 Reading time: 5 min.

*In the panorama of the great witnesses of faith of the 20th century, the name of Alberto Marvelli shines resplendent as an example of Christian dedication and social commitment.Born in Ferrara in 1918 and living in post-war Rimini, Alberto embodied the values of the Gospel through a life spent in the service of the weakest and neediest.Beatified by Pope John Paul II in 2004, his figure continues to inspire young people and adults on the path of faith and social action.*

**A childhood of values and spirituality**

Alberto Marvelli was born on 21 March 1918, the second of seven children of Alfredo Marvelli and Maria Mayr. His family, deeply Christian, instilled values of faith, charity and service in him from an early age. His mother, in particular, had a great influence on his spiritual formation, passing on to him a love of prayer and concern for the needy. The Marvelli family was known for its generosity and hospitality, often opening its home to anyone in need.

During his high school years in Rimini, Alberto distinguished himself not only for his excellence in studies, but also for his commitment to sports and social activities. Passionate about cycling and athletics, he saw sport as a means to strengthen character and promote values such as loyalty and discipline.

**His university years and social vocation**

Enrolled in the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering at the University of Bologna, Alberto tackled his studies seriously and enthusiastically. But in addition to his academic commitment, he devoted time and energy to Catholic Action, a movement that played a fundamental role in his spiritual growth and social commitment. He organised study groups, spiritual meetings and volunteer projects, involving his university colleagues in initiatives in favour of the less fortunate.

His room became a meeting place for discussions on social and religious issues. Here, Alberto encouraged his companions to reflect on the role of the laity in the Church and society, promoting the idea that every Christian is called to be an active witness of the Gospel in the world.

**War: a test of faith and courage**

With the outbreak of the Second World War, Albert was called to arms. Even in the military environment he did not stop witnessing to his faith, sharing moments of prayer with his fellow soldiers and offering moral support in a time of great uncertainty and fear.

After 8 September 1943, with the Italian armistice, he returned to Rimini, finding a city devastated by bombing and Nazi occupation. In this dramatic context, Alberto became actively involved in the Resistance, helping Allied prisoners and Jews to escape from the hands of the Nazis. He risked his own life on numerous occasions, showing extraordinary courage and unwavering faith.

**Charity without borders**

One of Alberto's most emblematic images is of him riding his bicycle through the destroyed streets of Rimini, laden with food, clothes and medicine to be distributed to those in need. His bicycle became a symbol of hope for many citizens. He made no distinction between people: he helped Italians, foreigners, friends and enemies, seeing in everyone the face of the suffering Christ.

He opened the doors of his home to evacuees, organised soup kitchens for the poor and worked to find housing for the homeless. His dedication was total and unconditional. As he wrote in his diary: 'Every poor person is Jesus. Every act of charity is an act of love towards Him'.

**Interior life and deep spirituality**

Despite his social and political commitments, Albert never neglected his spiritual life. He participated in the Eucharist daily, devoted time to prayer and meditation, and constantly relied on divine Providence. His personal diary reveals a deep union with God and an ardent desire to conform to God's will in every aspect of his life. He wrote: 'God is my infinite happiness. I must be holy otherwise nothing.' This striving for holiness permeated his every gesture, large or small. Regular confession, Eucharistic adoration and reading the Holy Scriptures were essential moments of spiritual growth for him.

**Political commitment as a form of charity**

In the post-war period, Alberto was actively involved in the moral and material reconstruction of society. He joined the Christian Democrats, seeing politics as a means to promote the common good and social justice. For him, politics was a high form of charity, a selfless service to the community.

As councillor for Public Works in Rimini, he worked tirelessly to improve housing conditions for the poor, promoted the reconstruction of schools and hospitals, and supported initiatives for the economic revival of the city. He refused any form of corruption or moral compromise, always putting the needs of the most vulnerable at the centre.

**Testimonies of an extraordinary life**
There are many testimonies from those who knew Alberto personally. Friends and colleagues remember his smile, his availability and his ability to listen. He used to say: ‘We cannot love God if we do not love our brothers’. This conviction translated into concrete gestures, such as hosting displaced families in his home or giving up his own meal to give it to the hungry.
His simple and austere lifestyle, combined with a deep inner joy, attracted the admiration of many. He never sought recognition or personal glory, but always acted with humility and discretion.

**Tragedy and beatification**
On 5 October 1946, at only 28 years of age, Albert died tragically in a car accident while cycling to an election rally. His sudden death was a blow to the community. However, his funeral became a manifestation of affection and gratitude: thousands of people came together to pay homage to a young man who had given all of himself for others.
The reputation for holiness that surrounded his figure led to the start of the beatification process in the 1990s. On 5 September 2004, during a ceremony in Loreto, Pope John Paul II proclaimed him Blessed. The beatification was not only a personal recognition, but also a message to young people all over the world: holiness is possible in every state of life, even in the laity and in social and political commitment.

**Legacy and topicality**
The figure of Alberto Marvelli continues to be a point of reference for anyone wishing to combine faith and social action. His life testifies that it is possible to live the Gospel in everyday life, committing oneself to justice, solidarity and the common good. In an era characterised by individualism and indifference, Alberto’s example invites us to rediscover the value of love of neighbour and social responsibility.
Today, several associations and initiatives bear his name, promoting projects of solidarity, spiritual formation and civic engagement. His life is often cited as an example in educational and catechetical courses, inspiring new generations to follow his path.

**Final reflections**
Alberto Marvelli’s message is extraordinarily relevant today. His ability to combine deep faith and concrete action is a response to the challenges of our time. He

shows that holiness is not reserved for the chosen few, but is a path accessible to anyone who is open to the love of God and the service of their brothers and sisters. In a passage in his diary, Albert wrote: ‘Every day is a precious gift to love more’. This phrase encapsulates the essence of his spirituality and can be a beacon for all those who wish to live a meaningful and good-oriented life.

Blessed Alberto Marvelli represents a model of lay holiness, a young man who was able to transform his faith into concrete actions for the benefit of others. His life, though short, was a hymn to love, justice and hope. Today more than ever, his testimony invites each of us to reflect on our role in society and the possibility of being instruments of peace and good in the world.

*Alberto Marvelli continues to inspire with his simple and extraordinary life.An invitation to all of us to ride, like him, on the roads of solidarity and brotherly love.*