERIAN READING

From 'Letter to Brother Severinus' by John Didonè, priest and martyr

(Epistolario, Rome 2024, 107; Locasca, 10.07.1958)

Entrusting to Mary: 'Only with her can we walk'

"Take heart, that time passes very quickly and one must not let it pass in vain.

I recommend that you deepen your devotion to Our Lady according to St. Grignon de Montfort's Treatise on True Devotion to Mary; it is the most perfect way to truly be of Mary and, through her, of Jesus.

Without a solid and tender devotion to Mary one cannot reach the radiant goal, with Mary one walks better, indeed only with her can one walk. I remember you in my prayers".

MEDITATION

By María Guadalupe Pacheco Rodríguez, Xaverian missionary

Mary, like a mother, is always ready to accompany and guide us on the path of faith, of hope, of love, of peace even in sorrow. Walking with Mary, the cross we carry does not disappear, but her closeness and

her intercession help us to discover in it a light and a value that open the doors of the Kingdom.

We look to her imagining how she would behave in our place in the various situations we face, and little by little we end up looking like her, as children look like their mother.

We too have been given the gift of the Holy Spirit and therefore we cannot let the hope of attaining holiness die in us, of being faithful to our baptism by persevering to the end. Mary's experience alongside Jesus confirms to us that in faith we are always on a journey, like pilgrims; there is no lack of sacrifices, pain, misunderstandings. However, the deep joy of the heart to serve the Lord and to have him constantly in us, will always accompany us!

Day eight (16 August)

Caring

SHORT READING

2 Cor 1:3-4

Blessed be God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the merciful Father and God of all consolation, who comforts us in all our tribulations so that we too may comfort those who are in any kind of affliction with the consolation with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

XAVERIAN READING

From the Letter to the Catechist Raphael by Giovanni Didonè, priest and martyr

(Epistolario, Rome 2024, 422; Lett. of 09.11.1964)

The service of consolation: caring for the heart

"Thank you for your letter and the work you are doing. Now in Rome, with the Council, they have given permission to the bishops of the missions to place Deacons alongside the fathers, that is: the bishop can choose catechists who have given proof of an honest life, fidelity and zeal and give them great permission to baptise like the fathers and to distribute communion to the Christians (...) I am writing these things to give you some hope for the times to come. Have a little more patience and in a little while you will have a Deacon (...). We Fathers are here in Fizi, far away from our countries, but God is everywhere and sees us. Let us remain strong! Do not think that the Fathers will return to their homes, know that they would rather die than abandon you. Do not listen to lies. We have been sent to stay here in the mission of Fizi. I have not yet come to you because I cannot, and you know it

well, because you will see me, I do not know when, but you will see me.

MEDITATION

By Fr Robert Kowa Sado, Xaverian missionary

This letter by Giovanni Didonè informs us of his pastoral attachment to the mission and to the people of God of the portion of the Church to which he was sent. The young missionary puts himself in an attitude of consolation and closeness to the inner experience of the people to reassure them of their missionary communion of life and destiny. This attention touches the heart and cannot but manifest the strength of the God of all consolation: it is he who restores and confirms his people in faith, making them strong and firm (1 Peter 5:10-11).

The words of consolation lead towards communion with the ecclesial journey, at a time when the conciliar event was drawing to its end, already bringing signs of hope to the universal Church. Father John had, in fact, understood the need to 'believe and hope together', to live the faith by promoting the different ecclesial ministries.

The pastoral service of consolation, thus experienced by the missionary, invites one to cultivate an attitude of welcoming the people to whom the Gospel proclamation is addressed; to develop the capacity to understand and interpret all forms of language - even the non-verbal; to know how to risk one's life in order to live the empathetic listening in situations of affliction, need and profound questions of the human being in his precise existential, social and historical context.

Ninth day (17 August)

Pray always

SHORT READING

Heb 13:7-9a

Remember your leaders, who proclaimed the word of God to you; considering carefully the outcome of their standard of living, imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and always! Do not be led astray by various and peregrine doctrines.

XAVERIAN READING

From the 'Letter to parents' of Vittorio Faccin, religious and martyr

(Epistolary, Rome 2024, 189; Baraka, 22.11.1964)

The new blessed: our intercessors

Six days before his martyrdom, Brother Victor wrote:

"I hope this one of mine will reach you. Health is good even though there have been difficulties, which, by the way, are not over. It is impossible for us to have communication with the free world: we thirst for freedom, but when will this be? Every day is a day of waiting. What we have seen and heard during this time is impossible to explain, and will always remain in our hearts.

The Heavenly Mother who has assisted us until today in a miraculous form will continue to assist us. I am certain that we will come out safe. Your prayers are well received in Heaven. Continue to pray for these poor people. Pour out your tears at the feet of our heavenly Mother, Mother of the Apostles. Pray. A hug to all".

MEDITATION

By Msgr. Francesco Beschi, Bishop of Bergamo

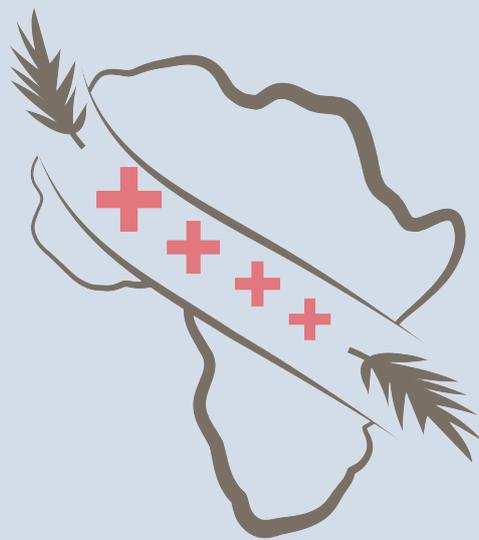
Death set the seal on a short but intense story. One can say of Victor, Louis, John and Albert what has been written of other martyrs: They did *not steal his life, he had already given it.*

Luigi Carrara and his fellow martyrs also remember the many missionaries who planted their lives of faith in Congolese soil, attached to the people, close to the poorest, always aware that it is not elsewhere that we are called to be witnesses of the Gospel and of God's love, but there where Providence has planted us. And there where we are planted is where we repeat with Father Luigi: *We are in God's hands.*

In this time, the Church is, in a special way, called to be missionary with a courageous love that does not seek easy popularity, but only goodness, and that knows how to be in history with a humble and industrious presence capable of speaking words of truth, without speaking, even to those who do not yet believe. May the new blessed martyrs, who have always believed in prayer, now intercede with God for us and for our Church.

Summary

Conduct of the prayer	3
First day (09 August)	4
<i>Turn yourself in</i>	4
Second day (10 August)	6
<i>Earning Christ</i>	6
Day three (11 August)	8
<i>Helpfulness and friendliness</i>	8
Day four (12 August)	10
<i>Passionate</i>	10
Fifth day (13 August)	12
<i>Perseverance</i>	12
Day six (14 August)	14
<i>Fraternally</i>	14
Seventh day (15 August)	16
<i>Entrusting oneself to Mary</i>	16
Day eight (16 August)	18
<i>Caring</i>	18
Ninth day (17 August)	20
<i>Always pray</i>	20



Xaverian Missionaries
General postulation