 Reading time: 4 min.

Fr Sergio Dall'Antonia, Salesian missionary and founder of the Salesian presence in Romania, ended his earthly pilgrimage in Bacau, Romania, on 21.02.2023, at the age of 83.

Sergio Dall'Antonia was born in Pieve di Soligo (Treviso, Italy), on 11 April 1939. His parents were Sonia and Angelo Lombardi. The family included an older brother, Francesco, and a little sister, Mariella, who died at the age of one. He was baptised on 14 April, receiving the names Sergio and Livio. His mother died when he was seven.

He attended primary school in the village and secondary school at the Salesian school Astori, in Mogliano Veneto, where the family had moved. Thanks to contact with the Salesians, he understood the divine call and at the end of the fifth year of grammar school asked to be a Salesian. He finished his novitiate on 15 August 1954 under the guidance of Fr Vigilio Uguccioni, in Albarè di Costermano, becoming a full Salesian.

After his high school and philosophical studies at Nave (1955-1958) and at Foglizzo (1958-1959), he returned to the Province for his practical training, which he did at Tolmezzo (1959-1961) and then at Pordenone (1961-1962), making his perpetual profession on 13th August 1961.

After his theological studies at Monteortone (1962-1966), concluded with his priestly ordination (02.04.1966) in the Marian Sanctuary of Monteortone, his superiors singled him out as a possible future teacher in the studentate, and so he was sent to Rome, to the Pontifical Salesian University, to study morals (1966-1970). Due to health problems, after his moral studies, he returned to the house in Pordenone (1970-1973) as a catechist and teacher. He thus began to manifest good organisational, artistic and animation skills, which would make him famous.

The Salesian San Luigi house in Gorizia had him for about fifteen years (1973-1986): here he became the soul of the Salesian Youth Tourism Association of Isontino. He organised festivities for young people and parents, art exhibitions, but above all he became the promoter of the famous "Friendship March", in spring, and "Pedalling in

Friendship", in autumn. They would remain in local memory as the only events that in the *Iron Curtain* years allowed people to cross the border into Yugoslavia by merely displaying the event's registration card. These events ended with a hot plate of pastasciutta offered to all participants, Italians and Yugoslavs, by the Army field kitchens housed in the courtyards at San Luigi.

For another decade he returned to Pordenone (1986-1996), always working in the field of education, until the Lord – through his superiors – asked him to go to Romania to open a Salesian presence. It was not easy at 57 to move to an unknown, former Communist, Orthodox-majority country and learn a language that would serve him no other purpose than communicating God's love to young people. However, thanks to his willingness (which characterised him throughout his life) he left and became the founder of two Salesian houses: first in Constanța (1996-2001) and then in Bacău, where he would remain until the end of his earthly pilgrimage.

The memories of those who knew him describe him as a person who spoke little but did a lot, being a great and tireless worker. Always in the midst of the children, he entertained them with intelligent imagination and creativity. In the proclamation of the Christian message, he also entered the world of the Internet with a youthful spirit, running no less than four blogs, pulling from his repertoire for the young "things old and new".

A man of faithful prayer, he prayed the Liturgy of the Hours entirely in front of the tabernacle and loved to meditate on the rosary with his confreres every evening after dinner. He was a great devotee not only of the Holy Eucharist, but also of Our Lady. He gave proof of his faith in visits to nearby Marian shrines and did not miss the feasts of the Blessed Virgin. He was faithful in his fortnightly confession and available as a confessor, appreciated by his confreres, the religious of the area and the faithful.
He leaves a memory as a patriarch, as the "Don Bosco of Romania".

His steadfast faith is also reflected in his spiritual testament, which we reproduce below.

My Jesus, forgive me! May I love you forever!
In the event of my death, I consent to some organs useful for the life of another person being taken from my body, with the consent of my Superior of the Salesian house to which I belong. I willingly give them up as a humble sign of the Charity of

Christ who made himself all things to all people to lead them back to the Father.
I ask forgiveness of my loved ones, my confreres and the young people for the evil done, the bad example set and the good not done or neglected. May the Church accept me in her forgiveness and in her prayer of suffrage. If anyone feels they have offended me in any way, let them know that I forgive them wholeheartedly and for ever.
May Jesus and Mary be my gentle friends for ever. May they accompany me by the hand to the Father in the Holy Spirit, obtaining mercy and forgiveness for me. From Heaven, where I hope to reach by the Infinite Mercy of God, I will love you forever, pray for you and ask every blessing for you from Heaven.
Fr Sergio Dall'Antonia

Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord, and may perpetual light shine upon him. Rest in peace!

We report below his last published video.