

# Crown of the Seven Sorrows of Mary

*The publication "Crown of the Seven Sorrows of Mary" represents a cherished devotion that St. John Bosco instilled in his young followers. Following the structure of the "Way of the Cross," the seven sorrowful scenes are presented with brief reflections and prayers to guide towards a deeper participation in the sufferings of Mary and her Son. Rich in tender imagery and contrite spirituality, the text reflects the desire to unite with the Sorrowful Mother in redemptive compassion. The indulgences granted by various Popes attest to the pastoral value of this text—a small treasury of prayer and reflection to nurture love for the Mother of Sorrows.*

## **Preface**

The primary aim of this booklet is to facilitate remembrance and meditation of the bitterest Sorrows of the tender Heart of Mary, a devotion most pleasing to her, as she has often revealed to her devotees, and a most efficacious means for us to obtain her patronage.

To make this meditation easier, it is first practised with a chaplet indicating Mary's seven principal sorrows, which can then be meditated upon in seven distinct brief reflections, much like the *Way of the Cross*.

May the Lord accompany us with His heavenly grace and blessing so that the desired intention is achieved, so that each soul may be deeply moved by the frequent remembrance of Mary's sorrows for spiritual benefit and the greater glory of God.

## **Chaplet of the Seven Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin Mary with Seven Brief Reflections Presented in the Form of the Way of the Cross**

### **Preparation**

Dearest brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ, we undertake our

usual devotions by meditating devoutly on the bitterest sorrows that the Blessed Virgin Mary endured in the life and death of her beloved Son, our Divine Saviour. Let us imagine ourselves present at Jesus hanging on the Cross, as His afflicted Mother says to each of us, "Come and see if there is any sorrow like mine."

Trusting that this merciful Mother will grant us special protection as we meditate on her sorrows, let us invoke divine aid with the following prayers:

*Antiphon: Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of Thy faithful, and kindle in them the fire of Thy love.*

*Send forth Thy Spirit, and they shall be created,  
And Thou shalt renew the face of the earth.  
Remember Thy Congregation,  
Which Thou hast possessed from the beginning.  
O Lord, hear my prayer,  
And let my cry come unto Thee.*

*Let us pray.*

*Enlighten our minds, we beseech Thee, O Lord, with the light of Thy brightness, that we may see what is to be done and have the strength to do what is right. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

### **First Sorrow: The Prophecy of Simeon**

The first sorrow was when the Blessed Virgin Mother of God presented her only Son in the Temple in the arms of the holy elder Simeon, who said to her, "This child shall be a sword that shall pierce thy soul," foretelling the Passion and death of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

*One Our Father and seven Hail Marys.*

### **Prayer`**

O sorrowful Virgin, by that sharp sword with which the holy elder Simeon foretold that thy soul would be pierced in the Passion and death of thy dear Jesus, I beseech thee to obtain

for me the grace always to remember thy wounded heart and the bitterest pains suffered by thy Son for my salvation. Amen.

### **Second Sorrow: The Flight into Egypt**

The second sorrow of the Blessed Virgin was when she had to flee to Egypt due to the persecution of cruel Herod, who wickedly sought to kill her beloved Son.

One *Our Father* and seven *Hail Marys*.

#### **Prayer**

O Mary, most sorrowful sea of tears, by the anguish thou didst endure fleeing to Egypt to protect thy Son from Herod's barbaric cruelty, I implore thee to be my guide, that through thee I may be freed from the persecutions of visible and invisible enemies of my soul. Amen.

### **Third Sorrow: The Loss of Jesus in the Temple**

The third sorrow of the Blessed Virgin was when, after being in Jerusalem with her spouse Joseph and her beloved Son Jesus the Saviour during Passover, she lost Him on the return to her humble home and mourned the loss of her only Beloved for three days.

One *Our Father* and seven *Hail Marys*.

#### **Prayer**

O disconsolate Mother, thou who sought thy Son anxiously for three days after losing His bodily presence, pray that sinners too may seek Him with acts of contrition and find Him. Amen.

### **Fourth Sorrow: Meeting Jesus Carrying the Cross**

The fourth sorrow of the Blessed Virgin was when she met her most sweet Son carrying a heavy Cross on His tender shoulders to Mount Calvary to be crucified for our salvation.

One *Our Father* and seven *Hail Marys*.

#### **Prayer**

O Virgin, more afflicted than any other, by the agony thou didst feel in thy heart upon meeting thy Son as He bore the wood of the Holy Cross to Calvary, grant that I may accompany

Him continually in thought, weep for my sins, the cause of His and thy torment, and grow in love for Him. Amen.

### **Fifth Sorrow: The Crucifixion of Jesus**

The fifth sorrow of the Blessed Virgin was when she saw her Son raised upon the hard wood of the Cross, shedding blood from every part of His Most Sacred Body.

One *Our Father* and seven *Hail Marys*.

#### **Prayer**

O Rose among thorns, by the bitter sorrow that pierced thy heart as thou beheld thy Son wounded and lifted on the Cross, grant that I may seek only Jesus

crucified, remembering always that my sins caused His suffering. Amen.

### **Sixth Sorrow: The Descent from the Cross**

The sixth sorrow of the Blessed Virgin was when her beloved Son, wounded in the side after His death and taken down from the Cross, was placed in thy most holy arms, so pitilessly slain.

One *Our Father* and seven *Hail Marys*.

#### **Prayer**

O afflicted Virgin, thou who received thy dead Son into thy arms, kissing His most sacred wounds and weeping a sea of tears, grant that I too may wash with tears of true contrition the mortal wounds my sins inflicted upon thee. Amen.

### **Seventh Sorrow: The Burial of Jesus**

The seventh sorrow of the Virgin Mary, our Lady and Advocate, was when she accompanied the Most Holy Body of her Son to the tomb.

One *Our Father* and seven *Hail Marys*.

#### **Prayer**

O Martyr of Martyrs, Mary, by the bitter torment thou didst suffer when, after burying thy Son, thou had to depart from

that beloved tomb, obtain for all sinners the grace to recognise the grave harm of being far from their God. Amen.

Three *Hail Marys* shall be recited in profound respect for the tears shed by the Blessed Virgin in all her sorrows, to implore through her a similar sorrow for our sins.

*Hail Mary*, etc.

After finishing the Chaplet, the Lament of the Blessed Virgin is recited—the hymn “*Stabat Mater*,” etc.

### **Hymn – Lament of the Blessed Virgin Mary**

The Supreme Pontiff Innocent XI, grants the indulgence of 100 days each time the *Stabat Mater* is recited. Benedict XIII granted the seven-year indulgence to those who recite the Crown of the Seven Sorrows of Mary. Many other indulgences were granted by other Popes especially to the Brothers and Sisters of the Company of the Sorrowful Mary.

### **The seven sorrows of Mary meditated in the form of the Way of the Cross**

Stabat Mater dolorosa  
 Iuxta crucem lacrymosa,  
 Dum pendebat Filius.  
 Cuius animam gementem  
 Contristatam et dolentem  
 Pertransiuit gladius.  
 O quam tristis et afflicta  
 Fuit illa benedicta  
 Mater unigeniti!  
 Quae moerebat, et dolebat,  
 Pia Mater dum videbat.  
 Nati poenas inclyti.  
 Quis est homo, qui non fleret,  
 Matrem Christi si videret  
 In tanto supplicio?  
 Quis non posset contristari,  
 Christi Matrem contemplari  
 Dolentem cum filio?  
 Pro peccatis suae gentis  
 Vidit Iesum in tormentis  
 Et flagellis subditum.  
 Vidit suum dulcem natura  
 Moriundo desolatum,  
 Dum emisit spiritum.  
 Eia mater fons amoris,  
 Me sentire vim doloris  
 Fac, ut tecum lugeam.  
 Fac ut ardeat cor meum  
 In amando Christum Deum,  
 Ut sibi complaceam.  
 Sancta Mater istud agas,  
 Crucifigi fige plagas  
 Cordi meo valide.  
 Tui nati vulnerati  
 Tam dignati pro me pati  
 Poenas mecum divide.  
 Fac me tecum pie flere,  
 Crucifixo condolere,  
 Donec ego vixero.  
 Iuxta Crucem tecum stare,  
 Et me tibi sociare  
 In planctu desidero.  
 Virgo virginum praeclara,  
 Mihi iam non sia amara,  
 Fac me tecum plangere.  
 Fac ut portem Christi mortem,  
 Passionis fac consortem,  
 Et plagas recolor.  
 Fac me plagis vulnerari,  
 Fac me cruce inebriari,  
 Et cruore Filii.  
 Flammis ne urar succensus,  
 Per te, Virgo, sim defensus  
 In die Iudicii.  
 Christe, cum sit hinc exire,  
 Da per matrem me venire  
 Ad palmam victoriae.  
 Quando corpus morietur,  
 Fac ut animae donetur  
 Paradisi gloria. Amen.

At the cross her station keeping,  
 Stood the mournful Mother weeping,  
 Close to Jesus to the last.  
 Through her heart, His sorrow sharing,  
 All His bitter anguish bearing,  
 Now at length the sword had passed.  
 Oh, how sad and sore distressed  
 Was that Mother highly blest,  
 Of the sole begotten One!  
 Christ above in torment hangs.  
 She beneath beholds the pangs  
 Of her dying glorious Son.  
 Is there one who would not weep,  
 Whelmed in miseries so deep,  
 Christ's dear Mother to behold?  
 Can the human heart refrain  
 From partaking in her pain,  
 In that Mother's pain untold?  
 Bruised, derided, cursed, defiled,  
 She beheld her tender Child,  
 All with bloody scourges rent.  
 For the sins of His own nation,  
 Saw Him hang in desolation  
 Till His spirit forth He sent.  
 O thou Mother, fount of love!  
 Touch my spirit from above,  
 Make my heart with thine accord.  
 Make me feel as thou hast felt;  
 Make my soul to glow and melt  
 With the love of Christ my Lord.  
 Holy Mother, pierce me through;  
 In my heart each wound renew  
 Of my Savior crucified.  
 Let me share with thee His pain,  
 Who for all my sins was slain,  
 Who for me in torment died.  
 Let me mingle tears with thee,  
 Mourning Him who mourned for me,  
 All the days that I may live.  
 By the Cross with thee to stay;  
 There with thee to weep and pray,  
 Is all I ask of thee to give.  
 Virgin of all virgins best,  
 Listen to my fond request:  
 Let me share thy grief divine.  
 Let me to my latest breath,  
 In my body bear the death  
 Of that dying Son of thine.  
 Wounded with His every wound,  
 Steep my soul till it hath swooned  
 In His very blood, away.  
 Be to me, O Virgin, nigh,  
 Lest in flames I burn and die,  
 In His awful Judgment day.  
 Christ, when Thou shalt call me hence,  
 Be Thy Mother my defence,  
 Be Thy Cross my victory.  
 While my body here decays,  
 May my soul Thy goodness praise,  
 Safe in Paradise with Thee. Amen.

**Invoke divine help by saying:**

*We beseech Thee, O Lord, to anticipate our actions by inspiring us, and to continue them by helping us, so that all our prayer and work may always begin with Thee, and, having begun through Thee, may be ended. Through Christ Our Lord. Amen.*

**Act of Contrition**

Most Afflicted Virgin, alas! How ungrateful I have been in the past towards my God, with what ingratitude I have responded to His countless benefits! Now I repent, and in the bitterness of my heart and the weeping of my soul, I humbly ask Him for forgiveness for having offended His infinite goodness, firmly resolved in the future with heavenly grace, never to offend Him again. Ah! By all the sorrows you endured in the barbaric passion of your beloved Jesus, I beg you with the deepest sighs to obtain for me from Him, pity and mercy for my sins. Accept this holy exercise I am about to perform and receive it in union with those pains and sorrows you suffered for your son Jesus. Ah, grant me! Yes, grant me that those same swords that pierced your spirit may also pierce mine, and that I may live and die in the friendship of my Lord, to eternally partake of the glory He has acquired for me with His precious Blood. Amen.

**First Sorrow**

In this first sorrow, let us imagine ourselves in the temple of Jerusalem, where the Most Blessed Virgin heard the prophecy of the old Simeon.

**Meditation**

Ah! What anguish the heart of Mary must have felt upon hearing the sorrowful words with which the holy old Simeon foretold the bitter passion and atrocious death of her sweetest Jesus: while at that same moment there came to her mind the insults, abuses, and tortures that the wicked Jews would inflict on the Redeemer of the world. But do you know what was the most

piercing sword that wounded her in this circumstance? It was the consideration of the ingratitude with which her beloved Son would be repaid by men. Now reflecting that, because of your sins, you are miserably among these, ah! Throw yourself at the feet of this Sorrowful Mother and say to her weeping (all kneel): Ah! Most Compassionate Virgin, who experienced such bitter anguish in your spirit seeing the abuse which I, unworthy creature, would make of the blood of your beloved Son, grant, yes grant by your most afflicted Heart, that in the future I may respond to the Divine Mercies, make use of heavenly graces, and not receive in vain so many lights and inspirations which you will deign to obtain for me, so that I may be among those for whom the bitter passion of Jesus is an eternal salvation. Amen. *Hail Mary* etc. *Glory be* etc.

Mary, my sweet love,  
Imprint your sorrows in my heart.

## **Second Sorrow**

In this second sorrow, let us consider the most painful journey the Virgin made towards Egypt to save Jesus from Herod's cruel persecution.

## **Meditation**

Consider the bitter sorrow Mary must have felt when, at night, she had to set out on her journey by the Angel's order to preserve her Son from the massacre ordered by that fierce Prince. Ah! At every animal cry, at every gust of wind, at every rustle of leaves she heard in those deserted roads, she was filled with fear lest some harm befall the child Jesus she carried with her. Now she turned one way, now another, now hastened her steps, now hid herself, thinking she was overtaken by soldiers who might tear her most beloved Son from her arms and subject Him to barbaric treatment before her eyes. Fixing her tearful gaze upon her Jesus and pressing Him tightly to her breast, giving Him a thousand kisses, she sent forth the most anguished sighs from her heart. And here reflect how many times you have renewed this bitter sorrow for



Mary by forcing her Son with your grave sins to flee from your soul. Now that you know the great evil committed, turn repentantly to this merciful Mother and say to her:

Ah, sweetest Mother! Once Herod forced you and your Jesus to flee because of the inhuman persecution he commanded; but I, oh! How many times have I obliged my Redeemer, and consequently you too, to depart quickly from my heart, introducing into it the cursed sin, merciless enemy of you and my God. Ah! Full of sorrow and contrition, I humbly ask your forgiveness.

Yes, mercy, O dear Mother, mercy, and I promise in the future with Divine help to always keep my Saviour and You in full possession of my soul. Amen. *Hail Mary* etc. *Glory be* etc.

Mary, my sweet love,  
Imprint your sorrows in my heart.

### **Third Sorrow**

In this third sorrow, let us consider the most afflicted Virgin who, weeping, searches for her lost Jesus.

### **Meditation**

How great was Mary's sorrow when she realised, she had lost her beloved Son! And how her grief increased when, having diligently searched for Him among friends, relatives, and neighbours, she could find no trace of Him. Not minding discomfort, fatigue, or dangers, she wandered for three continuous days through the regions of Judea, repeating those words of desolation: Has anyone seen Him whom my soul truly loves? Ah! The great anxiety with which she sought Him made her imagine at every moment that she saw Him or heard His voice, but then, finding herself disappointed, oh how she shuddered and felt more keenly the grief of such a deplorable loss! Great confusion for you, O sinner, who, having so often lost your Jesus through grave faults, took no care to seek Him, a clear sign that you make little or no account of the precious treasure of Divine friendship. Weep, then, for your blindness, and turning to this Sorrowful Mother, say to her

sighing thus:

Most Afflicted Virgin, ah, make me learn from you the true way to seek Jesus whom I have lost by following my passions and the wicked suggestions of the devil, so that I may succeed in finding Him, and when I have regained possession of Him, I will continually repeat those words of yours, I have found Him whom my heart truly loves. I will keep Him always with me, and never let Him depart again. Amen. *Hail Mary* etc. *Glory be* etc.

Mary, my sweet love,  
Imprint your sorrows in my heart.

#### **Fourth Sorrow**

In the fourth sorrow, let us consider the meeting of the sorrowful Virgin with her suffering Son.

#### ***Meditation***

Come, then, O hardened hearts, and see if you can endure this most tearful spectacle. It is the most tender, most loving mother meeting her sweetest, most beloved Son; and how does she meet Him? O God! Amidst the most impious mob dragging Him cruelly to death, covered with wounds, dripping with blood, torn by injuries, with a crown of thorns on His head and a heavy beam on His shoulders, weary, gasping, languishing, seeming at every step about to breathe His last.

Ah! Consider, my soul, the mortal shock the Most Holy Virgin felt at the first glance she fixed upon her tormented Jesus. She would want to bid Him a last farewell, but how, when grief prevents her from uttering a word? She would throw herself at His neck, but remains motionless and petrified by the force of inner affliction. She would vent her grief with tears, but her heart feels so constricted and oppressed that she cannot shed a tear. Oh! And who can restrain tears seeing a poor mother plunged in such great anguish? But who is the cause of such bitter sorrow? Ah, I know, yes, it is I with my sins who have made such a barbaric wound in your tender heart, O Sorrowful

Virgin. Yet who would believe it? I remain unmoved, without being touched. But if I was ungrateful in the past, I shall be so no more.

Meanwhile, prostrate at your feet, O Most Holy Virgin, I humbly ask your forgiveness for so much sorrow I have caused you. I know and confess that I do not deserve pity, being the true reason you fell with grief upon meeting your Jesus all covered with wounds; but remember, yes remember that you are the mother of mercy. Ah, show yourself thus to me, and I promise in the future to be more faithful to my Redeemer, and so make up for so much displeasure I have given your most afflicted spirit. Amen. *Hail Mary* etc. *Glory be* etc.

Mary, my sweet love,  
Imprint your sorrows in my heart.

### **Fifth sorrow**

In this fifth sorrow, let us imagine ourselves on Mount Calvary where the most afflicted Virgin saw her beloved Son expire on the Cross.

### ***Meditation***

Here we are at Calvary where two altars of sacrifice are already raised, one in the body of Jesus, the other in the heart of Mary. Oh, tragic spectacle! We behold the Mother drowned in a sea of anguish as she sees her dear and beloved child torn from her by pitiless death. Alas! Every hammer blow, every wound, every laceration that the Savior receives upon His flesh deeply reverberates in the heart of the Virgin. She stands at the foot of the Cross so penetrated by sorrow and pierced by grief that you could not decide who would be the first to expire—Jesus or Mary. She fixes her eyes on the face of her agonizing Son, observes His languishing pupils, His pale face, His livid lips, His laboured breath, and finally realizes that He no longer lives and has already surrendered His spirit into the hands of His eternal Father. Ah, her soul then makes every possible effort to separate from her body and unite with that of Jesus. And who can endure such

a sight?

Oh, most sorrowful Mother, instead of withdrawing from Calvary to avoid feeling such acute anguish, you remain motionless there to drink to the last drop the bitter cup of your afflictions. What confusion this must bring to me, who seek every means to avoid the crosses and small sufferings that the Lord deigns to send for my good? Most sorrowful Virgin, I humble myself before you—ah! Grant that I may once clearly know the preciousness and great value of suffering, that I may become so attached to it that I never tire of exclaiming with St. Francis Xavier: “More, Lord, more, Lord—more suffering, my God.” Ah yes, more suffering, O my God. So be it. *Hail Mary*, etc. *Glory be*, etc.

Mary, my sweet beloved,  
Imprint your sorrows upon my heart.

### **Sixth sorrow**

In this sixth sorrow, let us imagine ourselves seeing the disconsolate but Virgin Mother receiving into her arms her deceased Son taken down from the Cross.

### ***Meditation***

Consider the most bitter pain that pierced Mary’s soul when she saw the lifeless body of her beloved Jesus placed in her lap. Ah! As she fixed her gaze upon His wounds and sores, beholding Him crimson with His own blood, the force of her inner grief was such that her heart was mortally pierced, and had she not died, it was Divine omnipotence that preserved her life. Oh, poor Mother—yes, poor Mother, who leads to the tomb the dear object of your tenderest affections, who from a bouquet of roses has become a bundle of thorns due to the mistreatment and lacerations inflicted by wicked executioners. And who would not pity you? Who would not feel crushed by sorrow seeing you in such a state of affliction as to move even the hardest stone to pity? I see John inconsolable, Magdalene and the other Marys weeping bitterly, Nicodemus unable to bear the grief any longer. And I? I alone shed no

tear amid such sorrow! Ungrateful and thankless wretch that I am!

Ah! Most merciful Mother, here I am at your feet, receive me under your powerful protection and let my heart be pierced by the same sword that passed through your most afflicted spirit, that it may soften at last and truly weep for my grave sins, which brought you such cruel martyrdom. So be it. *Hail Mary*, etc. *Glory be*, etc.

Mary, my sweet beloved,  
Imprint your sorrows upon my heart.

### **Seventh sorrow**

In this seventh sorrow, let us consider the most sorrowful Virgin as she sees her deceased Son enclosed in the tomb.

### ***Meditation***

Consider the mortal sigh that escaped Mary's afflicted heart when she saw her beloved Jesus laid in the tomb! Oh, what pain, what grief her spirit felt when the stone was raised to seal that most sacred monument! It was impossible to detach her from the edge of the sepulchre, for her sorrow rendered her insensible and immobile, never ceasing to gaze upon those wounds and cruel lacerations. And when the tomb was finally sealed—ah, then the force of her inner anguish was such that she would undoubtedly have fallen dead had God not preserved her life. Oh, most tormented Mother! You will now depart from this place with His body, but surely your heart remains here, for here lies your true treasure. Ah, fate—may all our affection, all our love, remain with Him. How can we not be consumed with love for the Savior, who shed all His blood for our salvation? How can we not love you, who suffered so much for our sake?

Now, sorrowful and repentant for having caused so much pain to your Son and such bitterness to you, we prostrate ourselves at your feet. And for all those sorrows you allowed us to meditate upon, grant us this favour, that the memory of them may remain vividly impressed upon our minds, that our hearts

may be consumed with love for our good God and for you, our sweetest Mother, and that the last sigh of our life may be united to those you poured forth from the depths of your soul in the sorrowful Passion of Jesus, to whom be honour, glory, and thanksgiving for all ages. Amen. *Hail Mary*, etc. *Glory be*, etc.

Mary, my sweet beloved,  
Imprint your sorrows upon my heart.

Then the *Stabat Mater* is recited, as above.

Antiphon: *"A sword shall pierce your own soul also"—Simeon's prophecy to Mary.*

*Pray for us, O most sorrowful Virgin.*

*That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.*

*Let us pray*

*O God, in whose Passion, according to the prophecy of Simeon, a sword of sorrow pierced the sweetest soul of the glorious Virgin and Mother Mary, mercifully grant that we who recall her sorrows may attain the blessed fruit of Your Passion. You who live, etc.*

*Praise be to God and to the most sorrowful Virgin.*

With ecclesiastical approval

The Feast of the Seven Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin Mary, celebrated by the Pious Union and Society, falls on the third Sunday of September in the Church of St. Francis of Assisi.

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# The Evangelical Radicality of Blessed Stefano Sándor

*Stefano Sándor (Szolnok 1914 – Budapest 1953) was a Salesian coadjutor martyr. A cheerful and devout young man, he studied metallurgy before joining the Salesians, becoming a master printer and mentor to boys. He enlivened youth centres, founded Catholic Workers' Youth, and transformed trenches and construction sites into "festive oratories". When the communist regime confiscated Church institutions, he continued educating and saving young people and machinery in secret. Arrested, he was hanged on 8 June 1953. Rooted in the Eucharist and devotion to Mary, he embodied the Gospel radicalism of Don Bosco through educational dedication, courage, and unshakable faith. Beatified by Pope Francis in 2013, he remains a model of Salesian lay holiness.*

## 1. Biographical Notes

Sándor Stefano was born in Szolnok, Hungary, on 26 October 1914, to Stefano and Maria Fekete, the first of three brothers. His father was an employee of the State Railways, while his mother was a housewife. Both instilled a deep religiosity in their children. Stefano studied in his hometown, obtaining a diploma as a metallurgical technician. From a young age, he was respected by his peers; he was cheerful, serious, and kind. He helped his younger siblings study and pray, setting an example himself. He fervently received Confirmation, committing to imitate his patron saint and Saint Peter. He served daily Mass with the Franciscan Fathers, receiving the Eucharist.

While reading the *Salesian Bulletin*, he learned about Don Bosco. He felt immediately drawn to the Salesian charism. He discussed it with his spiritual director, expressing his desire to enter the Salesian Congregation. He

also spoke to his parents about it. They denied him consent and tried in every way to dissuade him. But Stefano managed to convince them, and in 1936 he was accepted at the *Clarisseum*, the Salesians' headquarters in Budapest, where he spent two years in the Aspirantate. He attended printing courses at "Don Bosco" printing house. He began the novitiate but had to interrupt it due to being called to arms.

In 1939, he obtained his final discharge and, after a year of novitiate, made his first Profession on 8 September 1940, as a Salesian Coadjutor. Assigned to the *Clarisseum*, he actively engaged in teaching in vocational courses. He was also responsible for assisting at the oratory, which he led with enthusiasm and competence. He was the promoter of the Catholic Youth Workers. His group was recognized as the best in the movement. Following Don Bosco's example, he proved to be a model educator. In 1942, he was called back to the front and earned a silver medal for military valor. The trench was for him a festive oratory that he animated in a Salesian manner, encouraging his fellow soldiers. At the end of World War II, he committed himself to the material and moral reconstruction of society, dedicating himself particularly to the poorest youth, gathering them to teach them a trade. On July 24, 1946, he made his perpetual profession. In 1948, he obtained the title of master-printer. At the end of his studies, Stefano's students were hired in the best printing houses in Budapest and Hungary.

When the State, under Mátyás Rákosi, confiscated ecclesiastical property in 1949 and began persecuting Catholic schools, which had to close their doors, Sándor tried to save what could be saved, at least some printing machines and some of the furnishings that had cost so many sacrifices. Suddenly, the religious found themselves with nothing; everything had become State property. Rákosi's Stalinism continued to rage; the religious were dispersed. Without a home, work, or community, many became clandestine. They adapted to do anything: street cleaners, farmers, laborers, porters,



servants... Even Stefano had to “disappear,” leaving his printing house, which had become famous. Instead of seeking refuge abroad, he remained in his homeland to save Hungarian youth. Caught in the act (he was trying to save some printing machines), he had to flee quickly and remain hidden for several months. Then, under another name, he managed to get hired in a detergent factory in the capital, but he continued his apostolate fearlessly and clandestinely, knowing it was strictly prohibited. In July 1952, he was captured at his workplace and was never seen again by his confreres. An official document certifies his trial and death sentence, carried out by hanging on June 8, 1953.

The diocesan phase of the Cause of Martyrdom began in Budapest on May 24, 2006, and concluded on December 8, 2007. On March 27, 2013, Pope Francis authorized the Congregation for the Causes of Saints to promulgate the Decree of Martyrdom and to celebrate the Beatification rite, which took place on Saturday, October 19, 2013, in Budapest.

## **2. Original Testimony of Salesian Holiness**

The brief notes on Sándor’s biography have introduced us to the heart of his spiritual journey. Contemplating the features that the Salesian vocation has taken in him, marked by the action of the Spirit and now proposed by the Church, we discover some traits of that holiness: the deep sense of God and the full and serene availability to His will; the attraction to Don Bosco and the cordial belonging to the Salesian community; the encouraging and animating presence among the youth; the family spirit; the spiritual and prayer life cultivated personally and shared with the community; the total dedication to the Salesian mission lived in service to apprentices and young workers, to the boys of the oratory, and to the animation of youth groups. It is an active presence in the educative and social world, all animated by the charity of Christ that drives him from within!

There were also gestures that were heroic and unusual, culminating in the supreme act of giving his life for the salvation of Hungarian youth. "A young man wanted to jump onto the tram that was passing in front of the Salesian house. Misjudging his move, he fell under the vehicle. The carriage stopped too late; a wheel deeply injured his thigh. A large crowd gathered to watch the scene without intervening, while the poor unfortunate was about to bleed to death. At that moment, the gate of the school opened, and Pista (the familiar name of Stefano) ran out with a folding stretcher under his arm. He threw his jacket on the ground, crawled under the tram, and carefully pulled the young man out, tightening his belt around the bleeding thigh, and placed the boy on the stretcher. At this point, the ambulance arrived. The crowd cheered Pista enthusiastically. He blushed but could not hide the joy of having saved someone's life."

One of his boys recalls, "One day I fell seriously ill with typhus. At the hospital in Újpest, while my parents were worried about my life at my bedside, Stefano Sándor offered to give me blood if necessary. This act of generosity deeply moved my mother and all the people around me."

Even though more than sixty years have passed since his martyrdom and there has been a profound evolution in Consecrated Life, in the Salesian experience, in the vocation and formation of the Salesian Coadjutor, the Salesian path to holiness traced by Stefano Sándor is a sign and a message that opens perspectives for today. This fulfills the affirmation of the Salesian Constitutions: "The confreres who have lived or live fully the evangelical project of the Constitutions are for us a stimulus and help in the journey of sanctification." His beatification concretely indicates that "high measure of ordinary Christian life" indicated by John Paul II in *Novo Millennio Ineunte*.

## **2.1. Under the Banner of Don Bosco**

It is always interesting to try to identify in the

mysterious plan that the Lord weaves for each of us the guiding thread of all existence. In a synthetic formula, the secret that inspired and guided all the steps of Stefano Sándor's life can be summarized in these words: following Jesus, with Don Bosco and like Don Bosco, everywhere and always. In Stefano's vocational history, Don Bosco erupts in an original way with the typical traits of a well-identified vocation, as the Franciscan parish priest wrote, presenting the young Stefano. "Here in Szolnok, in our parish, we have a very good young man: Stefano Sándor, of whom I am the spiritual father, and who, after finishing technical school, learned the trade in a metallurgical school; he receives Communion daily and would like to enter a religious order. We would have no difficulty, but he would like to enter the Salesians as a lay brother."

The flattering judgment of the parish priest and spiritual director highlights: the traits of work and prayer typical of Salesian life; a persevering and constant spiritual journey with a spiritual guide; the apprenticeship of the typographic art that he will perfect and specialize over time.

He had come to know Don Bosco through the Salesian Bulletin and the Salesian publications of Rákospalota. From this contact through the Salesian press, perhaps his passion for typography and books was born. In a letter to the Provincial of the Salesians of Hungary, Fr. János Antal, where he asks to be accepted among the sons of Don Bosco, he declared: "I feel the vocation to enter the Salesian Congregation. There is a need for work everywhere; without work, one cannot reach eternal life. I like to work."

From the beginning, the strong and determined will to persevere in the received vocation emerges, as will indeed happen. When on May 28, 1936, he applied for admission to the Salesian novitiate, he declared that he "had known the Salesian Congregation and had been increasingly confirmed in his religious vocation, so much so that he trusted he could persevere under the banner of Don Bosco." In a few words, Sándor expresses a high-profile vocational awareness:

experiential knowledge of the life and spirit of the Congregation; confirmation of a right and irreversible choice; assurance for the future of being faithful on the battlefield that awaits him.

The record of admission to the novitiate, in Italian (June 2, 1936), unanimously qualifies the experience of the Aspirantate: "With excellent results, diligent, of good piety, and offered himself for the festive oratory, was practical, of good example, received the certificate of printer, but does not yet have perfect practice." Those traits that, subsequently consolidated in the novitiate, will define his identity as a lay Salesian religious are already present: the exemplarity of life, the generous availability to the Salesian mission, the competence in the profession of printer.

On September 8, 1940, he made his religious profession as a Salesian Coadjutor. On this day of grace, we report a letter written by Pista, as he was familiarly called, to his parents. "Dear parents, I have to report an important event for me that will leave indelible marks in my heart. On September 8, by the grace of good God and with the protection of the Holy Virgin, I committed myself with my profession to love and serve God. On the feast of the Virgin Mother, I made my wedding with Jesus and promised Him with the triple vow to be His, never to separate from Him, and to persevere in fidelity to Him until death. I therefore pray all of you not to forget me in your prayers and Communions, making vows that I may remain faithful to my promise made to God. You can imagine that it was a joyful day for me, never before experienced in my life. I think I could not have given the Madonna a more pleasing birthday gift than the gift of myself. I imagine that our good Jesus looked at you with affectionate eyes, you having been the ones who gave me to God... Affectionate greetings to all. PISTA."

## **2.2. Absolute Dedication to the Mission**

"The mission gives all our existence its concrete tone...", say the Salesian Constitutions. Stefano Sándor lived

the Salesian mission in the field entrusted to him, embodying pastoral educative charity as a Salesian Coadjutor, in the style of Don Bosco. His faith led him to see Jesus in the young apprentices and workers, in the boys of the oratory, in those of the street.

In the printing industry, the competent direction of the administration is considered an essential task. Stefano Sándor was responsible for the direction, practical and specific training of apprentices, and the setting of prices for printing products. "Don Bosco" printing house enjoyed great prestige throughout the Country. The Salesian editions included the *Salesian Bulletin*, *Missionary Youth*, magazines for youth, the *Don Bosco Calendar*, devotional books, and the Hungarian translation of the official writings of the General Directorate of the Salesians. It was in this environment that Stefano Sándor began to love the Catholic books that were not only prepared for printing by him but also studied.

In the service of youth, he was also responsible for the collegiate education of young people. This was also an important task, in addition to their technical training. It was essential to discipline the young, in a phase of vigorous development, with affectionate firmness. At every moment of the apprenticeship period, he stood by them as an older brother. Stefano Sándor distinguished himself for a strong personality; he possessed excellent specific education, accompanied by discipline, competence, and a community spirit.

He was not content with just one specific job but made himself available for every need. He took on the role of sacristan of the small church of the Clarisseum and took care of the direction of the "Little Clergy." A testament to his capacity for endurance was also the spontaneous commitment to voluntary work in the flourishing oratory, regularly attended by the youth from the two suburbs of Újpest and Rákospalota. He enjoyed playing with the boys; in soccer matches, he refereed with great competence.

### 2.3. Religious Educator

Stefano Sándor was an educator of faith for every person, brother, and boy, especially in times of trial and at the hour of martyrdom. Indeed, Sándor had made the mission for young people his educational space, where he daily lived the criteria of Don Bosco's Preventive System – reason, religion, loving-kindness – in the closeness and loving assistance to young workers, in the help provided to understand and accept situations of suffering, in the living testimony of the presence of the Lord and His unfailing love.

In Rákospalota, Stefano Sándor zealously dedicated himself to training young printers and educating the youth of the oratory and the "Pages of the Sacred Heart." On these fronts, he showed a strong sense of duty, living his religious vocation with great responsibility and characterized by a maturity that inspired admiration and esteem. "During his printing activity, he conscientiously lived his religious life, without any desire to appear. He practiced the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, without any forcing. In this field, his mere presence was a testimony, without saying a word. Even the students recognized his authority, thanks to his fraternal ways. He put into practice everything he said or asked of the students, and no one thought of contradicting him in any way."

György Érseki had known the Salesians since 1945 and after World War II moved to Rákospalota, in the Clarisseum. His acquaintance with Stefano Sándor lasted until 1947. For this period, he not only offers us a glimpse of the multiple activities of the young Coadjutor, printer, catechist, and youth educator, but also a deep reading, from which emerges the spiritual richness and educational capacity of Stefano. "Stefano Sándor was a very gifted person by nature. As a pedagogue, I can affirm and confirm his observational skills and his multifaceted personality. He was a good educator and managed to handle the young people, one by one, in an optimal manner, choosing the appropriate tone with everyone. There is still a detail belonging to his

personality: he considered every work a holy duty, dedicating, without effort and with great naturalness, all his energy to the realization of this sacred purpose. Thanks to an innate intuition, he was able to grasp the atmosphere and influence it positively. [...] He had a strong character as an educator; he took care of everyone individually. He was interested in our personal problems, always reacting in the most suitable way for us. In this way, he realized the three principles of Don Bosco: reason, religion, and loving-kindness... The Salesian Coadjutors did not wear the habit outside the liturgical context, but Stefano Sándor's appearance stood out from the crowd. Regarding his activity as an educator, he never resorted to physical punishment, which was prohibited according to the principles of Don Bosco, unlike other more impulsive Salesian teachers, who were unable to control themselves and sometimes slapped students. The apprentice students entrusted to him formed a small community within the school, despite being different from each other in terms of age and culture. They ate in the dining hall together with the other students, where the Bible was usually read during meals. Naturally, Stefano Sándor was also present. Thanks to his presence, the group of industrial apprentices was always the most disciplined... Stefano Sándor remained youthful, showing great understanding towards young people. By grasping their problems, he transmitted positive messages and was able to advise them both personally and religiously. His personality revealed great tenacity and resilience in work; even in the most difficult situations, he remained faithful to his ideals and to himself.

The Salesian school of Rákospalota hosted a large community, requiring work with young people at multiple levels. In the school, alongside the printing house, there lived young Salesians in formation, who were in close contact with the Coadjutors. I remember the following names: József Krammer, Imre Strifler, Vilmos Klinger, and László Merész. These young men had different tasks from those of Stefano Sándor and also

differed in character. However, thanks to their common life, they knew each other's problems, virtues, and flaws. Stefano Sándor always found the right measure in his relationship with these clerics. Stefano Sándor managed to find the fraternal tone to admonish them when they showed some shortcomings, without falling into paternalism. In fact, it was the young clerics who sought his opinion. In my view, he realized the ideals of Don Bosco. From the very first moment of our acquaintance, Stefano Sándor represented the spirit that characterized the members of the Salesian Society: a sense of duty, purity, religiosity, practicality, and fidelity to Christian principles."

A boy from that time recalls the spirit that animated Stefano Sándor: "My first memory of him is linked to the sacristy of the *Clarisseum*, where he, as the main sacristan, demanded order, imposing the seriousness due to the situation, yet always remaining himself, with his behavior, to set a good example for us. One of his characteristics was to give us directives in a moderate tone, without raising his voice, rather politely asking us to do our duties. This spontaneous and friendly behavior won us over. We truly cared for him. We were enchanted by the naturalness with which Stefano Sándor took care of us. He taught us, prayed, and lived with us, witnessing the spirituality of the Salesian Coadjutors of that time. We young people, often did not realize how special these people were, but he stood out for his seriousness, which he manifested in church, in the printing house, and even on the playing field."

### **3. Reflection of God with Evangelical Radicality**

What gave depth to all this – the dedication to the mission and the professional and educative capacity – and what immediately struck those who met him was the inner figure of Stefano Sándor, that of a disciple of the Lord, who lived at every moment his consecration, in constant union with God



and in evangelical fraternity. From the testimonies in the process, a complete figure emerges, also for that Salesian balance whereby the different dimensions converge in a harmonious, unified, and serene personality, open to the mystery of God lived in the everyday.

One striking aspect of such radicality is the fact that from the very novitiate, all his companions, even those aspiring to the priesthood and much younger than him, esteemed him and saw him as a model to imitate. The exemplary nature of his consecrated life and the radicality with which he lived and testified to the evangelical counsels always distinguished him everywhere, so that on many occasions, even during his imprisonment, many thought he was a priest. Such testimony speaks volumes about the uniqueness with which Stefano Sándor always lived with clear identity his vocation as a Salesian Coadjutor, highlighting precisely the specificity of Salesian consecrated life as such. Among the novitiate companions, Gyula Zsédely speaks of Stefano Sándor: "We entered together the Salesian novitiate of Saint Stephen in Mezőnyárád. Our master was Béla Bali. Here I spent a year and a half with Stefano Sándor and was an eyewitness to his life, a model of a young religious. Although Stefano Sándor was at least nine or ten years older than me, he lived with his novitiate companions in an exemplary manner; he participated in the practices of piety with us. We did not feel the age difference at all; he stood by us with fraternal affection. He edified us not only through his good example but also by giving us practical advice regarding the education of youth. It was already evident then how he was predestined for this vocation according to the educational principles of Don Bosco... His talent as an educator stood out even to us novices, especially during community activities. With his personal charm, he inspired us to such an extent that we took for granted that we could easily tackle even the most difficult tasks. The engine of his deep Salesian spirituality was prayer and the Eucharist, as well as devotion to Our Lady Help of Christians. During the novitiate, which lasted a year, we saw in him a

good friend. He became our model also in obedience, as being the oldest, he was tested with small humiliations, but he endured them with composure and without showing signs of suffering or resentment. At that time, unfortunately, there was someone among our superiors who enjoyed humiliating the novices, but Stefano Sándor knew how to resist well. His greatness of spirit, rooted in prayer, was perceptible to all."

Regarding the intensity with which Stefano Sándor lived his faith, with a *continuous union with God*, an exemplary evangelical testimony emerges, which we can well define as a "reflection of God". "It seems to me that his inner attitude stemmed from devotion to the Eucharist and to the Madonna, which had also transformed the life of Don Bosco. When he took care of us, 'Little Clergy,' he did not give the impression of exercising a profession; his actions manifested the spirituality of a person capable of praying with great fervor. For me and my peers, 'Mr. Sándor' was an ideal, and we never dreamed that everything we saw and heard was a superficial act. I believe that only his intimate life of prayer could

have nourished such behavior when, still a very young confrere, he had understood and taken seriously Don Bosco's educational method."

The evangelical radicality expressed itself in various forms throughout the religious life of Stefano Sándor:

- In waiting patiently for the consent of his parents to enter the Salesians.

- In every step of religious life, he had to wait: before being admitted to the novitiate, he had to do the Aspirantate; admitted to the novitiate, he had to interrupt it to serve in the military; the request for perpetual profession, initially accepted, would be postponed after a further period of temporary vows.

- In the harsh experiences of military service and

at the front. The confrontation with an environment that posed many traps to his dignity as a man and a Christian strengthened in this young novice the decision to follow the Lord, to be faithful to his choice of God, no matter the cost. Indeed, there is no more difficult and demanding discernment than that of a novitiate tested and scrutinized in the trench of military life.

– In the years of suppression and then imprisonment, up to the supreme moment of martyrdom.

All this reveals that gaze of faith that will always accompany the story of Stefano: the awareness that God is present and works for the good of His children.

## **Conclusion**

Stefano Sándor, from birth until death, was a deeply religious man, who in all circumstances of life responded with dignity and coherence to the demands of his Salesian vocation. This is how he lived during the period of the Aspirantate and initial formation, in his work as a printer, as an animator of the oratory and liturgy, in the time of clandestinity and imprisonment, up to the moments preceding his death. Eager, from his early youth, to dedicate himself to the service of God and his brothers in the generous task of educating young people according to the spirit of Don Bosco, he was able to cultivate a spirit of strength and fidelity to God and to his brothers that enabled him, in the moment of trial, to resist, first to situations of conflict and then to the supreme test of the gift of life.

I would like to highlight *the testimony of evangelical radicality* offered by this confrere. From the reconstruction of the biographical profile of Stefano Sándor emerges a real and profound journey of faith, begun from his childhood and youth, strengthened by his Salesian religious profession and consolidated in the exemplary life of a Salesian Coadjutor. A genuine consecrated vocation is particularly noticeable, animated according to the spirit of

Don Bosco, by an intense and fervent zeal for the salvation of souls, especially young ones. Even the most difficult periods, such as military service and the experience of war, did not tarnish the upright moral and religious behavior of the young Coadjutor. It is on this basis that Stefano Sándor will suffer martyrdom without second thoughts or hesitations.

The beatification of Stefano Sándor engages the entire Congregation in *promoting the vocation of the Salesian Coadjutor*, welcoming his exemplary testimony and invoking in a communal form his intercession for this intention. As a lay Salesian, he managed to set a good example even for priests, with his activity among young people and with his exemplary religious life. He is a model for young consecrated persons, for the way in which he faced trials and persecutions without accepting compromises. The causes to which he dedicated himself, the sanctification of Christian work, love for the house of God, and the education of youth, are still fundamental missions of the Church and our Congregation.

As an exemplary educator of young people, particularly apprentices and young workers, and as an animator of the oratory and youth groups, he serves as an example and encouragement in our commitment to proclaim to young people *the Gospel of joy through the pedagogy of goodness*.

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## **Don Elia Comini: martyr priest at Monte Sole**

*On December 18, 2024, Pope Francis officially recognized the martyrdom of Don Elia Comini (1910-1944), a Salesian of Don Bosco, who will thus be beatified. His name joins that of other priests—such as Don Giovanni Fornasini, already Blessed since 2021—who fell victim to the brutal Nazi violence in the*

*Monte Sole area, in the Bologna hills, during World War II. The beatification of Don Elia Comini is not only an event of extraordinary significance for the Bologna Church and the Salesian Family, but also constitutes a universal invitation to rediscover the value of Christian witness: a witness in which charity, justice, and compassion prevail over every form of violence and hatred.*

### **From the Apennines to the Salesian courtyards**

Don Elia Comini was born on May 7, 1910, in the locality of “Madonna del Bosco” in Calvenzano di Vergato, in the province of Bologna. His birthplace is adjacent to a small Marian sanctuary dedicated to the “Madonna del Bosco,” and this strong imprint in the sign of Mary will accompany him throughout his life.

He is the second child of Claudio and Emma Limoni, who were married at the parish church of Salvaro on February 11, 1907. The following year, the firstborn Amleto was born. Two years later, Elia came into the world. Baptized the day after his birth—May 8—at the parish of Sant’Apollinare in Calvenzano, Elia also received the names “Michele” and “Giuseppe” that day.

When he was seven years old, the family moved to the locality of “Casetta” in Pioppe di Salvaro in the municipality of Grizzana. In 1916, Elia began school: he attended the first three elementary classes in Calvenzano. During that time, he also received his First Communion. Still young, he showed great involvement in catechism and liturgical celebrations. He received Confirmation on July 29, 1917. Between 1919 and 1922, Elia learned the first elements of pastoral care at the “school of fire” of Mons. Fidenzio Mellini, who had known Don Bosco as a young man and had prophesied his priesthood. In 1923, Don Mellini directed both Elia and his brother Amleto to the Salesians of Finale Emilia, and both would treasure the pedagogical charisma of the saint of the young: Amleto as a teacher and “entrepreneur” in the school; Elia as a Salesian of Don Bosco.

A novice from October 1, 1925, at San Lazzaro di Savena, Elia Comini became fatherless on September 14, 1926, just a few days (October 3, 1926) before his First Religious Profession, which he would renew until Perpetual, on May 8, 1931, on the anniversary of his baptism, at the "San Bernardino" Institute in Chiari. In Chiari, he would also be a "trainee" at the Salesian Institute "Rota." He received the minor orders of the ostiariate and lectorate on December 23, 1933; of the exorcist and acolyte on February 22, 1934. He was ordained subdeacon on September 22, 1934. Ordained deacon in the cathedral of Brescia on December 22, 1934, Don Elia was consecrated a priest by the imposition of hands of the Bishop of Brescia, Mons. Giacinto Tredici, on March 16, 1935, at just 24 years old: the next day he celebrated his First Mass at the Salesian Institute "San Bernardino" in Chiari. On July 28, 1935, he would celebrate with a Mass in Salvaro.

Enrolled in the Faculty of Classical Letters and Philosophy at the then Royal University of Milan, he was always very well-liked by the students, both as a teacher and as a father and guide in the Spirit: his character, serious without rigidity, earned him esteem and trust. Don Elia was also a fine musician and humanist, who appreciated and knew how to make others appreciate "beautiful things." In the written compositions, many students, in addition to following the prompt, naturally found it easy to open their hearts to Don Elia, thus providing him with the opportunity to accompany and guide them. Of Don Elia "the Salesian," it was said that he was like a hen with chicks around her ("You could read all the happiness of listening to him on their faces: they seemed like a brood of chicks around the hen"): all close to him! This image recalls that of Mt 23:37 and expresses his attitude of gathering people to cheer them and keep them safe.

Don Elia graduated on November 17, 1939, in Classical Letters with a thesis on Tertullian's *De resurrectione carnis*, with Professor Luigi Castiglioni (a renowned Latinist and co-author of a famous Latin dictionary, the "Castiglioni-Mariotti"): focusing on the words "*resurget*

*igitur caro*", Elia comments that it is the song of victory after a long and exhausting battle.

### **A one-way journey**

When his brother Amleto moved to Switzerland, their mother—Mrs. Emma Limoni—was left alone in the Apennines: therefore, Don Elia, in full agreement with his superiors, would dedicate his vacations to her every year. When he returned home, he helped his mother but—as a priest—he primarily made himself available in local pastoral work, assisting Mons. Mellini.

In agreement with the superiors and particularly with the Inspector, Don Francesco Rastello, Don Elia returned to Salvaro in the summer of 1944: that year he hoped to evacuate his mother from an area where, at a short distance, Allied forces, partisans, and Nazi-fascist troops defined a situation of particular risk. Don Elia was aware of the danger he faced leaving his Treviglio to go to Salvaro, and a confrere, Don Giuseppe Bertolli SDB, recalls: "As I said goodbye to him, I told him that a journey like his could also be without return; I also asked him, of course jokingly, what he would leave me if he did not return; he replied in my same tone that he would leave me his books...; then I never saw him again." Don Elia was already aware that he was heading towards "the eye of the storm" and did not seek a form of protection in the Salesian house (where he could easily have stayed): "The last memory I have of him dates back to the summer of 1944, when, during the war, the Community began to dissolve; I still hear my words that kindly addressed him, almost jokingly, reminding him that he, in those dark times we were about to face, should feel privileged, as a white cross had been drawn on the roof of the Institute and no one would have the courage to bomb it. However, he, like a prophet, replied to me to be very careful because during the holidays I might read in the newspapers that Don Elia Comini had heroically died in the fulfillment of his duty." "The impression of the danger he was exposing himself to was vivid in everyone",

commented a confrere.

Along the journey to Salvaro, Don Comini stopped in Modena, where he sustained a serious injury to his leg: according to one account, he interposed himself between a vehicle and a passerby, thus averting a more serious accident; according to another, he helped a gentleman push a cart. In any case, he helped his neighbor. Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote: "When a madman drives his car onto the sidewalk, I cannot, as a pastor, be content to bury the dead and console the families. I must, if I find myself in that place, jump and grab the driver at the wheel."

The episode in Modena expresses, in this sense, an attitude of Don Elia that would emerge even more in Salvaro in the following months: to interpose, mediate, rush in personally, expose his life for his brothers, always aware of the risk this entails and serenely willing to pay the consequences.

### **A pastor on the front line**

Limping, he arrived in Salvaro at sunset on June 24, 1944, leaning on a cane as best he could: an unusual instrument for a 34-year-old young man! He found the rectory transformed: Mons. Mellini was hosting dozens of people, belonging to families of evacuees; moreover, the 5 Ancelle del Sacro Cuore sisters, responsible for the nursery, including Sister Alberta Taccini. Elderly, tired, and shaken by the war events, that summer Mons. Fidenzio Mellini struggled to make decisions; he had become more fragile and uncertain. Don Elia, who had known him since childhood, began to help him in everything and took a bit of control of the situation. The injury to his leg also prevented him from evacuating his mother: Don Elia remained in Salvaro, and when he could walk well again, the changed circumstances and the growing pastoral needs would ensure that he stayed there.

Don Elia revitalized the pastoral work, followed catechism, and took care of the orphans abandoned to themselves. He also welcomed the evacuees, encouraged the



fearful, and moderated the reckless. Don Elia's presence became a unifying force, a good sign in those dramatic moments when human relationships were torn apart by suspicion and opposition. He put his organizational skills and practical intelligence, honed over years of Salesian life, at the service of many people. He wrote to his brother Amleto: "Certainly, these are dramatic moments, and worse ones are foreseen. We hope everything in the grace of God and in the protection of the Madonna, whom you must invoke for us. I hope to be able to send you more news."

The Germans of the Wehrmacht were stationed in the area, and on the heights, there was the partisan brigade "Stella Rossa." Don Elia Comini remained a figure estranged from any claims or partisanship: he was a priest and asserted calls for prudence and pacification. He told the partisans: "Boys, watch what you do, because you ruin the population...," exposing it to reprisals. They respected him, and in July and September 1944, they requested Masses in the parish church of Salvaro. Don Elia accepted, bringing down the partisans and celebrating without hiding, instead preferring not to go up to the partisan area and, as he would always do that summer, to stay in Salvaro or nearby areas, without hiding or slipping into "ambiguous" attitudes in the eyes of the Nazi-fascists.

On July 27, Don Elia Comini wrote the last lines of his Spiritual Diary: "July 27: I find myself right in the middle of the war. I long for my confreres and my home in Treviglio; if I could, I would return tomorrow."

From July 20, he shared a priestly fraternity with Father Martino Capelli, a Dehonian, born on September 20, 1912, in Nembro in the Bergamo area, and already a teacher of Sacred Scripture in Bologna, also a guest of Mons. Mellini and helping with the pastoral work.

Elia and Martino are two scholars of ancient languages who now have to attend to more practical and material matters. The rectory of Mons. Mellini becomes what Mons. Luciano Gherardi later called "the community of the ark," a place that welcomes to save. Father Martino was a

religious who became passionate when he heard about the Mexican martyrs and wished to be a missionary in China. Elia, since he was young, has been pursued by a strange awareness of "having to die," and by the age of 17, he had already written: "The thought that I must die always persists in me! – Who knows?! Let us act like the faithful servant: always prepared for the call, to 'render account' of the management."

On July 24, Don Elia begins catechism for the children in preparation for their First Communions, scheduled for July 30. On the 25th, a baby girl is born in the baptismal font (all spaces, from the sacristy to the chicken coop, were overflowing) and a pink bow is hung.

Throughout August 1944, soldiers of the Wehrmacht are stationed at the rectory of Mons. Mellini and in the space in front. Among Germans, displaced persons, and consecrated individuals... the tension could have exploded at any moment: Don Elia mediates and prevents even in small matters, for example, acting as a "buffer" between the too-loud volume of the Germans' radio and the now too-short patience of Mons. Mellini. There was also some praying of the Rosary together. Don Angelo Carboni confirms: "In the constant effort to comfort Monsignore, Don Elia worked hard against the resistance of a company of Germans who, having settled in Salvaro on August 1, wanted to occupy various areas of the Rectory, taking away all freedom and comfort from the families and displaced persons hosted there. Once the Germans were settled in Monsignore's archive, they again disturbed, occupying a good part of the church square with their vehicles; with even gentler manners and persuasive words, Don Elia also obtained this other liberation to comfort Monsignore, who the oppression of the struggle had forced to rest." In those weeks, the Salesian priest is firm in protecting Mons. Mellini's right to move with a certain ease in his own home – as well as that of the displaced persons not to be removed from the rectory –: however, he recognizes some needs of the Wehrmacht men, which attracts their goodwill towards Mons. Mellini, whom the German soldiers will learn to

call the good pastor. From the Germans, Don Elia obtains food for the displaced persons. Moreover, he sings to calm the children and tells stories from the life of Don Bosco. In a summer marked by killings and reprisals, with Don Elia, some civilians even manage to go listen to a bit of music, evidently broadcast from the Germans' device, and to communicate with the soldiers through brief gestures. Don Rino Germani sdb, Vice-Postulator of the Cause, states: "Between the two warring forces, the tireless and mediating work of the Servant of God intervenes. When necessary, he presents himself to the German Command and, with politeness and preparation, manages to win the esteem of some officers. Thus, many times he succeeds in avoiding reprisals, looting, and mourning."

With the rectory freed from the fixed presence of the Wehrmacht on September 1, 1944 – "On September 1, the Germans left the Salvaro area free, only a few remained for a few more days in the Fabbri house" – life in Salvaro can take a breath of relief. Don Elia Comini continues in his apostolic initiatives, assisted by the other priests and the nuns.

Meanwhile, however, Father Martino accepts some invitations to preach elsewhere and goes up into the mountains, where his light hair gets him into big trouble with the partisans who suspect him of being German, while Don Elia remains essentially stationary. On September 8, he writes to the Salesian director of the House of Treviglio: "I leave you to imagine our state of mind in these moments. We have gone through very dark and dramatic days. [...] My thoughts are always with you and with the dear confreres there. I feel a deep nostalgia [...]"

From the 11th, he preaches the Exercises to the Sisters on the theme of the Last Things, religious vows, and the life of the Lord Jesus.

The entire population – declared a consecrated person – loved Don Elia, also because he did not hesitate to spend himself for everyone, at every moment; he did not only ask people to pray, but offered them a valid example with his piety and the little apostolate that, given the circumstances,

was possible to exercise.

The experience of the Exercises gives a different dynamic to the entire week and involves both consecrated and lay people. In the evening, in fact, Don Elia gathers 80-90 people: he tried to ease the tension with a bit of cheerfulness, good examples, and charity. During those months, both he and Father Martino, along with other priests, first among them Don Giovanni Fornasini, were on the front lines in many works of charity.

### **The massacre of Montesole**

The most brutal and largest massacre carried out by the Nazi SS in Europe during the war of 1939-45 was that which took place around Monte Sole, in the territories of Marzabotto, Grizzana Morandi, and Monzuno, although it is commonly known as the "massacre of Marzabotto."

Between September 29 and October 5, 1944, there were 770 casualties, but overall the victims of Germans and fascists, from the spring of 1944 to liberation, were 955, distributed across 115 different locations within a vast territory that includes the municipalities of Marzabotto, Grizzana, and Monzuno and some portions of the surrounding territories. Of these, 216 were children, 316 were women, 142 were elderly, 138 were recognized partisans, and five were priests, whose fault in the eyes of the Germans was being close, with prayer and material help, to the entire population of Monte Sole during the tragic months of war and military occupation. Along with Don Elia Comini, a Salesian, and Father Martino Capelli, a Dehonian, three priests from the Archdiocese of Bologna were also killed during those tragic days: Don Ubaldo Marchioni, Don Ferdinando Casagrande, and Don Giovanni Fornasini. The cause for beatification and canonization is underway for all five. Don Giovanni, the "Angel of Marzabotto," fell on October 13, 1944. He was twenty-nine years old, and his body remained unburied until 1945, when it was found heavily mutilated; he was beatified on September 26, 2021. Don Ubaldo died on September 29, shot by a

machine gun on the altar step of his church in Casaglia; he was 26 years old and had been ordained a priest two years earlier. The German soldiers found him and the community engaged in the prayer of the rosary. He was killed there, at the foot of the altar. The others – more than 70 – in the nearby cemetery. Don Ferdinando was killed on October 9, shot in the back of the neck, along with his sister Giulia; he was 26 years old.

### **From the Wehrmacht to the SS**

On September 25, the Wehrmacht leaves the area and hands over command to the SS of the 16th Battalion of the 16th Armored Division “Reichsführer – SS,” a division that includes SS elements “Totenkopf – Death’s Head” and was preceded by a trail of blood, having been present at Sant’Anna di Stazzema (Lucca) on August 12, 1944; at San Terenzo Monti (Massa-Carrara, in Lunigiana) on the 17th of that month; at Vinca and surroundings (Massa-Carrara, in Lunigiana at the foot of the Apuan Alps) from August 24 to 27.

On September 25, the SS establish the “High Command” in Sibano. On September 26, they move to Salvaro, where Don Elia is also present: an area *outside* the immediate influence of partisans. The harshness of the commanders in pursuing total contempt for human life, the habit of lying about the fate of civilians, and the paramilitary structure – which willingly resorted to “scorched earth” techniques, in disregard of any code of war or legitimacy of orders given from above – made it a death squad that left nothing intact in its wake. Some had received training explicitly focused on concentration and extermination, aimed at: the suppression of life, for ideological purposes; hatred towards those who professed the Jewish-Christian faith; contempt for the small, the poor, the elderly, and the weak; persecution of those who opposed the aberrations of National Socialism. There was a veritable catechism – anti-Christian and anti-Catholic – of which the young SS were imbued.

“When one thinks that the Nazi youth was formed in

the contempt for the human personality of Jews and other 'non-chosen' races, in the fanatical cult of an alleged absolute national superiority, in the myth of creative violence and of the 'new weapons' bringing justice to the world, one understands where the roots of the aberrations lay, made easier by the atmosphere of war and the fear of a disappointing defeat."

Don Elia Comini – with Father Capelli – rushes to comfort, reassure, and exhort. He decides to welcome primarily the survivors of families in which the Germans had killed in retaliation. In doing so, he removes the survivors from the danger of finding death shortly after, but above all, he tears them – at least to the extent possible – from that spiral of loneliness, despair, and loss of the will to live that could have translated into a desire for death. He also manages to speak to the Germans and, on at least one occasion, to dissuade the SS from their intention, making them pass by and thus being able to subsequently warn the refugees to come out of hiding.

The Vice-Postulator Don Rino Germani sdb wrote: "Don Elia arrives. He reassures them. He tells them to come out because the Germans have left. He speaks with the Germans and makes them go on."

Paolo Calanchi, a man whose conscience reproaches him nothing and who makes the mistake of not fleeing, is also killed. It is still Don Elia who rushes, before the flames attack his body, trying at least to honor his remains, having not arrived in time to save his life: "The body of Paolino is saved from the flames by Don Elia who, at the risk of his life, collects him and transports him with a cart to the Church of Salvaro."

The daughter of Paolo Calanchi testified: "My father was a good and honest man ['in times of ration cards and famine, he gave bread to those who had none'] and had refused to flee, feeling at peace with everyone. He was killed by the Germans, shot, in retaliation; later, the house was also set on fire, but my father's body had been saved from the

flames by Don Comini, who, at the risk of his own life, had collected him and transported him with a cart to the Church of Salvaro, where, in a coffin he built with spare planks, he was buried in the cemetery. Thus, thanks to the courage of Don Comini and, very likely, also of Father Martino, after the war, my mother and I were able to find and have our dear one's coffin transported to the cemetery of Vergato, alongside that of my brother Gianluigi, who died 40 days later while crossing the front."

Once, Don Elia had said of the Wehrmacht: "We must also love these Germans who come to disturb us." "He loved everyone without preference." Don Elia's ministry was very precious for Salvaro and many displaced persons during those days. Witnesses have stated: "Don Elia was our fortune because we had a parish priest who was too old and weak. The entire population knew that Don Elia had this interest in us; Don Elia helped everyone. One could say that we saw him every day. He said Mass, but then he was often on the church steps watching: the Germans were down, towards the Reno; the partisans were coming from the mountain, towards the Creda. Once, for example, (a few days before the 26th) the partisans came. We were coming out of the Church of Salvaro, and there were the partisans there, all armed; and Don Elia urged them so much to leave, to avoid trouble. They listened to him and left. Probably, if it hadn't been for him, what happened afterward would have happened much earlier"; "As far as I know, Don Elia was the soul of the situation, as with his personality he knew how to keep many things in hand that were of vital importance in those dramatic moments."

Although he was a young priest, Don Elia Comini was reliable. This reliability, combined with a deep rectitude, had accompanied him for a long time, even as a cleric, as evidenced by a testimony: "I had him for four years at the Rota, from 1931 to 1935, and, although still a cleric, **he gave me help that I would have found it hard to get from any other older confrere.**"

## **The triduum of passion**

The situation, however, deteriorates after a few days, on the morning of September 29, when the SS carry out a terrible massacre in the locality "Creda." The signal for the start of the massacre is a white rocket and a red one in the air: they begin to shoot, the machine guns hit the victims, barricaded against a porch and practically without a way out. Hand grenades are then thrown, some incendiary, and the barn – where some had managed to find refuge – catches fire. A few men, seizing a moment of distraction from the SS in that hell, rush down towards the woods. Attilio Comastri, injured, is saved because the lifeless body of his wife Ines Gandolfi shielded him: he will wander for days, in shock, until he manages to cross the front and save his life; he had lost, in addition to his wife, his sister Marcellina and his two-year-old daughter Bianca. Carlo Cardi also manages to save himself, but his family is exterminated: Walter Cardi was only 14 days old, he was the youngest victim of the Monte Sole massacre. Mario Lippi, one of the survivors, attests: "I don't even know how I miraculously saved myself, given that of the 82 people gathered under the porch, 70 were killed [69, according to the official reconstruction]. I remember that besides the fire from the machine guns, the Germans also threw hand grenades at us, and I believe that some shrapnel from these slightly injured me in the right side, in the back, and in the right arm. I, along with seven other people, took advantage of the fact that on [one] side of the porch there was a small door leading to the street, and I ran away towards the woods. The Germans, seeing us flee, shot at us, killing one of us named Gandolfi Emilio. I specify that among the 82 people gathered under the aforementioned porch, there were also about twenty children, two of whom were in swaddling clothes, in the arms of their respective mothers, and about twenty women."

In Creda, there are 21 children under 11 years old, some very small; 24 women (including one teenager); almost 20 "elderly." Among the most affected families are the Cardi (7 people), the Gandolfi (9 people), the Lolli (5



people), and the Macchelli (6 people).

From the rectory of Mons. Mellini, looking up, at a certain point, smoke is seen: but it is early morning, Creda remains hidden from view, and the woods muffles the sounds. In the parish that day – September 29, the feast of the Archangels – three Masses are celebrated, in immediate succession: that of Mons. Mellini; that of Father Capelli, who then goes to bring Extreme Unction in the locality “Casellina”; that of Don Comini. And it is then that the drama knocks at the door: “Ferdinando Castori, who also escaped the massacre, arrived at the Church of Salvaro smeared with blood like a butcher and went to hide inside the spire of the bell tower.” Around 8, a distraught man arrives at the rectory: he looked “like a monster for his terrifying appearance,” says Sister Alberta Taccini. He asks for help for the wounded. About seventy people are dead or dying amid terrible tortures. Don Elia, in a few moments, has the clarity to hide 60/70 men in the sacristy, pushing an old wardrobe against the door that left the threshold visible from below, but was nonetheless the only hope of salvation: “It was then that Don Elia, he himself, had the idea to hide the men next to the sacristy, then putting a wardrobe in front of the door (one or two people who were in Monsignore’s house helped him). The idea was Don Elia’s; but everyone was against the fact that it was Don Elia who did that work... He wanted it. The others said: ‘And what if they discover us?’” Another account: “Don Elia managed to hide about sixty men in a room adjacent to the sacristy and pushed an old wardrobe against the door. Meanwhile, the crackle of machine guns and the desperate screams of people came from the nearby houses. Don Elia had the strength to begin the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the last of his life. He had not yet finished when a terrified and breathless young man from the locality ‘Creda’ arrived asking for help because the SS had surrounded a house and arrested sixty-nine people, men, women, and children.”

“Still in sacred vestments, **prostrated at the altar, immersed in prayer**, he invokes for all the help of the

Sacred Heart, the intercession of Mary Help of Christians, St. John Bosco, and St. Michael the Archangel. Then, with a brief examination of conscience, reciting the act of sorrow three times, he prepares them for death. He commends all those people to the care of the sisters and to the Superior to lead the prayer strongly so that the faithful may find in it the comfort they need."

Regarding Don Elia and Father Martino, who returned shortly after, "some dimensions of a priestly life spent consciously for others until the last moment are evident: their death was a prolongation in the gift of life of the Mass celebrated until the last day." Their choice had "distant roots, in the decision to do good even if it were the last hour, even willing to martyrdom": "Many people came to seek help in the parish, and unbeknownst to the parish priest, Don Elia and Father Martino tried to hide as many people as possible; then, ensuring that they were somehow assisted, they rushed to the site of the massacres to bring help to the most unfortunate; even Mons. Mellini did not realize this and continued to look for the two priests to get help to receive all those people" ("We are certain that none of them was a partisan or had been with the partisans").

In those moments, Don Elia demonstrates great clarity, which translates into both organizational spirit and the awareness of putting his own life at risk: "In light of all this, and Don Elia knew it well, we cannot therefore seek that charity which leads to the attempt to help others, but rather that type of charity (which was the same as Christ's) that leads **to participating fully in the suffering of others**, not even fearing death as its ultimate manifestation. The fact that his choice was **lucid and well-reasoned** is also demonstrated by the organizational spirit he manifested until just a few minutes before his death, trying promptly and intelligently to hide as many people as possible in the hidden rooms of the rectory; then the news of the Creda and, after fraternal charity, heroic charity."

One thing is certain: if Don Elia had hidden with

all the other men or even just stayed next to Mons. Mellini, he would have had nothing to fear. Instead, Don Elia and Father Martino took the stole, the holy oils, and a container with some consecrated Hosts: "They then set off for the mountain, armed with the stole and the oil of the sick": "When Don Elia returned from having gone to Monsignore, **he took the Ciborium with the Hosts** and the Holy Oil and turned to us: that face again! It was so pale that he looked like someone already dead. And he said: 'Pray, pray for me, because I have a mission to fulfill.' 'Pray for me, do not leave me alone!' 'We are priests and we must go and we must do our duty.' **'Let us go to bring the Lord to our brothers.'**

Up at the Creda, there are many people dying in agony: they must hurry, bless, and – if possible – try to intercede regarding the SS.

Mrs. Massimina [Zappoli], also a witness in the military investigation in Bologna, recalls: "Despite the prayers of all of us, they quickly celebrated the Eucharist and, driven only by the hope of being able to do something for the victims of such ferocity, at least with a spiritual comfort, they **took the Blessed Sacrament and ran towards the Creda**. I remember that while Don Elia, already launched in his run, passed by me in the kitchen, **I clung to him in a last attempt to dissuade him**, saying that we would be left at the mercy of ourselves; he made it clear that, as serious as our situation was, there were those who were worse off than us and it was from them that they had to go."

He is unyielding and refuses, as Mons. Mellini later suggested, to delay the ascent to the Creda when the Germans had left: "It was [therefore] a passion, before being bloody, [...] of the heart, the passion of the spirit. In those times, everyone was terrified by everything and everyone: there was no longer trust in anyone: anyone could be a decisive enemy for one's life. When the two priests realized that someone truly needed them, they had no hesitation in deciding what to do [...] and above all they did **not resort to what was the immediate decision for everyone, that is, to find**

**a hiding place, to try to cover themselves and to be out of the fray.** The two priests, on the other hand, went right in, consciously, knowing that their lives were 99% at risk; and they went in to be truly priests: that is, to assist and to comfort; to also provide the service of the Sacraments, therefore of prayer, of the comfort that faith and religion offer.”

One person said: “Don Elia, for us, was already a saint. **If he had been a normal person [...] he would have hidden too, behind the wardrobe, like all the others.**”

With the men hidden, it is the women who try to hold back the priests, in an extreme attempt to save their lives. The scene is both frantic and very eloquent: “Lidia Macchi [...] and other women tried to prevent them from leaving, they tried to hold them by the cassock, they chased them, they called out loudly for them to come back: driven by an inner force that is the ardor of charity and missionary solicitude, they were now decisively walking towards the Creda bringing religious comforts.”

One of them recalls: “I hugged them, I held them firmly by the arms, saying and pleading: – Don’t go! – Don’t go!”

And Lidia Marchi adds: “I was pulling Father Martino by the robe and holding him back [...] but both priests kept repeating: – We must go; the Lord is calling us.”

“We must fulfill our duty. And [Don Elia and Father Martino,] like Jesus, went to meet a marked fate.”

“The decision to go to the Creda was made by the two priests out **of pure pastoral spirit; despite everyone trying to dissuade them**, they wanted to go driven by the hope of being able to save someone among those who were at the mercy of the soldiers’ rage.”

At the Creda, almost certainly, they never arrived. Captured, according to a witness, near a “little pillar,” just outside the parish’s field of vision, Don Elia and Father Martino were later seen loaded with ammunition, at the head of those rounded up, or still alone, tied up, with

chains, near a tree while there was no battle going on and the SS were eating. Don Elia urged a woman to run away, not to stop to avoid being killed: "Anna, for charity, run, run."

"They were loaded and bent under the weight of many heavy boxes that wrapped around their bodies from front to back. Their backs curved so much that their noses were almost touching the ground."

"Sitting on the ground [...] very sweaty and tired, with ammunition on their backs."

"Arrested, they are forced to carry ammunition up and down the mountain, witnesses of unheard-of violence."

"[The SS make them] go up and down the mountain several times, under their escort, and also committing, under the eyes of the two victims, the most gruesome acts of violence."

Where are the stole, the holy oils, and above all the Blessed Sacrament now? There is no trace of them left. Far from prying eyes, the SS forcibly stripped the priests of them, getting rid of that Treasure of which nothing would ever be found again.

**Towards the evening of September 29, 1944**, they were taken with many other men (rounded up and not for reprisal or because they were pro-partisan, as the sources show), to the house "of the Birocciai" in Pioppe di Salvaro. Later, they, divided, would have very different fates: few would be released after a series of interrogations. The majority, deemed fit for work, would be sent to forced labor camps and could – later – return to their families. Those deemed unfit, for mere age criteria (cf. concentration camps) or health (young, but injured or pretending to be sick hoping to save themselves) would be killed on the evening of October 1 at the "Botte" of the Canapiera in Pioppe di Salvaro, now a ruin because it had been bombed by the Allies days before.

Don Elia and Father Martino – who were interrogated – were able to move until the last moment in the house and receive visits. Don Elia interceded for everyone and a very troubled young man fell asleep on his knees: in one of them, Don Elia

received the Breviary, so dear to him, which he wanted to keep with him until the last moments. Today, careful historical research through documentary sources, supported by the most recent historiography from a secular perspective, has shown how no attempt to free Don Elia, made by Cavalier Emilio Veggetti, ever succeeded, and how Don Elia and Father Martino were never truly considered or at least treated as “spies.”

## **The Holocaust**

Finally, they were included, although young (34 and 32 years old), in the group of the unfit and executed with them. They lived those last moments praying, making others pray, having absolved each other and giving every possible comfort of faith. Don Elia managed to transform the macabre procession of the condemned up to a walkway in front of the canapiera reservoir, where they would be killed, into a choral act of entrustment, holding the Breviary open in his hand for as long as he could (then, it is said, a German violently struck his hands and the Breviary fell into the reservoir) and above all singing the Litanies. When the fire was opened, Don Elia Comini saved a man because he shielded him with his own body and shouted “Pity.” Father Martino instead invoked “Forgiveness,” struggling to rise in the reservoir, among the dead or dying companions, and tracing the sign of the Cross just moments before dying himself, due to a huge wound. The SS wanted to ensure that no one survived by throwing some hand grenades. In the following days, given the impossibility of recovering the bodies immersed in water and mud due to heavy rains (the women tried, but even Don Fornasini could not succeed), a man opened the grates and the impetuous current of the Reno River carried everything away. Nothing was ever found of them: consummatum est!

They had shown themselves willing “even to martyrdom, even if in the eyes of men it seems foolish to **refuse one’s own salvation to give a miserable relief to those already destined for death.**” Mons. Benito Cocchi in September 1977 in Salvaro said: “Well, here before the Lord we say that

our preference goes to these gestures, to these people, to those who **pay personally**: to those who at a time when only weapons, strength, and violence mattered, when a house, the life of a child, an entire family were valued as nothing, knew how to perform gestures that have no voice in the war accounts, but which are true treasures of humanity, resistance, and an alternative to violence; to those who in this way were laying **roots for a more humane society and coexistence.**"

In this sense, "The martyrdom of the priests constitutes the fruit of their conscious choice to share the fate of the flock until the ultimate sacrifice, when the efforts of mediation between the population and the occupiers, long pursued, lose all possibility of success."

Don Elia Comini had been clear about his fate, saying – already in the early stages of detention –: "To do good we find ourselves in so much suffering"; "It was Don Elia who, pointing to the sky, greeted with tear-filled eyes." "Elia leaned out and said to me: 'Go to Bologna, to the Cardinal, and tell him where we are.' I replied: 'How can I go to Bologna?' [...] Meanwhile, the soldiers were pushing me with the rifle barrel. Don Elia greeted me saying: 'We will see each other in paradise!' I shouted: 'No, no, don't say that.' He replied, sad and resigned: 'We will see each other in Paradise.'"

With Don Bosco...: "[I] await you all in Paradise"!

It was the evening of October 1, the beginning of the month dedicated to the Rosary and Missions.

In the years of his early youth, Elia Comini had said to God: "Lord, **prepare me to be the least unworthy to be an acceptable victim**" ("Diary" 1929); "Lord, [...] **receive me as a victim of atonement**" (1929); "**I would like to be a victim of holocaust**" (1931). "[To Jesus] I asked for death rather than failing in my priestly vocation and in my **heroic love for souls**" (1935).

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# **“The Roman Stations”. A millenary tradition**

*The “Roman Stations” are an ancient liturgical tradition that, during Lent and the first week of Easter, associates each day with a specific church in Rome, within a pilgrimage journey. The term “statio” (from the Latin stare, to stop) refers to the idea of a communal pause for prayer and celebration. In past centuries, the Pope and the faithful would move in procession from the church called “collecta” to the station of the day, where the Eucharist was celebrated. This rite, while having roots in the early centuries of Christianity, retains its vitality even today, when the indication of the station church still appears in liturgical books. It is a true pilgrimage among the basilicas and shrines of the Eternal City that can be undertaken in this jubilee year not only as a path of conversion but also as a testimony of faith.*

## **Origin and diffusion**

The origins of the Roman Stations date back at least to the 3rd Century, when the Christian community was still undergoing persecutions. The earliest testimonies refer to Pope Fabian (236-250) who would visit places of worship established near the catacombs or the burial sites of martyrs, distributing to the needy what the faithful offered as alms and celebrating the Eucharist. This custom strengthened in the 4th Century, with the freedom of worship granted by Constantine: large basilicas were built, and the faithful began to gather on specific days to celebrate Mass at sites linked to the memory of the saints. Over time, the itinerary took on a more organic character, creating a true calendar of stations that touched on the various districts of Rome. The communal dimension – with the presence of the bishop, clergy, and people – thus



became a visible sign of communion and testimony of faith.

It was Pope Gregory the Great (590-604) who gave structure and regularity to the use of the Stations, especially during Lent. He established a calendar that, day by day, assigned a specific church for the main celebration. His reform did not stem from nothing, rather organized an already existing practice. Gregory wanted the procession to start from a minor church (*collecta*) and conclude in a more solemn place (*statio*), where the people, united with the Pope, celebrated the penitential rites and the Eucharist. It was a way to prepare for Easter. The very journey indicated the earthly pilgrimage towards eternity, the churches with their sacred architecture and works of art served a pedagogical function in an era when not everyone could read or access books. The relics of the martyrs preserved in those churches testified to the faith lived to the point of giving life, and their intercession brought graces to those who requested them. The celebration of the Sacrifice of the Mass sanctified the participating faithful.

During the Middle Ages, the practice of the Roman Stations spread more and more, becoming not only an ecclesial event but also a significant social phenomenon. The faithful, in fact, who came from different regions of Italy and Europe, joined the Romans to take part in these liturgical gatherings.

### **Structure of the station celebration**

The characteristic element of these celebrations was the procession. In the morning, the faithful gathered in the church of the *collecta*, where, after a brief moment of prayer, they would set off in procession towards the station church, singing litanies and penitential hymns. Upon arrival, the Pope or the appointed prelate would preside over the Mass, with readings and prayers specific to the day. The use of litanies had a strong spiritual and pedagogical sense: while physically walking through the streets, prayers were offered for the needs of the Church and the world, invoking the saints of Rome

and all of Christianity. The celebration culminated in the Eucharist, giving this “pause” a sacramental value and ecclesial communion.

Lent became the privileged time for the Stations, starting from Ash Wednesday until Holy Saturday or, according to some customs, until the second Sunday after Easter. Each day was marked by a designated church, often chosen for the presence of important relics or for its particular history. Notable examples include *Santa Sabina on the Aventine*, where the Ash Wednesday rite usually begins, and *Santa Croce in Gerusalemme*, linked to the veneration of the relics of the Cross of Christ, a traditional destination for Good Friday. Participating in the Lenten Stations means entering a daily pilgrimage that unites the faithful in a path of penance and conversion, supported by devotion to the martyrs and saints. Each church tells a page of history, offering images, mosaics, and architectures that communicate the evangelical message in a visual form.

One of the most significant features of this tradition is the connection with the martyrs of the Church of Rome. During the period of persecutions, many Christians died for their faith. In the Constantinian and subsequent eras, basilicas or chapels were erected over their tombs. Celebrating a *statio* in these places meant recalling the testimony of those who had given their lives for Christ, reinforcing the belief that the Church is built also on the blood of the martyrs. Each liturgical visit thus became an act of communion between the faithful of yesterday and those of today, united by the Sacrament of the Eucharist. This “pilgrimage to the memory” connected the Lenten journey to a history of faith passed down from generation to generation.

### **From decline to rediscovery**

In the Middle Ages and the following centuries, the practice of the Stations experienced alternating fortunes. Sometimes, due to epidemics, invasions, or unstable political situations,

it was moderated or suspended. However, liturgical books continued to indicate the Station Churches for each day, a sign that the Church at least preserved the symbolic memory of them. With the Tridentine liturgical reform (16th century), the centrality of the Pope in such celebrations became less frequent, but the practice of citing the Station Church remained in official texts. With the renewed interest in Christian history and archaeology, the station tradition was rediscovered and proposed as a path of spiritual formation. In modern times, especially starting from Leo XIII (1878-1903) and subsequently with the popes of the 20th Century, there has been a growing interest in recovering this tradition. Various religious orders and lay associations have begun to promote the rediscovery of the “pilgrimage of the stations,” organising communal moments of prayer and catechesis in the designated churches.

Today, in an era characterised by frenzy and speed, the *statio* proposes rediscovering the dimension of “pausing”: stopping to pray, contemplate, listen, be silent, and meet the Lord. Lent is by definition a time of conversion, of more intense prayer, and of charity towards others. Undertaking a journey among the churches of Rome, even just on some significant days, can help the faithful rediscover the meaning of a penance lived not as a renunciation in itself but as an opening to the mystery of Christ.

Even today, in the Roman Calendar, the Station Church is indicated for each day. This recalls the unity of the people of God, gathered around the successor of Peter, and the memory of the saints who have spent their lives for the Gospel. Anyone who participates in these liturgies – even occasionally – discovers a city that is not just an open-air museum but a place where faith has been expressed in an original and lasting way.

Those who wish to rediscover the profound meaning of Lent and Easter can thus allow themselves to be guided by the station

itinerary, joining their voice to that of the Christians of yesterday and of today in the great chorus that leads to the Easter light.

We present below the itinerary of the Roman Stations, accompanied by the list of churches and their geographical location. It is important to note that the order of the list remains unchanged each year. Only the start date of Lent varies, and consequently, the subsequent dates. We wish a fruitful pilgrimage to those who wish to undertake, even if only in part, this journey in the Jubilee year.

			<b>Roman Station</b>	<b>Saints and Martyrs with Relics or Preserved Remains</b>
1	<a href="#">03.05</a>	Wed	<a href="#">St. Sabina on the Aventine Hill</a>	Saint <a href="#">Sabina</a> and Saint Serapia, martyr (d. circa 126 AD); Saints Alexander, Evens and Theodulus, martyrs
2	<a href="#">03.06</a>	Thurs	<a href="#">St. George at the Velabrum</a>	Saint <a href="#">George</a> , martyr (d. 303)
3	<a href="#">03.07</a>	Fri	<a href="#">Sts. John and Paul on the Caelian Hill</a>	Saints <a href="#">John and Paul</a> , martyrs (d. 362); Saint <a href="#">Paul of the Cross</a> (d. 1775), Founder of the Congregation of the Passionists of Jesus Christ (the Passionists)
4	<a href="#">03.08</a>	Sat	<a href="#">St. Augustine in Camp Martius</a>	Saint <a href="#">Monica</a> (d. 387), mother of Saint <a href="#">Augustine</a> ; relics of Saint Augustine
5	<a href="#">03.09</a>	Sun	<a href="#">St. John Lateran</a>	The heads of Saint <a href="#">Peter</a> and Saint <a href="#">Paul</a> : these relics are preserved in silver busts placed above the papal altar, visible through a gilded grille; the <a href="#">Holy Stairs</a> (in the nearby Chapel of the Sancta Sanctorum); the Last Supper Table – the table on which the Last Supper was celebrated, according to tradition (a significant relic located on the altar of the Blessed Sacrament)

6	<a href="#">03.10</a>	Mon	<a href="#">St. Peter in Chains on the Oppian Hill</a>	The chains of Saint Peter; relics attributed to the Seven Maccabean Brothers, figures from the Old Testament venerated as martyrs
7	<a href="#">03.11</a>	Tue	<a href="#">St. Anastasia on the Palatine Hill</a>	Saint <a href="#">Anastasia of Sirmium</a> (d. 304); relics of the Holy Mantle of Saint Joseph; part of the Veil of the Virgin Mary
8	<a href="#">03.12</a>	Wed	<a href="#">St. Mary Major</a>	The Sacred Wood of the Cradle (the manger of the Christ Child); Panniculum (a small piece of cloth, part of the swaddling clothes with which the newborn Jesus was wrapped); Saint <a href="#">Matthew</a> , Apostle (d. 70 or 74); Saint <a href="#">Jerome</a> (d. 420); Saint <a href="#">Pius V</a> , Pope (d. 1572)
9	<a href="#">03.13</a>	Thurs	<a href="#">St. Lawrence in Panisperna</a>	Site of the martyrdom of Saint <a href="#">Lawrence</a> (d. 258); Saint Lawrence, martyr; Saint <a href="#">Crispina</a> , martyr (d. 304); Saint <a href="#">Bridget of Sweden</a> (d. 1373)
10	<a href="#">03.14</a>	Fri	<a href="#">Twelve Holy Apostles at the Trajan Forum</a>	Saint <a href="#">Philip the Apostle</a> (d. 80); Saint <a href="#">James the Less</a> , the Apostle (d. 62); Saints <a href="#">Chrysanthus and Daria</a> , martyrs (d. c. 283)

11	03.15	Sat	<p><a href="#">St. Peter in the Vatican</a></p>	<p>Saint <a href="#">Peter</a> (d. 67); Saint <a href="#">Linus</a> (d. 76); Saint <a href="#">Cletus</a> (d. 92); Saint <a href="#">Evaristus</a> (d. 105); Saint <a href="#">Alexander I</a> (d. 115); Saint <a href="#">Sixtus I</a> (d. 126–128); Saint <a href="#">Telesphorus</a> (d. 136); Saint <a href="#">Hyginus</a> (d. 140); Saint <a href="#">Pius I</a> (d. 155); Saint <a href="#">Anicetus</a> (d. 166); Saint <a href="#">Eleutherius</a> (d. 189); Saint <a href="#">Victor I</a> (d. 199); Saint <a href="#">John Chrysostom</a> (d. 407, relics in the Choir Chapel); Saint <a href="#">Leo I, the Great</a> (d. 461); Saint <a href="#">Simplicius</a> (d. 483); Saint <a href="#">Gelasius I</a> (d. 496); Saint <a href="#">Symmachus</a> (d. 514); Saint <a href="#">Hormisdas</a> (d. 523); Saint <a href="#">John I</a> (d. 526); Saint <a href="#">Felix IV</a> (d. 530); Saint <a href="#">Agapetus I</a> (d. 536); Saint <a href="#">Gregory I, the Great</a> (d. 604); Saint <a href="#">Boniface IV</a> (d. 615); Saint <a href="#">Eugene I</a> (d. 657); Saint <a href="#">Vitalian</a> (d. 672); Saint <a href="#">Agatho</a> (d. 681); Saint <a href="#">Leo II</a> (d. 683); Saint <a href="#">Benedict II</a> (d. 685); Saint <a href="#">Sergius I</a> (d. 701); Saint <a href="#">Gregory II</a> (d. 731); Saint <a href="#">Gregory III</a> (d. 741); Saint <a href="#">Zachary</a> (d. 752); Saint <a href="#">Paul I</a> (d. 767); Saint <a href="#">Leo III</a> (d. 816); Saint <a href="#">Paschal I</a> (d. 824); Saint <a href="#">Leo IV</a> (d. 855); Saint <a href="#">Nicholas I</a> (d. 867); Saint <a href="#">Leo IX</a> (d. 1054); Blessed <a href="#">Urban II</a> (d. 1099); Blessed <a href="#">Innocent XI</a> (d. 1689); Saint <a href="#">Pius X</a> (d. 1914); Saint <a href="#">John XXIII</a> (d. 1963); Saint <a href="#">Paul VI</a> (d. 1978); Blessed <a href="#">John Paul I</a> (d. 1978); Saint <a href="#">John Paul II</a> (d. 2005); a fragment of Saint Andrew's Cross; the lance of Saint Longinus; a fragment of the Cross of Christ</p>
12	03.16	Sun	<p><a href="#">St. Mary in Domnica at Navicella</a></p>	<p>Saint <a href="#">Lawrence</a>, martyr (d. 258); Saint Ciriaca, martyr</p>

13	<a href="#">03.17</a>	Mon	<a href="#">St. Clement in Lateran</a>	<p>Saint <a href="#">Clement I</a>,  Pope and martyr (d. 101); Saint <a href="#">Ignatius of Antioch</a>,  Bishop and martyr (d. c. 110); Saint <a href="#">Cyril</a> (d. 869), Apostle of the Slavs</p>
14	<a href="#">03.18</a>	Tue	<a href="#">St. Balbina on the Aventine</a>	<p>Saint <a href="#">Balbina</a>,  Virgin and Roman martyr (d. 130) already venerated in early Christian times  Saints Felicitissimus and Quirinus (her father) associated with the martyrdom of St. Balbina</p>
15	<a href="#">03.19</a>	Wed	<a href="#">St. Cecilia in Trastevere</a>	<p>Saint <a href="#">Cecilia</a> (d. 230); Saint Valerian, Cecilia's husband, converted to Christianity and martyred (d. 229); Saint Tiburtius, brother of Valerian and companion in martyrdom; Saint Maximus, the soldier or official in charge of the execution of Valerian and Tiburtius, who later converted and was in turn martyred;  Pope <a href="#">Urban I</a> (c. d. 230), who is said to have baptised Cecilia and her husband Valerian</p>
16	<a href="#">03.20</a>	Thurs	<a href="#">St. Mary in Trastevere</a>	<p>Saint <a href="#">Julius I</a>,  Pope (d. 352); Saint <a href="#">Callixtus I</a>,  Pope and martyr (c. d. 222); Saints Florentinus, Corona, Sabinus and Alexander, martyrs</p>
17	<a href="#">03.21</a>	Fri	St. Vitalis in Fovea	<p>Saints <a href="#">Vitalis</a> (d. 304), <a href="#">Valeria</a> (2nd century), <a href="#">Gervasius and Protasius</a> (2nd century)</p>
18	<a href="#">03.22</a>	Sat	<a href="#">Sts. Peter and Marcellinus in Lateran</a>	<p>Saints <a href="#">Marcellinus and Peter</a>,  martyrs (d. 304); Saint Marcia, martyr associated with Saints Marcellinus and Peter</p>

19	<a href="#">03.23</a>	Sun	<a href="#">St. Lawrence Outside the Walls</a>	Saint <a href="#">Lawrence</a> (d. 258); Saint <a href="#">Stephen</a> , Protomartyr (1st century); Saint <a href="#">Hippolytus</a> (3rd century); Saint <a href="#">Justus</a> , martyr (d. 167); Pope Saint <a href="#">Sixtus III</a> (d. 440); Pope Saint <a href="#">Zosimus</a> (d. 418); Blessed <a href="#">Pius IX</a> , Pope (d. 1878)
20	<a href="#">03.24</a>	Mon	<a href="#">St. Mark on the Capitoline</a>	Saint <a href="#">Mark, Evangelist</a> and martyr (1st century); Pope Saint <a href="#">Mark</a> (d. 336); Saints <a href="#">Abdon and Sennen</a> , Persian martyrs (3rd century)
21	<a href="#">03.25</a>	Tue	<a href="#">St. Pudenziana at the Viminal</a>	Saint <a href="#">Pudenziana</a> , martyr (2nd century); Saint <a href="#">Praxedes</a> , his sister (2nd century)
22	<a href="#">03.26</a>	Wed	<a href="#">St. Sixtus (Sts. Nereus and Achilleus)</a>	Saint <a href="#">Sixtus I</a> , Pope (d. 125); Saints <a href="#">Nereus and Achilleus</a> (d. 300); Saint <a href="#">Flavia Domitilla</a> , martyr (1st century)
23	<a href="#">03.27</a>	Thurs	<a href="#">Sts. Cosmas and Damian on the Via Sacra</a>	Saints <a href="#">Cosmas and Damian</a> , physicians and martyrs (d. 303); Saints Antimo and Leonzio, brothers and martyrs
24	<a href="#">03.28</a>	Fri	<a href="#">St. Lawrence in Lucina</a>	The gridiron of Saint Lawrence on which the Saint is said to have been burned alive; a vase containing St. Lawrence's burnt flesh
25	<a href="#">03.29</a>	Sat	<a href="#">St. Susanna at the Baths of Diocletian</a>	Saint <a href="#">Susanna</a> , virgin and martyr (d. 294)
26	<a href="#">03.30</a>	Sun	<a href="#">Holy Cross in Jerusalem</a>	Fragments of the True Cross, part of the Titulus Crucis (the inscription "I.N.R.I."); nails from the Crucifixion and some thorns from the Crown; a fragment of the cross of the Good Thief, Saint <a href="#">Dismas</a> ; the phalanx of Saint <a href="#">Thomas the Apostle</a> (1st century)



27	<a href="#">04.31</a>	Mon	<a href="#">Sts. Four Crowned on the Caelian Hill</a>	Saints <a href="#">Castor</a> , <a href="#">Sinfroniano</a> , <a href="#">Claudius</a> and <a href="#">Nicostratus</a> , martyrs (4th century)
28	<a href="#">04.01</a>	Tue	<a href="#">St. Lawrence in Damaso</a>	Saint <a href="#">Lawrence</a> , martyr (d. 258); Saint <a href="#">Damasus</a> , Pope and martyr (d. 384); Saints Jovinus and Faustinus, martyrs
29	<a href="#">04.02</a>	Wed	<a href="#">St. Paul Outside the Walls</a>	Saint <a href="#">Paul the Apostle</a> (d. 67); the chain of Saint Paul; the staff of Saint Paul
30	<a href="#">04.03</a>	Thurs	<a href="#">Sts. Sylvester and Martin on the Mountains</a>	Saints Artemius, Paulina and Sisinnius, martyrs; Blessed <a href="#">Angelus Paoli</a> (d. 1720)
31	<a href="#">04.04</a>	Fri	<a href="#">St. Eusebius on the Esquiline Hill</a>	Saint <a href="#">Eusebius</a> , presbyter and martyr (d. 353); Saints Orosius and Paulinus, priests and martyrs
32	<a href="#">04.05</a>	Sat	<a href="#">St. Nicholas in Prison</a>	Saint <a href="#">Nicholas of Bari</a> (d. 270); Saints Marcellinus and Faustinus, martyrs (d. 250)
33	<a href="#">04.06</a>	Sun	<a href="#">St. Peter in the Vatican</a>	
34	<a href="#">04.07</a>	Mon	<a href="#">St. Chrysogonus in Trastevere</a>	Saint <a href="#">Chrysogonus</a> , martyr (d. 303); Saint <a href="#">Anastasia</a> , martyr (d. 250); Saint Rufus, martyr (1st century); Blessed <a href="#">Anna Maria Taigi</a> (d. 1837)
35	<a href="#">04.08</a>	Tue	<a href="#">St. Mary on Via Lata</a>	Saint <a href="#">Agapitus</a> , martyr (d. 273); Saints Hippolytus and <a href="#">Darius</a> , martyrs (4th century); a fragment of the True Cross
36	<a href="#">04.09</a>	Wed	<a href="#">St. Marcellus on the Corso</a>	Saint <a href="#">Marcellus I</a> , Pope (d. 309); Saint Digna and Saint Emerita, martyrs
37	<a href="#">04.10</a>	Thurs	<a href="#">St. Apollinaris in Campo Marzio</a>	Saint <a href="#">Apollinaris</a> (2nd century); Saints Eustratius, Bardarius, Eugenius, Orestes and Eusenio, martyrs

38	<a href="#">04.11</a>	Fri	<a href="#">St. Stephen on the Caelian Hill</a>	Saint <a href="#">Stephen</a> , Protomartyr (d. 36); Saints <a href="#">Primus and Felician</a> , martyrs (d. 303); fragments of the True Cross
39	<a href="#">04.12</a>	Sat	<a href="#">St. John at the Latin Gate</a>	Bone fragments or small reliquaries containing parts of the body or personal objects attributed to Saint <a href="#">John the Evangelist</a> (d. 98); Saints <a href="#">Gordianus and Epimachus</a> , martyrs (4th century)
40	<a href="#">04.13</a>	Sun	<a href="#">St. John Lateran</a>	
41	<a href="#">04.14</a>	Mon	<a href="#">St. Praxedes on the Esquiline</a>	Saint <a href="#">Praxedes</a> , martyr (2nd century); Saint Pudens, martyr (2nd century); Saint Victoria, martyr (d. 253); the Column of the Flagellation
42	<a href="#">04.15</a>	Tue	<a href="#">St. Prisca on the Aventine</a>	Saint <a href="#">Prisca</a> , one of the first Christian martyrs (1st century); Saints <a href="#">Aquila and Priscilla</a> , Christian spouses; fragments of the True Cross
43	<a href="#">04.16</a>	Wed	<a href="#">St. Mary Major</a>	
44	<a href="#">04.17</a>	Thurs	<a href="#">St. John Lateran</a>	
45	<a href="#">04.18</a>	Fri	<a href="#">Holy Cross in Jerusalem</a>	
46	<a href="#">04.19</a>	Sat	<a href="#">St. John Lateran</a>	
47	<a href="#">04.20</a>	Sun	<a href="#">St. Mary Major</a>	
48	<a href="#">04.21</a>	Mon	<a href="#">St. Peter in the Vatican</a>	
49	<a href="#">04.22</a>	Tue	<a href="#">St. Paul Outside the Walls</a>	

50	<a href="#">04.23</a>	Wed	<a href="#">St. Lawrence Outside the Walls</a>	Saint <a href="#">Lawrence</a> , martyr (d. 258); Saint <a href="#">Stephen</a> , Protomartyr (d. 36); Saint <a href="#">Sebastian</a> , martyr (d. 288); Saint <a href="#">Francis of Assisi</a> (d. 1226); Pope Saint <a href="#">Zosimus</a> (d. 418), Pope Saint <a href="#">Sixtus III</a> (d. 440), Pope Saint <a href="#">Hilary</a> (d. 468), Pope Saint <a href="#">Damasus II</a> (d. 1048); Blessed <a href="#">Pius IX</a> , Pope (d. 1878); fragments of the True Cross
51	<a href="#">04.24</a>	Thurs	<a href="#">Church of the Twelve Apostles</a>	Saint <a href="#">Philip the Apostle</a> (d. 80); Saint <a href="#">James the Less</a> (d. 62)
52	<a href="#">04.25</a>	Fri	<a href="#">St. Mary ad Martyres (Pantheon)</a>	Saint <a href="#">Longinus</a> , the Roman soldier who pierced the side of Jesus Christ during the Crucifixion (1st century); Saint <a href="#">Bibiana</a> , martyr (d. 362–363); Saint <a href="#">Lucia</a> , martyr (d. 304); Saints Rasus and Anastasius, martyrs; during the consecration of the church in 609 A.D. by Pope Boniface IV, the bones of at least 28 groups of martyrs were transferred here from the Roman cemeteries
53	<a href="#">04.26</a>	Sat	<a href="#">St. John Lateran</a>	
54	<a href="#">04.27</a>	Sun	<a href="#">St. Pancras</a>	Saint <a href="#">Pancras</a> , martyr (d. 304); fragments of the True Cross