



## Venerable Riccardo Andrea M. Borello (1916-1948)

### BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

Riccardo is born in Mango, near Alba (Cuneo), on 8 March 1916 of parents Giuseppe Stanislao Borello and Margherita Paolina Rivella. A few weeks after birth he is already orphaned of father, who died in combat in the course of the first world war. At age nine he follows his mother, who remarried with a farmer of Castagnole Lanze. At the start of 1933, in the space of one week, he loses his stepfather and his mother and is adopted by the Perrone family. He spends his youth in prayer, doing work accepted and offered on the example of saint Joseph, as a means for his own sanctification and for the redemption of humanity. He serves with enthusiasm among the ranks of Catholic Action.

At age twenty, on 8 July 1936, following the call of the Lord, he enters the Society of Saint Paul as an aspiring Disciple of the Divine Master. “Reading the life of Maggiorino Vigolungo – he confides – I have felt the attraction to make myself a Pauline religious.” In fact, after a retreat in the house of the Society of Saint Paul, he comes to the conclusion that God calls him to the consecrated life. Thus the life of Riccardo finds its definitive direction, unconsciously sought from his infancy and favored by those close to him, starting from his mother up to the good Perrone farmers.

Starting from the first contact, Riccardo leaves indelible impressions in his companions. One of them recalls: “Although he is older than us by a few years, he greeted us with great cordiality and with charming smiles. After a very short time, he won all of us.” In his desire to give through his life the greatest glory to God and good to men, he consecrates himself totally to the apostolate of the editions. In the Society of Saint Paul all the young men, starting from their entrance, are launched to work. Riccardo would have wanted to be introduced immediately to the activity then specific of the Paulines: the press. But he does not say it and instead accepts to go temporarily to work in the garden of the community. What is important for him is the fact of working already in the “field of the Lord,” as a worker in his harvest.

After a short time in the garden and then in the paper mill, the superior Fr. Giaccardo asks him to change work, to transfer to the cobbler’s shop. In his prayers, Borello understands that there is no work foreign to the apostolate of evangelization. Jesus himself worked for twenty years as a carpenter and even saint Joseph, Mary and saint Paul worked. And so he worked as a

shoemaker for all his life, never considering work as a burden; accustomed more to give than to receive, any work is for him “doing apostolate” for the glory of God and for the good of souls, while collaborating with the Pauline priests in the work of evangelization, using the means of social communication, even in the most humble ways.

On 7 April 1938 Fr. James Alberione receives the first religious profession of Riccardo, who from that moment assumes the name of Andrea Maria. In the effervescent environment of that time, the young man who passes from prayer to work, from study to recreation, with a composure and a lifestyle that is truly edifying for everybody, attracts the attention of everybody. Every week he consults his spiritual director about the journey of faith to be traveled. His detachment from things is equal to the pureness of his rapport with persons: serene, transparent, generous, capable of total dedication, and at the same time prudent and serious. Inflexible as to the norms of respect toward persons, Andrea is always attentive to the needs of others and exercises a delicious tact and a special gift of making his confreres aware about inconvenient things to avoid, or behavior to correct, putting himself in front of each one with a disarming humility. On the other hand, knowing his strong temperament, he is always willing to let himself be humbly corrected. His patience is contagious, capable of putting on its feet the humor of his brothers, restoring for them confidence in themselves and in others.

In his great love for his vocation and for the Congregation, after obtaining the consent of his spiritual director, he makes a special offering of his life in sacrifice to God for the perseverance of consecrated souls, so that all those who are called may be faithful to the grace of their vocation. “In March of 1948 he pronounced the definitive word – his spiritual director Fr. Giovanni Roatta affirms – and, with my consent, Brother Borello made the heroic offering of his life. Since at that time his health was invariably good, I did not think that God would have accepted with so much concern the simple and total offering of his disciple.” Instead, Jesus Master accepts the offering of his good and faithful Disciple. At the dawn of Saturday 4 September 1948, the sound of the bell in the sanatorium of Sanfrè jolts the sleep of the community. At that very moment brother Andrea Borello gives up his soul to God. “This death – the doctor says who cares for him – is for me a great wonder: a person dies with a smile.” In fact, brother Andrea dies with a smile on his lips and with eyes wide open, gazing at the picture of the Madonna hanging on the front of his bed, and... nobody dares to spoil the situation.

Born amidst humble surroundings, orphaned a few months after birth, a troubled adolescence, very little secular education, a series of bereavements and transfers; then one of the most demanding choices in an atmosphere of foundation full of work and sacrifices: where is the greatness of brother Borello? In his exemplary conduct. Andrea Borello is wonderful in small things. And the founder himself declares: “By general consent, Brother Andrea Maria Borello merits to be glorified and proposed as an example for all those who consecrate themselves to the apostolate of the means of social communication, but in a particular way for the brothers Disciples of the Pious Society of Saint Paul, who are like the backbone of the Congregation and have an important part in the apostolate of the editions.”

## ACTUALITY

A young man, 32 years of age consecrated to God, who leaves this life suffering from an illness with no cure at that time, gazing with love at an image of Mary, today would not make news. As also would not make news a religious who humbly dedicates his life at the service of God, first in a paper mill, then doing the work of a cobbler. But what has moved brother Andrea Borello all his life? No doubt it is the deep desire to give himself to God and for the good of souls.

Among the traits that characterize the actuality and the Pauline sanctity of brother Andrea M. Borello, we can call to mind the following:

**Humanity, solidarity, friendliness.** Brother Borello has been a man of communion, capable of true friendship, of giving himself to the other, of quick and sincere obedience. These are things of other times for one who loves individualism and independence at all costs, but they are not for one who decides to follow the Lord carrying the cross with humility and meekness of heart. Pope Francis exhorts the Christians, especially the young ones, to go against the current, not to allow their hope to be stolen and to travel the roads up to the farthest peripheries in the company of the poor Christ. In this sense the life donated by brother Borello is timely and challenging: a contemplative in every situation, desirous of authentic sanctity for himself and for all, not afraid of pain and death so long as Christ is preached.

**A humble and hidden life.** He has always desired to work in the frontlines of the diffusion of the gospel through the direct apostolate of the good press, and instead he must stay “behind the lines,” employed in the most humble and heavy tasks: the garden, the paper mill, as cobbler... Silent and quick to organize games and sports. Lover of prayer and a great worker. Coming from a humble family and a direct witness of the sufferings that life can reserve, he soon learns to trust in God, to follow the way traced by Jesus Christ and to bless the Lord in every circumstance up to the last day of his existence. His search for humility and for the fear of the Lord lists him among the wise men and the friends of God.

**Full dedication to the mission.** He admits that he dedicates all his energies and all his time to the work assigned him, even if it is “somewhat heavy.” Although he never meets the recipients of his apostolate, brother Borello preaches to many through the testimony of a life hidden with Christ in God and through a profound desire and humble personal collaboration so that many may know Jesus Christ, the Master, the Way, the Truth and the Life. Convinced of contributing through his work to the mission of the universal Church for the salvation of the world, he commits himself to it with all his energies, to the point of the offering of his life for those who are called and for their perseverance: a heroic offering which the Lord accepts.

**A life as a consecrated brother.** Andrea lives the awareness of sharing as a consecrated person, side by side with the priests, the mission of evangelization through a wide apostolate, modern, open to all the ways of the world, using all the means of modern technologies so that Christ may become truly the Master recognized, followed and loved by all. He does not make it in time to see with his eyes the advances of the techniques of communication, which will open unimaginable horizons for the preaching of the gospel message and for human promotion, nor can he see what elevated functions his brothers the Disciples of the Divine Master will carry out in the apostolic works of the Congregation. Notwithstanding the apparent modesty of his contribution in the most humble tasks, he is always convinced – and with reason – that he is helping in the evangelization of the world not different from that of his brothers committed in the frontlines, under the spotlights of public opinion, on the highest pulpits of the publishing business and of the magisterium. Thus he remains for everybody as a point of reference and an invitation to consider the prospects open today for the mission of consecrated laity.

**Sanctity accessible to all.** Above all, Riccardo Andrea Borello indicates to people of our time a “way” of sanctity that is accessible to everybody. In fact, he is a “common” person, of average intelligence. He is not a theologian, nor a degree holder, nor an artist nor an intellectual. His culture is of the elementary school, but one of high supernatural wisdom. He has understood that little is enough to become great in the eyes of the Lord and holy in front of His people: it is enough to believe truly in the gospel, to follow faithfully the journey of Jesus, consisting in the practice of the human and Christian virtues, in loving God in everything and above all things, and seeking the good of one’s neighbor in the life of everyday. He is a living model of that sanctity proposed several times by pope Francis, who asks that “our light does not come from make-ups or special effects, but from our making ourselves neighbor of one we meet along the way, a neighbor wounded and needful of love and tenderness.”

## SOME OF HIS PHRASES

“I have always tried to be a good person: now, so as to work only for the Lord and to make myself better, I desire to become a religious in the Society of Saint Paul.”

“Obedience was the secret of my life!”

“I did not believe that it was so easy to make yourself a saint.”

“I have just one thing that pains me much: it is the fact that some are not faithful to their calling.”

“If we are not careful to spend time well, the devil comes, he steals it from us, and, among other things, we also sin against poverty... Pardon me, you know, but it is necessary to listen to the Superiors and to love them, because they are the true representatives of God. And it is necessary to pray for them. If one is with his Superiors, he is sure to do the will of God... Indeed, the work we are doing (in the paper mill) is a bit heavy, but each shovel of paste that we lift is a sheet of paper on which the Word of God will be printed and brought to souls.”

On his deathbed: “help me to die as a saint. I am not aware that I have lost time during my life. I renew the offering of my life for the faithfulness of all those who are called.”

## WHAT THEY SAY OF HIM

**Blessed James Alberione:** “In light of saint Joseph, Brother Andrea Maria Borello made it his concern to inform all his life with an intense reparatory piety, with a customary recollection and a being silent, a serene docility in generous sharing of the apostolate through technique and propaganda, and constant tension toward Pauline perfection.”

“Humility and charity, together with piety, have characterized his life which he offered to the Lord for vocations. From the Tabernacle he received particular light regarding the apostolate of the Editions, for which he consecrated all his energies. Since his death remembrance of him has become ever more widespread and felt, together with his reputation for sanctity and trusting invocation, in so many necessities.”

Seen on a holy card: “Here is a model Pauline Disciple: model of piety, of obedience, of apostolate, of observance, of Pauline spirit. “The person who humbles himself will be exalted.”

**Mons. Carlo Stoppa:** “I know the ever-growing reputation for sanctity which surrounds the person of Brother Andrea Maria Borello and his holy life, all consumed in faithfulness and in the hiddenness of a common life, in his commitment for his sanctification and, finally, heroically offered for the apostolate of the editions, for vocations, for the better development of the Congregation which he has loved more than himself.”

“Br. Andrea Borello, who has consumed all his life in the Apostolate of the Editions, closely collaborating with the Pauline Priests in the Magisterium of the Church, is a model and a powerful invitation to the young people of the new times.”

**A companion in Pauline life:** “He took much care to have a refined conscience: I never heard him say discourses that are frivolous and much less double-meaning words; if at times he found himself in the company of somebody with a loose tongue, he went away, when he could not change the discourse. There was no action or comportment that left the least doubt on the virtue of chastity, and since in the house devotion to the Madonna was much inculcated as a

defense for purity, I explain his very tender devotion to the Madonna exactly for this love that he had for chastity.”

**Sr. M. Lucia Ricci:** “In my encounters with him motivated by duty or occasionally, Br. Borello habitually presented himself with humble and refined behavior, reserved and at the same time self-assured; he was not afraid to look us in the face with serenity, dispatching in haste what has to be done to return with solicitousness to his duty. Particularly striking was that discreet smile that always remained as a particular characteristic of his, an expression of inner goodness, but also indicating his ability to win you over.”

**Fr. Cirillo Tomatis:** “Brother Borello has passed among us gifting us with edification. He has edified us with his simplicity and humility. He was truly a simple and humble soul, of a real and sincere humility, so that he lowly saw himself, was respectful toward others, lent to everyone the most humble services. All those who have known him can confirm that what is said here corresponds exactly to the truth. He has edified us with his habit of silence and his being hardworking... He did not talk, but went into action, accomplishing with commitment and diligence what was entrusted to him by the superiors. Often we saw him busy even during spare times with some small useful work, picking up, for example, the pieces of paper scattered here and there to keep clean the courtyards. He has edified us, above all, with his piety, with his inner victory, with his refined conscience. He was very faithful to his practices of piety, always composed and recollected, as everybody could observe.”

**Fr. Luigi Zanoni:** “At certain times he was requested to do extraordinary tasks, unscheduled, which undoubtedly cost him much, but which he accepted, always succeeding to let his smile prevail.”

**Fr. Valentino G. Macca:** “The figure of the Pauline Brother Andrea Maria Borello seems to me to be particularly actual, when – after what has been affirmed with such authority by the Vatican Council II... – there is a move to give utmost value to the lay religious vocation, “a state in itself complete as to the profession of the evangelical counsels.” Brother Borello is a lay religious entirely and deeply convinced of his vocation-mission. It is that which makes him a man very faithful to the following of Christ, a true “Disciple of the Divine Master,” in following him, professing and living the evangelical counsels according to the charism and under the gaze of the Servant of God Fr. James Alberione, who deeply esteemed him. Laboring with constancy, humility, obedience in the various areas assigned him by his superiors, he offered and immolated himself everywhere for the apostolic goals of the Pious Society of Saint Paul, “social communications,” inspired by Christ and the Gospel, always glad to do good in the best way possible, tending to perfection, in forming himself to be a holy “disciple,” as his profession required.”

**Card. Albino Luciani.** “In his brief existence the servant of God has practiced the Christian virtues to a degree that seems heroic, discharging the humble duties of his life, first as a layperson and then as a religious, in a truly uncommon manner. It is not common that a young layman animate a life intensely laborious through a spirit and an exercise of prayer like his; that a young religious realize his apostolic vocation through very intense work, employed as a means to unite himself ever better to God, to the point of reaching that “ecstasy of action” about which Saint Francis de Sales talks. If he is canonized, the servant of God could become a stimulating example: 1) For young laymen, especially those of humble condition, so as to sanctify with their holy and industrious life the environment in which they live. 2) For religious, so as to love their religious vocation and to persevere in it with fidelity and strength. 3) For everybody, for a rightful valorization of the means of social communication, of which he has been a convinced apostle.”

HIS CAUSE OF CANONIZATION

Brother Borello died in Sanfrè on 4 September 1948. His remains were transferred from the local cemetery to the chapel of the Institute in the cemetery of Alba on 4 November 1959, and then to the temple of Saint Paul in the city, where he now rests. His Cause of beatification and canonization was promoted by Fr. James Alberione on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of foundation of the Congregation.

The ordinary Process started in Alba on 31 May 1964 and it was closed on 23 June 1969. The changes of the procedure introduced by the Congregation of the causes of the saints involved for the cause a consistent postponement and an additional process, from 14 February to 6 July 1984, in order to enrich the testimonies. The Congregation declared the validity of the process on 27 March 1987, and on 9 June 1989 the peculiar Congress of the theology consultants expressed their favorable votes regarding the heroic virtues of the servant of God. Having passed the examination of the ordinary Session of the cardinals and bishops, Andrea M. Borello was declared “venerable” on 3 March 1990 with the solemn signature of the decree on the part of John Paul II. A miracle recognized and approved by the Church attributed to his intercession is now necessary to arrive at his beatification.

## PRAYER

Father, who to communicate your love  
has sent Jesus Christ Master, Way, Truth and Life,  
through the intercession of venerable Andrea Borello,  
grant that the means of social communication  
may promote your glory and the good of society.  
Through the offering of his young life  
as a Disciple of the Divine Master  
following the example of saint Joseph,  
multiply those consecrated committed in evangelization  
and stir up among the believers an enthusiastic collaboration  
so that the message of the Gospel  
may shape today’s culture of communication.  
Glorify in the Church this your faithful disciple,  
and through his intercession grant me the grace I ask of you...

*Glory to the Father...*

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Silvano M. De Blasio, *A Disciple of the Divine Master, Bro. Andrea M. Borello, of the Pious Society of Saint Paul*, Rome 1960;

- Andrea Gemma, *A different young man, Andrea Borello*, Alba 1972;
- Rosario Esposito (edited by), *Very Beloved in Saint Paul*, Rome 1971, pp. 439-452;
- Celestino Rizzo, *Brother Andrea Borello, «a young man who listens to God»*, Rome 1984 and 2000<sup>2</sup>;
- Stefano Igino Silvestrelli, *Sanctity that does not shout: Venerable Andrea Borello*, Rome 1990;
- Stefano Lamera, *Remember, Lord, our Fathers*, Rome 1989, pp. 65-74 (manuscript use);
- Eliseo Sgarbossa, *Riccardo Andrea Borello. A life given on the roads of the Gospel*, Rome 1991;
- Giuseppe Barbero, *The Priest, James Alberione. A man – an idea*, Rome 1991<sup>2</sup>, pp. 869-873;
- Giuseppe Lacerenza, *Blessed James Alberione. Editor and apostle of the new millennium*, Camerata Picena (An) 2011, pp. 345-355 ;
- Stefano Lamera - Venanzio Floriano, *Remember, Lord, our Fathers. The great saints of the Pauline Family*, Cinisello Balsamo 2014, pp. 73-84.

## LINKS

<http://www.stpauls.it/coopera06/0405cp/0405cp12.htm>

<http://www.stpauls.it/madre06/0406md/0406md29.htm>

<http://www.stpauls.it/coopera06/0605cp/0605cp20.htm>

[Ven le Borello\borello\\_discepolo.pdf](#)

<http://www.santiebeati.it/dettaglio/91364>