

SOCIETY OF ST PAUL
The Secretary General



«As we have been united in the profession of the faith, so let us keep ourselves united in suffrage and intercession.»

(Fr. Alberione)

Early in the afternoon of Sunday, 3 January 2016, the day in which the Solemnity of the Epiphany is celebrated in Brazil, our brother priest returned to the Father

FR. SALVATORE VIRGILIO CIACCIO
88 years of age, 74 of Pauline life, 68 of profession and 59 of priesthood

«With each passing day his life conformed to what he was celebrating, Christ dead and risen, testifying that, after all, this is the meaning of our calling to be Pauline». With these words addressed to the Provincial Superior of Brazil on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of priestly ordination of Fr. Ciaccio, which would have fallen on 5th January, Fr. Valdir José De Castro, Superior General of the Society of St. Paul, recalled his long years of illness, due to the inexorable progress of Alzheimer's disease, which over 10 years has gradually removed his motor and cognitive skills, until the epilogue of yesterday.

Salvatore was born on 16 December 1927 in Davoli (Catanzaro), son of Nicola and Rosa. He entered the House in Alba on 3 January 1941, at the height of the war, and here on 8 September 1947 made his first religious profession, which was confirmed forever five years later. He was ordained deacon on 30 October 1955 and priest on 5 January 1956 by the laying on of hands of Msgr. Luigi Traglia. In a letter written to the Founder in 1945, the year before entering the novitiate, he confided that he had the first glimpse of his calling at age 9, during a walk with his mother along the wheat fields of his country in Calabria and had immediately revealed to her this wishful thinking. After his ordination until the end of 1964 in Alba, he dedicated himself to formation as Master of the aspirants. In January of 1965 he was transferred by his Superiors to Brazil, destined for the community of the “*Cidade Paulina*”, where he lived until the last call of the Lord which took place yesterday.

Before long Fr. Salvatore came to dominate the use of the Portuguese language and began to exercise his gifts – already “polished” by his formators in his youth – the brilliant writer, not without poetic vein, which he would capitalize especially in the preparation of the weekly liturgical-catechetical *O Domingo*. In his apostolate he had always one thing clear: «Proceeding from reality, we should not run the risk of celebrating the Eucharist so disembodied, turning our backs on the suffering brothers, stripped of their fundamental rights, robbed of their dignity as children of God». The beginnings of the magazine *O Domingo – Sunday Worship*, also followed which – making it clear in an editorial – «was born for the benefit of the communities, which, for lack of priests, can not gather to celebrate the Eucharist», and the weekly *O Domingo das Crianças*, «in support to the liturgy, in order to prepare for a Eucharistic celebration suited to the mentality of the young». Then he wrote several books and promoted the publication of lyrics and music for the colorful liturgical celebrations of that Country, which he felt to love more and more. Intelligent, witty and sympathetic, he worked, among others, in the offices of the Novice Master, Superior of “*Cidade Pauline*” (1990-1996) and Provincial Vicar (1992-1996).

Countless readers of *O Domingo* in Brazil, along with many brothers and sisters of the Pauline Family, are crying today “Father Virgil”, the name by which he was known for the widely read weekly, which he took care since 1973. His apostolic intention, as shown in the way he wrote, was based on an «approach to the reality of the moment, challenging everything that is not in tune with the Gospel: injustice, inequality, violence, abortion, immorality ... ». These are the years of the awakening of Latin American Churches, of appeals to social justice that arise from the meetings of the Latin American Episcopal Council in Medellin (1968) and Puebla (1979), of the spread of liberation theology, of the explosion of the phenomenon of basic ecclesial communities. And “Father Virgil” made his contribution everything with Pauline color.

This brother of ours will remain as a great gift of God to the Pauline Province of Brazil and of the whole Church in that Country, as confirmed by this testimony written by a reader, a diocesan priest: «Dear Father Virgil, from my childhood, that is, since the sixties, until now I have always read and appreciated much many of your homiletic comments on the pages of *O Domingo*. May you continue, therefore, your wonderful and admirable mission of making the “Midrash” of the Word of God, making it as a “bridge” for our times, putting it in our current reality, as you are always doing in a magisterial way. Also since the “people of God” has always the hunger and thirst for this Word, necessitating the existence of those who, like you, have extended it to be served on the “Table”, as it is: wonderful, simple, clear, provocative, to be what, in fact, it is: the Word that transforms. Dear Father Virgil, I pray that God’s keep you with this special gift, with your wonderful gift of the word!».

In lifting up his prayer before the Divine Master to give us holy vocations, we make our own the words of goodbye of our Brazilian confreres: «Dear “Father Virgil”, dear confrere and unforgettable Pauline communicator, our eternal gratitude now goes to you! We continue treading our way, as you wrote, “between blindness and vision”. Now that you are in the light of God we ask you to continue to present that invocation of yours: “Let the ray of the light of Christ shine on us, so that we can always walk in love, justice and truth”».

Rome, 4 January 2016

Fr. Stefano Stimamiglio

The funeral will be held on Monday, 4 January, local time, at 14:00, in the Pauline Parish Church of Saint Ignatius at São Paulo. The remains will be buried in the city cemetery of the Most Holy Sacrament.

The Circumscription Superiors are to inform their communities for the prescribed suffrages (Cost. 65 and 65.1).