

The Venerable FR. GIOVANNI NADIANI

His “spiritual notes” express an extraordinary witness of his truly ascetical and mystical life. From the novitiate, he built his intimate spousal relationship with Christ. Brother Giovanni was truly in love with Jesus in the Eucharist. He lived his life as a Blessed Sacrament Brother in contemplation and service, the two attitudes of his daily Eucharist. He was most faithful to adoration every eighth hour taking his turn in the community, ready even to substitute others who requested this, especially at night. He noted down: “The hour of adoration is an angelic exercise; it is the most necessary thing to refresh at the fountainhead the roots of virtue, to rekindle the warmth of our spirit at this ardent furnace. Adoration is the most delightful experience. The only happiness, the only joy promised to religious. Adoration is my little Mass. With what commitment I must celebrate it! I must prepare every time a victim to offer. I must renew every day the profound adoration of the Virgin at the moment of the Incarnation, her loving thanksgiving, her immolation, and her prayer.” With his passion for the Eucharist, Brother Giovanni used to live an intense spiritual asceticism. At Turin, he asked to go to confession twice a week, and to undertake always new penitential practices: hair shirt, chains around his waist, sleeping on a stray bed. He sought humility: “I will not be able to become an adorer in spirit and truth unless I am humble. Humility is the first stone, the basis of the Eucharistic life.”

Brother Giovanni used to say that he had a great secret throughout his life; it was the favorite theme of his meditations - the secret “to do the Will of God.” “It was the Secret of Jesus taught by his Mother ... When the adversaries would like to induce us to evil, we oppose them with the Will of God that forbids sin; when lukewarmness and inertia distract us from doing good, the thought of the Divine Will that prescribes good works shakes us; when hatred leads us to vengeance, we hinge it on the Will of God that requires forgiveness; when pride eagerly raises its head, we remind it that the Divine Will resists the proud. Against this sovereign and holy Will, all arrows are blunted against this diamond shield, all swords are broken. The Saints direct all their efforts to the Will of God. Father Eymard used to repeat: ‘To see the Divine Will in everything.’ In it relief is felt not only by the soul but also by the body; in the Will of God, there is peace of heart. It is true that there is no security, there is no firmness, there is no tranquillity and peace, there is no wisdom, there is no nobility for a person except in exactly fulfilling, faithfully persevering and loving the Will of God.” And Brother Giovanni proposed in a litanic form “The 33 Secrets contained in the great Secret of Jesus.”

In the community at Turin Brother Giovanni was the porter, sacristan, but above all an assistant in the Office of the publications and dispatch of the magazines, taking care of correspondence from subscribers. At the seminary of Ponteranica he was mainly the infirmarian. He was distinguished for his delicacy and kindness towards each sick person. Very modest, he did not make anyone feel uncomfortable, and everyone allowed themselves to be treated by him with confidence. It was here that Brother Giovanni regarded the beauty of his vocation as a Brother in terms of “spiritual motherhood.” He saw priests as fathers by whom so many souls were to be guided and listened to, while in brothers he saw the role of the mother who cares, who assists, who loves. He wrote a booklet “The spiritual Motherhood of the religious Brother:” “The title of Mother is not strange or improper. It is Jesus himself who gives this sublime mission to every truly loving soul who does the Will of God ... Being a little Mary, mother of Jesus, mother of the priests, mother of souls: such is the mission of the religious Brother. And no means are needed; only one thing is asked of you, the love in which everything is contained. Love with the heart of a Mother, and this love is simplified by sanctifying the present moment.” Brother Giovanni was in love with the Madonna whom he called “Smile in the family.” He wanted to imitate her maternal delicacy.

Even in the community he was always amiable, outgoing, joyful, and offering himself to replace anyone in need. He was also sent to carry out commissions and often went to the city to do the shopping or to take the sick to visit the doctor.

He was heroic in his last year when suffering very much from a cancerous ulcer. Without diminishing his commitments, he offered himself every day as a “victim with Jesus of the altar with the Cross in his chest.” At the hospital in Bergamo (the “garden of God” he called it) he was operated on 30 December 1939: “may I celebrate my bloody Mass as a true Blessed Sacrament religious, allowing freely and with joy Jesus the Victim to complete his Passion ... the dear heavenly Mother will accompany me.” He died on the morning of 6 January 1940.

This was the Venerable Giovanni Nadiani who by his life presents the beauty and attractiveness of the vocation of a Blessed Sacrament Brother and of religious life as such, even without the incentive of the priesthood. It is a vocational pattern to be fostered in our Congregation.