

SIX SAINTLY POLITICIANS

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Six Saintly Politicians

By

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Foreword

THE HIGHEST FORM OF CHARITY

Pope Francis has recently repeated a statement which can surprise people: “Politics is one of the highest forms of charity” . To understand the truth of the statement we must overlook the common belief that people involved in politics are corrupt and remember that in Christ’s teaching authority is service:

“You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them and their great men exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave; even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many” (*Matthew 20:25-28*).

The service that Jesus contemplates goes up to the sacrifice of one’s life, to bloody martyrdom, as it was with him. That is the case of the first president of independent Uganda, Benedicto Kiwanuka, who fell victim of the bloody dictator Idi Amin Dada. A sacrifice of blood was also the fate of Prof. Aldo Moro, the reluctant martyr of the Red Brigades who made even Pope Paul VI come out with an unexpected, moving letter to his captors but in vain.

Alcide De Gasperi is the most prominent professional politician, founder of the Christian Democratic Party which defeated the Communist Party in the 1948 landmark elections and assured the leadership of Italy in the delicate moment of the post World War II reconstruction. He is also one of the fathers of the European Union.

Raul Manglapus is the Asian representative of the movement of Christian Democratic parties, although in the Philippines that movement never really caught up. All the same, Raul Manglapus’ life is remarkable for his opposition to the dictator Ferdinand Marcos which forced him to go into exile. When he came back to the Philippines, after the EDSA Revolution, he was called by president Cory Aquino to be part of her cabinet.

Prof. Giorgio La Pira and Prof. Iginio Giordani are the two figures that emerge as gigantic in their holiness profiles. Politics have only had a

marginal place in their lives since God called them to become original and even heroic models of Christian holiness at super-national level.

I hope that the presentation of these saintly politicians may help the readers to have a fresh look at the field of politics which should attract more attention and commitment on the part of Christian activists and concerned citizen.

Fr. Lorenzo Carraro, MCCJ

Fr. LORENZO CARRARO, MCCJ, is a Catholic priest and a missionary. Born in 1937 in Venice, Italy, he did his secondary, philosophical and theological studies in the seminary of Padua diocese. At the age of 22, he joined the Comboni Missionaries, after his second year theology, and was ordained a priest in 1962.

He gained a Doctorate in Classic Literature in 1967, in Padua State University. He obtained a post-graduate Diploma in Journalism in the Catholic University of Sacred Heart of Milan two years later. He wrote for Catholic publications while teaching in MCCJ seminaries.

Assigned to Uganda (East Africa) in 1970, he first worked in pastoral life in the mountains of Kigezi, then as in charge of vocation promotion and formation, eventually he was Rector of Nadiket inter-diocesan minor seminary in Karamoja. In 1993 he left Uganda (Africa) after 23 years.

For six years he lived in London, Great Britain, as in charge of formation of the MCCJ Scholastics and pursued a Master Degree in Pastoral Theology in Heythrop College (University of London) with a dissertation by the title: "Formation for Human and Spiritual Maturity" (1997).

In 1999 he arrived in the Philippines and worked as Assistant Novice Master with residence in Calamba (Laguna). Since 2005 he resides at Saint Daniel Comboni Seminary in Roosevelt Avenue, Quezon City. Given the advanced age, he is now a free lance operator, teaching his Bible Study Groups, preaching retreats and writing for WORLD MISSION magazine.

The acronym MCCJ stays for the Latin: MISSIONARII COMBONIANI CORDIS JESU (Comboni Missionaries of the Heart of Jesus). Saint Daniel Comboni, first bishop of Central Africa, is the founder of the Comboni Missionaries.

Prof. Giorgio La Pira

“MY ONLY PARTY CARD IS MY BAPTISM CARD”

This is the statement of Giorgio La Pira, mayor of Florence, a man above the political parties for the sake of the underprivileged. His whole life was a mission of unity and peace at world level, above the opposing parties of the cold war period. He is a gigantic figure that looms on the horizon of history as a prophet, a pioneer and a saint. His story is of poignant interest and relevance for our time.

Not long ago, with a solemn mass, his eminence Cardinal Ennio Antonelli, archbishop of Florence, Italy, concluded the diocesan process of beatification of Giorgio La Pira, university professor, mayor of Florence, congressman and prophet of peace. It had started in 1986 and it was meant to “inquire about the heroic nature of the virtues and the fame of holiness of the person in question”. On that occasion, the documentation collected at diocesan level was sealed and sent to Rome, to the Congregation of the Causes of the Saints. It is a monumental work comprising the 35 volumes of La Pira’s published works, the interviews with more than 200 witnesses and tens of thousands of letters that the Servant of God exchanged with many of the most important characters of the time (only the correspondence with Fr. John Baptist Montini who later became pope with the name of Paul VI comprises more than 1200 letters).

One of the fathers of the Italian constitution.

Giorgio La Pira was born at Ragusa, in Sicily, Italy, on January 9, 1904 in a poor family. Because of his outstanding intelligence and at the price of innumerable sacrifices, he managed to finish a law degree and he was given the chair of Roman Law at the university of Florence. He turned out to be an esteemed scholar who aimed at putting Christian foundations to true democracy. To this purpose he started a law magazine, *Principles* that very soon was targeted by the fascist government and suppressed.

It was the crucial time, after World War II, when the Italian people were changing form of government, moving from monarchy to republic. A new constitution was needed. La Pira's ambition was to make it according to the Christian inspiration as he stated to a gathering of Catholic social activists in 1945: "The Christian inspiration essentially depends on this fact that the object of the Constitution, its aim and purpose is the Human Person as shown and defined by the Catholic doctrine. Therefore, the constitutional setup of economy, politics, the family, education and religion should conform to the nature and dignity of the Human Person. Only in this way may we consider a Constitution to be inspired by Christianity".

In 1946 La Pira was elected to the Constituent Assembly and within the very commission of the 75 members that contributed to formulate the principles of the constitution of the new republic. With him were other Catholic leaders called "the young professors" like Giuseppe Dossetti who later on became a priest and founder of religious orders and Aldo Moro who was Prime Minister, member of the European Parliament and was subsequently kidnapped and killed by the Red Brigades.

The "Saintly Mayor"

The moments when Giorgio La Pira was showing himself more spontaneously was the ones of meeting with the poor. Since 1934, the community of the poor used to gather around him for Sunday mass, first in the little church of Saint Procolo, and then, from 1942, in the more spacious church of Badia del Proconsole in Florence. He was then a young university professor; later he will be the mayor or the internationally re-known figure. For forty years the poor were the place in which he verified the validity of his choices, his observation point of the world, even the world of politics.

He entered active politics coming from there: not the silent atmosphere of a convent or library: it was the underground of the city where those who are unable to make a living gather, those on whom the eye of the sociologist or of the journalist don't focus. It is exactly from there that it is possible to see the other side of history. He was looking at the world of wealth and power with the eyes of the poor, adding his deep sense of compassion and the awareness of the temptation of inhumanity that wealth and power almost fatally produce.

Because of this attitude, the Democratic Party made him head-list candidate at Florence in 1951: he was the only person capable of snatching

the mayor ship of the city from the Communists who considered it as their own monopoly, because he could attract to his person the votes of the poorest strata of the populace who were inclined naturally to the left. He accepted the candidacy because he wanted to give voice to those that in the city had been voiceless and certainly not because he was a party man. He used to say: “My only party card is my baptism card”.

He was called: “Il sindaco santo” (*the saintly mayor*). His tenure of that post that defines him better than any other was exemplary: he was the mayor of the lower sector of the citizenship: committed to a courageous program of housing for the working class and loyal to the workers to the point of joining their strikes and agonizing with their struggle for a just salary and in defense of their jobs. These uncompromising positions did not spare him bitter criticism on the part of government agents as well as industrialists and even some Catholic prominent people. Answering to the government representatives who were inviting him to change his position in favor of the 1750 workers who had been laid off by the Pignone Factory, he said: “Be you the ones to change the law, I cannot change the Gospel!”

La Pira had no doubts when he was dealing with whatever ensured the basic rights of each person: “The house to live in, the workshop to find a job, the school to educate, the hospital to heal, the church to pray, the public administration building to promote relationship among the citizens” as he wrote in his book: “*The mayor of the poor*”.

His tenure as Mayor of Florence was always concerned with serving everybody, but with a particular attention for the poor. He himself was poor and loved to be so, for Jesus’ sake and like Jesus, so much so that he didn’t even own an official suit of value. It is well known the episode of the time he gave away his new coat that he had just received as a present from his friends. “I met with a helpless destitute who needed a coat... I couldn’t possibly give him this one of mine, which is so old and worn out!” he said.

“He died poor as he had lived poor” they wrote in the papers when he died and this was judged to witness not only his moral stature but also his political greatness. Today more than any other time we understand the exceptional nature of a public figure that never took advantage of his position for his selfish advantage but served the community without sparing his energies.

Peace and the city

He was Mayor of Florence from 1951 to 1957 and then again from 1960 to 1964. Almost immediately after the first nomination, he also started the

International Peace Encounters, the twinning with other great cities of the world and his first trips as peace messenger. He continued in the second period: Florence became the “city on the mountain”, the meeting point of world leaders in search of peace like Leopold S. Sengor, representative of the new African States or U Thant, UNO secretary, who organized there an East-West round table on disarmament.

La Pira called the “Mediterranean Colloquies”, international gatherings aimed at fostering peace and co-existence between Christians, Muslims and Jews. He was the first to anticipate the importance of creating a state for the Palestinians and the Israelis. In 1965 he traveled to Hanoi and met with Ho Chi Minh. He came back with a concrete peace proposal and organized a Symposium for Peace in Vietnam. His trips took him to Jerusalem, Rabat, Cairo, Amman and Moscow. His letters to Nikita Krusciov are famous for their Christian daring as was his speech in front of the Supreme Soviet. La Pira was a trail-blazer and a prophet.

Especially in the last period of his life, he was an untiring peace activist. He felt that in front of the atomic threat, the ‘utopia of disarmament’ was the only realistic way. In the peak of the cold war era, he managed to bring together the mayors of London, New York and those of Moscow and Beijing, to represent the peoples who were often silently rejecting the policies of their governments and the tragic choices done over their heads. When he ceased to be mayor of Florence, he dedicated himself to travel on behalf of the peace cause, giving innumerable talks on the topic of peace and good governance of the city and he strenuously defended the right to life against the abortion law.

Peace and the City are the pivotal tenets of the thought of the “Saintly Mayor”: a peace that is linked inseparably to the freedom of the person especially religious freedom and the City, as center of culture for the people. The role of the city between historical roots and challenges of the future is a continuous topic of his teaching and commitment. Politics are for La Pira action for the common good of the community. He died on November 5, 1977.

The “Essential Man”

La Pira had no interest in the opinion of the world. His otherworldly attitude is shown not only by the fact that he was always absorbed in God, but also by his spontaneous siding with those who are not touched by the noise of history, like the time he was seen greeting a child who was passing on the opposite side of the road, by just briefly lifting his hat.

His house was a few square meters room, too small even for a monk, and one day he decided to free it even of his books. He was absolutely loyal to the Catholic dogmas, and yet his faith was showing a remarkable degree of freedom. He didn't aim at converting anybody: for him all people were already moving in God the Fathers' kingdom. This is why, notwithstanding his loyalty, his party members or the institution representatives always perceived him as an alien. He really belonged to the dimension of holiness.

He constitutes an example for all the Catholics committed in politics. He remains to the people who knew him the image of a small man who dared to force history like the man of faith he was: he couldn't help creating the premises of a change in history in order to make possible the coming of the kingdom of God.

La Pira is a challenging model for the people of our time, especially the youth. He was a man capable of great vision, because of his large knowledge and especially because he was a man of faith. He defined the 21st century as the century of peace, in this way showing that he was a man of hope. He is certainly a demanding, even upsetting or disturbing model: he has embodied two apparently contradictory virtues: consistency in principles and capacity for dialogue. He was an "essential" man: almost hermitical in his personal life, heroic in his poverty, a person of prayer, a saint.

La Pira was an authentic Christian, in love with the Church and extremely faithful to the Magisterium, capable of uniting action and contemplation, ready to read in the signs of the times, especially in the tension towards peace and the unity of the human family, the seeds of the kingdom of God that is preparing to burst open.

Aldo Moro (1916-1978)

SACRIFICIAL LAMB

He was one of Italy's longest-serving post-war Prime Ministers. The world was shocked when he was kidnapped on March 16, 1978, by the Red Brigades and killed by them

after 55 days in captivity. Pope Paul VI offered his life for him in an open letter to his captors, but in vain. A committed Catholic, Moro was considered an outstanding intellectual and a patient mediator, especially in the internal life of his party. His sacrifice marked the end of the Red Brigades' rebellion.

Aldo Moro's widow, Eleonora Chiaravelli, died recently at Rome. She was 94. To her the president of the Christian Democracy had addressed some of the 86 letters written during his captivity with the Red Brigades. Very touching is the last letter he wrote just before his execution: "*My most sweet Noretta, after a moment of very feeble optimism due to a misunderstanding on my part of what I was told, we have reached, I believe, the decisive moment. I don't think it is the case of discussing the thing in itself and the incredible punishment that is falling on my meekness and moderation...*

At any rate, I would like the full responsibility of the leaders of the Christian Democracy with their absurd and incredible behavior to remain well clear. We must state this very firmly and a possible medal which is usually given in such cases must not be accepted... But all this is passed. For the future, there is, in this moment, an infinite tenderness towards all of you, the memory of each and everyone, a very great love full of all the memories apparently meaningless yet very precious to me. United in my memory may you live together. It will seem that I am with you...

Give a kiss and a caress to all on my behalf, face by face, eye by eye, hair by hair. Be strong, my sweetest, in this absurd and incomprehensible trial. They are God's ways. Remind me to all our relatives and friends with immense affection and to you and all the warmest embrace, pledge of an eternal love. I wish I could understand, with my small, mortal eyes, how we will see each other afterwards...If there were light, it would be most beautiful. My love, feel me as always with you and hold me tight...

The Red Brigades never delivered the letter which was found only years after Moro was executed. Nobody knew Lady Noretta Moro until the day her husband was kidnapped by the terrorists, on March 16 1978. Immediately after the kidnapping, this previously reserved woman sprung to the world attention because of her decision and determination in knocking at all doors in order to secure her husband's release, without ever surrender. Her composed firmness convinced even pope Paul VI who performed a

clamorous gesture. From the Vatican, the pope wrote an open letter to the “Men of the Red Brigades”, even offering his life in exchange.

When however, after 55 days in prison, Aldo Moro was found murdered, on May 9 1978, Lady Moro did not hide her anger against all those who, according to her, had not allowed her husband to come back among the living. She particularly rejected the leadership of the government and of the Christian Democracy who had stubbornly refused to negotiate with the terrorists.

The Center-Left Coalition

Moro was born in a middle class family at Maglie, in the province of Lecce, Italy, on September 23, 1916. After his primary and secondary schooling, he studied Law at the University of Bari, an institution where he was later to hold the post of ordinary professor of Philosophy of Law and of Criminal Law. In 1935, he entered the Catholic University Students' Association of Bari. A little later, with the approval of Mons. John Baptist Montini, later pope Paul VI, whom he had befriended, Moro was chosen as president of the association; he kept the post till 1942, succeeded by Julius Andreotti, who will head the government at the time of his murder.

During his university years, Italy was under the Fascist government and Moro was quietly preparing for future leadership, together with a bunch of promising young Catholic professors who will dominate the post-war political scene, like Alcide De Gasperi, Joseph Dossetti, George La Pira and others. In 1945 he married Eleonora Chiavarelli, with whom he had four children: Maria Fida, Agnese, Anna and Giovanni. After teaching Law for twenty years in Bari, in 1963, Moro obtained transfer to the Sapienza University of Rome, as professor of Criminal Law and Procedure.

He developed his interest in politics between 1943 and 1945. Initially he seemed to be very interested in the social-democratic component of the Italian Socialist Party, but then his Catholic faith moved him towards the newly constituted Christian Democracy. In 1946 he was nominated vice-president of the Christian Democracy and elected member of the Constitutional Assembly, where he took part in the works to redact the Italian Constitution.

In 1948 he was elected at the Italian Parliament and nominated vice-minister of Foreign Affairs. After covering different positions in several government cabinets, in 1963 he was nominated Prime Minister of Italy for the first time. His government was supported by the Christian Democracy, but also by the Italian Socialist Party. The centre-left coalition, a first for the Italian post-war political panorama, stayed in power till the 1968 general elections. Moro was Prime Minister in other two instances.

The “Historic Compromise”

Tall, soft spoken, with the characteristic forelock of white hair, Moro was considered a tenacious mediator, particularly skilled in coordinating the different internal trends of the Christian Democracy. At the beginning of the 1960s, Moro was one of the most convinced supporters of an alliance between the Christian Democracy and the Italian Socialist Party, in order to widen the majority and integrate the socialists in the government system. In the 1963 party congress in Naples, he was able to convince the whole party directive of the strategy. The same happened in 1978, when he supported a "national solidarity" government with the backing of the Italian Communist Party.

Moro faced big challenges: the necessity of conciliating the Christian and popular mission of the Christian Democracy with the raising liberal values of the Italian society and integrating new important social groups (youth, women, workers) in the democratic system. Following the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, the Italian Socialist Party had taken a definitive distance from the Italian Communist Party. Later the Communists themselves broke up with Moscow, and convened with the Spanish and French parties to draw the lines of Euro-communism. Such a move made an eventual collaboration more acceptable for Christian Democracy voters, and the two parties began an intense parliamentary debate, in a moment of deep social crises. Moro called this move the “Historic Compromise”.

On March 16, 1978, Moro was ambushed by the Red Brigades, his five bodyguards were murdered and he was kidnapped on Via Fani, a street in Rome. The whole of Italy, even Europe were in a shock because of the daring and ruthless act of banditry and the fame of the person involved. In the following days, trade unions called for a general strike, while security forces made hundreds of raids in Rome, Milan, Turin and other cities

searching for Moro's location. During his captivity, Moro wrote several letters to the leaders of the Christian Democrats, to the Prime Minister and the heads of other government bodies. In his letters, Moro said that the state's primary objective should be saving lives, and that the government should comply with his kidnapers' demands and agree to the exchange of war prisoners.

Most of the Christian Democracy leaders argued that the letters did not express Moro's genuine wishes, claiming they were written under duress, and thus refused all negotiation. They never considered the Red Brigades as war enemies, but only as bandits and criminals. This was in stark contrast to the requests of Moro's family. In his appeal to the terrorists, Pope Paul asked them to release Moro "without conditions". But the Red Brigades instead condemned Moro to death. After 54 days of detention, Moro was murdered in or near Rome.

When the Red Brigades decided to execute Moro, they placed him in a car and told him to cover himself with a blanket, that they were going to transport him to another location. After Moro was covered, they emptied ten rounds into him, killing him. Moro's body was left in the trunk of a red Renault 4, in Via Michelangelo Caetani. The location was somehow midway between the national seats of the Christian Democracy and of the Italian Communist Party in Rome to symbolize the end of the "Historic Compromise", the alliance between Christian Democracy and Communist Party sought by Moro. The Red Brigades didn't want it, fearing that the Communists would be "tamed" and lose their revolutionary urge.

On April 7, 1979, Marxist philosopher Antonio Negri was arrested. Although he was found innocent of Moro's assassination, he however bears moral responsibility for the crimes, because he wrote: "Every action of destruction and sabotage seems to me a manifestation of class solidarity.... Nor does the pain of my adversary affect me: proletarian justice has the productive force of self-affirmation...The adversary must be destroyed". Moro had written: "When we speak the truth, we must not regret to have uttered it. Truth is always enlightening. It helps us to be courageous".

The reluctant martyr

As a matter of fact, Moro has been the most accomplished intellectual that lived at the highest levels of the Italian political life. He represented the

leftist tendency in the Christian Democracy, following the leadership of Joseph Dossetti who eventually left politics to embrace religious life, become a priest and founder of religious families. Moro was a man who could incessantly search for possible solutions to all the problems, projecting what were called “long thoughts”, strategic ideas that could mediate between apparently extreme positions, something that never abandoned him even during the dramatic moments of his kidnapping and death.

In captivity, Moro was however under the complete dominion of the Red Brigades: they filtered the news he was allowed to receive and delivered or withheld the letters he was writing according to their purposes. He never saw the face of any of them. The Red Brigades had the upper hand because they had the body of the kidnapped and the control over his writings. They partially succeeded in promoting the feeling in the public that the blame for Moro’s death was to be attributed to the Christian Democracy and the government for their inflexibility in refusing to negotiate with them.

On the other hand, the cruelty of Moro’s execution turned the public opinion against the Red Brigades. Their cause was never popular; now even the hard core members started feeling sorry and turning away from them. There then appeared the movement of the so called “repented ones”: members of the Red Brigades who gave themselves up or when captured revealed the identity and hide out of the others. Some of them ended in prison in England. The London prison chaplain, Fr. Carmelo Di Giovanni, gathered the confessions of many “repented ones” and brought them back into the Church as he gives a detailed account in the book he wrote on the subject. We can safely say that Moro’s reluctant sacrifice signed the end of the Red Brigades.

Moro’s objective from the sixties onwards was to confirm the guiding role of the Christian Democracy no more as a “dam” against the Communists, but as the leading promoter of the necessary structural social reforms in order to harness the rapid and impetuous economic development of the country. Moro remains one of the last prominent politicians with strong links with the Catholic Action: he followed with growing interest the changes brought about by the Second Vatican Council and identified with the spirit of dialogue that the Council was promoting. Paradoxically, he fell victim of those who this dialogue didn’t want because it was contrary to their policy of violent confrontation.

But the consideration about the politician should not make us forget the dimensions of his human and Christian personality: he had reached the peak of power and yet he never let go of his roots and his faith. Thus, in the last letter to his wife, he wrote: “I wish I could understand, with my tiny mortal eyes, how we shall see each other afterwards...If there were light, it would be most beautiful”. In the hope of that light, he faced the extreme ordeal.

Benedicto Kiwanuka

MARTYR OF JUSTICE

Benedicto Kiwanuka (1922-1972) was the first Prime Minister of Uganda, leader of the Democratic Party that led the transition between British colonial rule to independence. Fervent Catholic and a family man with ten children, he is considered the greatest Ugandan hero and father of the country. Imprisoned by Obote who did not stand opposition, he was freed by Amin and made Chief Justice. In his high position, he did not fear to fight for justice even against the violent dictator. He was murdered by Idi Amin in 1972.

Maurice Kagimu Kiwanuka, who was recently nominated minister in President Yoweri Museveni's cabinet, says he was 11 years old when his father Benedicto Kiwanuka was shot twice in the head by Amin himself on September 22 1972. In an interview with *Ultimate Media*, Kagimu reveals how his father was followed by soldiers, picked up and taken to military cells. He explains it vividly as if he was driving with him when the soldiers chased his father's car from home to the High Court where he was arrested and later killed at Nakasero State House.

The woes that led to Kiwanuka's death started after he presided over a case involving an English man, one Stuart who was found in possession of printed materials which condemned Amin's government over human rights violations. All the judges feared to handle the case and as Chief Justice,

Benedicto Kiwanuka decided to take it on. "My father decided to handle the case and he released the white man after the trial," says Kagimu.

Kagimu is convinced that the release of Stuart was the main cause of Kiwanuka's death. After two days, as he was leaving his home in Rubaga, four Peugeot appeared following him but he outran them. In the evening, when Kiwanuka reached home, his friends told him to flee to Rwanda but he refused. The following day, when he went for work at the High Court, the soldiers grabbed him from his car at the Court's entrance, took him to their car and drove him to Makindye barracks.

While he was still at Makindye cells, the President of Kenya, Jomo Kenyatta, called Amin and told him to release the Chief Justice," Kagimu says. Then Amin allegedly fabricated a document stating that Tanzanians had abducted Kiwanuka but the Ugandan Army had rescued him. In this way, Amin was trying to cover up Kiwanuka's unlawful detention. He ordered Kiwanuka to sign the document but he refused.

The soldiers picked Kiwanuka from Makindye, took him to Nakasero State House, and told him to sign the document in the presence of Amin. He again refused. When the judge refused, Amin told him, "Don't you know I can kill you?" "I do," Kiwanuka responded, "But I cannot deceive the world."

It was then that Amin removed his pistol and shot him twice in the head," says Kagimu who was told about his father's predicaments by family friends who were working with Amin. Amin remained in power in Uganda until he was overthrown by Tanzanian forces in 1979. He and his troops were blamed for the deaths of nearly a half-million people.

Kiwanuka's body was buried in Luzira in the same grave with then Governor of Bank of Uganda, Joseph Mubiru who was also allegedly killed by Amin. Little is known about Mubiru's death but Kagimu says he was killed after he refused to print more money as President Amin had ordered. Kagimu says that there are plans of exhuming the remains of his father but there is yet to come someone to tell exactly where Kiwanuka and Mubiru were buried. People who know where the grave is, fear coming forward because they think Ugandans would see them as ones who participated in the murder of the former Chief Justice and the Governor of the Bank of Uganda.

An Outstanding Political Star

Uganda's political history, especially the politics of the events that unfolded before independence, would be incomplete without Benedicto Kiwanuka, who rose from a middle class family to emerge as one of Uganda's outstanding political stars.

Born on May 8, 1922 in Bukomansimbi district, he was the third son of Fulgensio Musoke Kawesi of the Mutima (heart) clan. His mother was called Eularia Nalubowa of the Ngo (Leopard) clan. Kiwanuka was brought up in a hostile environment, his father being a polygamist. Although Kiwanuka's father was not a devout Catholic, he encouraged his family members to become Catholics.

By the time Kiwanuka went to school at the age of 12, he had already completed catechism and was already a devout follower of his religion. He went to Villa Maria Primary School in Masaka before joining St. Peter's Nsambya Primary School in 1939, where he completed his primary education. He then went to St. Peter's Secondary School in 1940, where he studied with notables like former Vice-President Paul Muwanga and Kalure Ssetaala, who was twice minister in Obote's governments.

Ben Kiwanuka married Maxencia Zalwango, from Buwekula in Mubende, whose father Noah Kirya was a Munyoro prince of the Bachwezi dynasty. Their wedding was held on February 18, 1947 in Kitovu Catholic Church. On completion of his studies, Kiwanuka joined the King's African Rifles. He rose to the rank of sergeant major and participated in World War II.

On returning from the war front, he worked as an interpreter at the High Court of Uganda before enrolling for a law course in Lesotho between 1950 and 1952. Thereafter, he attended University College, London, from 1952 to 1956. He was admitted to the Bar Association at Gray's Inn, London, in February 1956. He privately practiced law in Uganda between 1956 and 1959 while slowly getting involved in politics.

Entry into Politics

At this time, Uganda was moving to gain independence. But it had special problems due to its complicated administrative structure, especially with the highly organized kingdom of Buganda, which was also the most economically advanced section of the country. Many of its leaders were little

disposed to diminish their state's special position by submerging it in a greater union.

Among the various political organizations formed in this time was the Democratic Party, the result of pressure from Roman Catholic groups, who thought that members of their religion did not have sufficient representation—in relation to their numbers—in the Ugandan political arena. Although efforts were made to draw non-Catholic support as well, the Democratic Party always kept a reputation as being too closely tied to the Catholic Church, mainly because the polarization was already strong in the Uganda People's Party that was considered monopoly of the Protestants and favored by the Protestant colonial government.

On August 1958, DP members from all the regions of Uganda convened in Tororo for their delegates' annual general conference, during which Benedicto Kiwanuka was elected the president and subsequently relinquished his law practice so that he could devote his whole time to politics. In his bid for the unification of Uganda and the deepening of democracy, Kiwanuka met a lot of hostility from the Mengo establishment of the traditional ruler of Buganda, the *Kabaka*.

The hostility was led by the *Katikkiro* Michael Kintu, who made it a continuous mission to move around Buganda, opposing the campaign of the Democratic Party and declaring Kiwanuka as Buganda's worst enemy who ought to be rejected. Kiwanuka openly criticised Kintu's administration for dividing the Baganda people and isolating Buganda from the rest of the country through intransigent demands.

Whereas many Baganda regarded him a traitor for his objection to Buganda's federal demands in favor of a unitary government for Uganda, Kiwanuka had a great love for the kingdom of Buganda. In 1953, when the *Kabaka* of Buganda, Sir Edward Mutesa II was deported to Britain over his demand for Buganda's self-rule, Kiwanuka was among those who vehemently criticized the act.

He publicly declared: "This blatant show of force, arrogance and pride will never gain lasting achievement. The people of Britain should clearly understand that we have been wronged and our whole country greatly slighted by this arbitrary removal of our beloved ruler and that unless their leaders change their minds and re-instate Mutesa II on the throne of

Buganda, they are helping in the darkening of our future to a degree beyond human imagination.”

By that time, Kiwanuka was the general secretary of the Uganda Students' Association in London. Later on, as the leader of the Democratic Party he found himself on a collision course with the political position of the *Kabaka*, given the strong commitment of the DP to a united Uganda.

The fragile democracy

When the first important elections were held in Uganda in 1961 to determine the country's future, there were only two important political parties: the Democratic Party and the Uganda People's Congress. The kingdom of Buganda decided to boycott the election. The Democratic Party swept the Buganda elections and won enough votes in the rest of Uganda to secure the largest representation in the legislature. Benedicto Kiwanuka was asked to form a government, and on July 1, 1961 he became the first chief minister of Uganda. On March 1, 1962 he was appointed Uganda's first prime minister.

But Kiwanuka's time as prime minister was fleeting. New elections were held in April of 1962 and he failed to gain reelection to the National Assembly. This time the Buganda participated by allying with the United People's Congress; their joint forces triumphed, and Milton Obote replaced Kiwanuka as prime minister. Obote then presided over Uganda's independence (October 9 1962).

The Democratic Party became the main opposition party, with Kiwanuka as their leader, despite losing his seat in the election. In the mid 1960s he focused on Uganda's Muslim population and their neglected needs in the hope of enlarging the popular support for the Democratic Party in view of the next elections. But the next elections were never to take place. The fragile democracy soon succumbed under the dictatorial scheme of the incumbent Milton Obote.

The unwilling alliance with the *Kabaka's* party soon ended. The aspiration of sovereignty and autonomy of the Baganda flared up in a rebellion that Obote suppressed in blood with the help Idi Amin as the Head of the Army. The *Kabaka* fled to England where he subsequently died as an exile. On the wake of this rebellion, Obote abolished the opposition and imprisoned Benedicto Kiwanuka.

This happened in 1969, and he remained jailed until Idi Amin overthrew Obote's government two years later, in January 1971, thus plunging Uganda into a deep crisis and an era of ruthless persecution. Benedicto Kiwanuka was one of 55 political detainees released by Idi Amin immediately after the coup that brought the military dictator to power. Amin, hoping to win the popularity of the country's working class and acceptance from the international community, installed Kiwanuka as Chief Justice of Uganda. But Kiwanuka quickly became a dissident and wouldn't overlook the atrocities committed by Amin's brutal regime. That signed his death warrant.

He fought for a united Uganda

In his book, *Benedicto Kiwanuka; The man and his politics*, Albert Bade writes that Kiwanuka is the greatest man in the history of Uganda, basing his statement on Kiwanuka's unique political stature, anchored on the values of honesty, justice and advancing the common good of the nation as opposed to the politics of opportunism which has characterized most of Uganda's politicians.

Kiwanuka was a very courageous Chief Justice of Uganda. At a time when the country was led by the ignorant and brutal leader Idi Amin Dada, Kiwanuka stood his ground and made judgments in an impartial way and he lost his life. As a political leader, he led his party in an honest manner. Although he lost the second elections because of his principles, the principles he promoted are extremely important and must guide the governance of our polity.

Veteran journalist John Nagenda wrote: "I am proud of Ben Kiwanuka for having risked his life for what he believed was the best for the country. Unlike many other learned politicians, Kiwanuka refused to run away from the problems of his country until he was killed. He acts as an inspiration to us that some people must sacrifice themselves for the good of the others.

He is one of the leaders we used to admire, especially when Uganda's independence constitution was being created. He will be remembered for fighting for a united Uganda. He had a national outlook and a national focus. He did not use politics to pursue his selfish interests like enriching himself".

Maurice Kagimu Kiwanuka, Benedicto's son, believes that he would be a different person if his father was not killed. "I had few friends because people feared to associate with our family thinking they would also be

killed," he says. He says as children, he and his siblings lived inside the gates of their houses and had no visitors at home. "There was a lot of fear and we never got a chance to play with fellow children". Kagimu is the 8th born out of 10 children in Ben and Maxencia Kiwanuka's family but three of his siblings have died.

I was happily surprised to find his colored photo in the internet: his face has still the innocence and spontaneity of the time I met him, when, as a college graduate, he was searching for his future and applied to become a member of the Comboni Missionaries. On that occasion, I met also with his mother Maxencia, Ben Kiwanuka's widow, a matronly lady, soft spoken and kind. Now, at 45 and a government minister, Kagimu somehow continues the family tradition of service to his country in the wake of the powerful example of his father, a martyr of justice.

Raul Manglapus

A RENAISSANCE MAN

A multi-talented individual formed by the Jesuits in Ateneo De Manila University, Raul Manglapus (1918–1999) was a lawyer, composer, champion orator, playwright, linguist, politician and diplomat. He used all his God-given gifts in the service of his country. A war hero during the Japanese occupation, he run for president as opponent of Ferdinand Marcos. In exile in USA during martial law, he came back to the Philippines to be Secretary of Foreign Affairs with Cory Aquino. A committed Catholic, a family man, he represented the World Christian Democrats in Asia. He was not always successful in his political battles since most of his ideas were considered ahead of his time.

In the year 1958 in Manila, a group of business executives and professional people (among whom a famous architect and a doctor of Theology), all amateur musicians, got together and formed the Executive Band, led by Raul Manglapus, senator, cabinet secretary and hero of a whole generation of alumni of the Ateneo De Manila University. The music was jazz. Manglapus was then 40 and at the peak of his political career and yet he had a great sense of humor and was always taking himself lightly, as a kind of clown, with touching humility.

For 35 years, the members of the fortunate band led by Manglapus continued to play occasionally in the Philippines and all over the world. And all for charity as ambassadors of goodwill of the Filipino people. On different occasions, they serenaded pope John Paul II, Frank Sinatra, and other international celebrities. In the course of the years they played with the former First Lady Mrs. Ming Ramos, with the legendary jazz musicians Duke Ellington and Lionel Hampton, with King Bhumipol of Thailand, Prince Norodom Shihanouk of Cambodia and President Bill Clinton. Eventually, this is the band that played "When The Saints Come Marching In" at Raul's funeral, as per his request.

Already, when he was in his early twenties, Raul Manglapus had shown the strength of his character and his heroic resistance to the enemy of his country by his behavior in harrowing war circumstances. When the war broke out in the Philippines, on December 8, 1941, he was the anchor in the "Voice of Freedom" broadcasts that came from the beleaguered Filipino-American forces in Bataan and Corregidor, serving under Gen. Douglas MacArthur. In 1942, Manglapus was arrested in Manila by the Japanese military police and imprisoned at Fort Santiago because of his opposition to the occupying forces.

Fort Santiago was terrible! Even the Japanese Army and Navy were afraid of Fort Santiago. It was the place of the Kempeitai, the notorious Japanese military intelligence. There Manglapus was tortured to the brink of death by the Japanese. We have a picture of him when he was in prison – dark skin, crew cut, very thin, and with in the eyes a strong will to survive the prison, to get out.

From Fort Santiago he was moved to Old Bilibid Prison, and from there to Muntinlupa in 1943. He had a dramatic escape from Los Banos POW camp in August, together with a young Jesuit Scholastic named Jaime Neri. It was not so small thing to break out of a Japanese military prison. He

immediately joined the Hunters Guerillas. He was fittingly the only Filipino who witnessed the signing of the Instrument of Surrender by the Japanese on board the USS *Missouri* on September 2, 1945 in Tokyo Bay.

Early Years

Raul Sevilla Manglapus was born on October 20, 1918 in Manila, to Congressman Valentin Manglapus of Ilocos Sur, and Justina Sevilla of Malabon, Rizal. Al through his life he was faithful to his wife, Pacita, whom he loved and with whom he had four sons and a daughter.

The young Manglapus distinguished himself as a student. He finished grade school and high school at the Ateneo de Manila with first honors. There he obtained his Bachelor of Arts, summa cum laude, and proceeded to obtain his Bachelor of Laws from the University of Santo Tomas. In 1946, he passed the bar examinations with flying colors. He completed his intellectual formation in Georgetown University, Washington, D.C.

In 1939, while a student at the Ateneo de Manila, Manglapus delivered his famous speech during an oratorical contest entitled: “Land of the bondage, land of the free”. The theme was social justice, exposing the evils of land tenancy. This marked the beginning of a long career in public service which spanned 60 years.

He first came to prominence from his association with Ramon Magsaysay, the populist politician who remains the most popular Filipino president in history. In 1953, Manglapus composed for the presidential candidate Magsaysay the catchy campaign tune *Mambo Magsaysay*, which became widely popular and is credited as aiding immensely in the election of Magsaysay. The same piece of music will become famous during the peaceful EDSA revolution. In 1954 President Ramon Magsaysay appointed him as undersecretary of foreign affairs.

He became Foreign Secretary in 1957, the youngest in Philippine history and was elected a Senator by a landslide in 1961. As senator and government official, he promoted land reform and battled corruption. He was also a foremost nationalist and human rights advocate. He ran for President of the Philippines in 1965 against former President Ferdinand E. Marcos. The elections were rigged, hopelessly. He had no poll watchers. His opponents divided his votes between themselves. But he made a tremendous impact on the country.

Commenting on his unsuccessful bid for the presidency, a writer wrote: "Raul Manglapus was one of the leading Filipino intellectuals of his generation and a politician with wide appeal. It was the Philippines' misfortune that Ferdinand Marcos, equally able but lacking in principles, won the presidency rather than someone like Manglapus."

In 1968, he founded and became president of the Christian Social Movement (CSM), predecessor of the National Union of Christian Democrats (NUCD). Manglapus fostered ties with the other Christian Democratic parties in the world, such as those in Germany and Italy.

Exile and second start

Fortuitously, Manglapus was on a speaking engagement in the United States when Marcos declared martial law in 1972. Marcos refused to allow Manglapus' wife and children to join him in exile, and they were forced to flee the country by way of Malaysia, escaping from the Philippines on a Muslim pump boat. Manglapus remained in exile for 14 years, dissuaded by an outstanding warrant of arrest should he return to the country.

Even in exile, Manglapus remained as one of the leading Filipino opposition figures along with Benigno Aquino, Jr., Jovito Salonga and Jose Diokno. During his years as an expatriate, Manglapus founded the Movement for a Free Philippines (MFP). He served as president of Democracy International, an organization of exiled world leaders seeking the restoration of democratic institutions in their respective countries.

In an interview in March 1981, he voiced his strong revulsion of Marcos' violation of the Constitution and his manipulation of the political scene as a ploy to the declaration of martial law which was merely a means to entrench himself and his cronies: "Martial law pure and simple has been a facade masking the exploitation of our people and their natural resources by Marcos, his family and close friends. Any benefits, and there have been few, that have reached the people have been accidental and not the result of deliberate martial law policy."

In the States, Manglapus was the heart of the Filipino campaign for freedom. He was based for the most part of Washington D.C. though he attended Boston College and earned a graduate degree. His thesis was a stage play: "Manifest Destiny: Yankee Panky", a musical comedy which satirizes the Philippines' struggle for freedom and democracy against Spain and the US at the turn of the century. It has been successfully staged in New York, Honolulu and Manila.

It is amusing, witty, lyrical, with tunes that recall the great musicals of Rodgers & Hammerstein. But most of all, it is the history of America's conquest of the Philippines, when American troops fresh from the Indian Wars and the Boxer Rebellion, turned their fury on the Filipinos, employing torture and perpetrating the massacre of women and children in Samar.

It is the beginning of America's imperialistic drive to "Christianize the Catholics" and have a colony of their own to exploit. Manglapus remained, until the end of his life, a prolific composer and musical performer. His compositions, distinctive for their martial lilt, included, a part from the musical comedy mentioned above, the Ateneo's signature song, "*Blue Eagle*".

Manglapus immediately returned to the Philippines upon the ouster of Marcos and the accession to the presidency of Corazon Aquino in 1986. The Aquino years provided a second lease in political life for the ageing statesman. He was elected to the Philippine Senate in 1987, but resigned before his term expired to serve once again as Secretary of Foreign Affairs for President Aquino. After the election of his close associate Fidel V. Ramos as President in 1992, Manglapus lowered his political profile, while retaining powerful positions such as chairman of the Philippine National Oil Company.

A prolific writer and political analyst, Raul Manglapus had lucid style and originality that made him one of the most widely read writers of his time. He wrote nine 9 books and contributed articles to international magazines and serials. His speaking engagements took him to all parts of the globe. His book written during his last year of exile: "Will of the People: Exploring Original Democracy in Non-Western Societies", transcends national interests and traces the origins of democratic traditions and institutions which prove globally relevant to our times.

Manglapus died on July 25, 1999 of throat cancer.

Do not stand at my grave and weep

The Greek called it *areté*, the ideal which the Jesuits try to instill in their students: an all-around wholeness in one's intellectual, physical, moral and spiritual development. In these days of specialization, the Atenean takes pride in his liberal education in humanities, and acquires the graces of a

cultured life, eloquence in the forum and with the pen, appreciation for poetry, literature and the arts, courage in combat, gentle strength and prominence in athletics.

The American Jesuits who taught our leaders were of third generation Irish stock driven to the USA by the potato famine, and in many ways the lower class in the American society during the Depression years. These Irish American priests undertook to educate the sons of the aristocratic ruling class of Filipinos and succeeded. Manglapus was an outstanding example of this human enterprise.

Passionate yet never fanatic, coldly analytical while being provocative, traditional without being conservative, Raul Manglapus was imbued with a sense of dedication to a cause. He really believed what the Jesuits taught him, that human beings are imperfect and must be made perfect, that the world is imperfect and must be changed for the better. And that is the reason why he was the best revolutionary of his day, the most articulate vanguard of peaceful revolutionary reform.

With his infectious smile, his generosity and kindness, his unfailing goodness, his towering intellect, his involvement in all facets of life, as an orator, composer, senator, foreign secretary, above all as an idealist, Raul Manglapus has put all of his fellow countrymen in his debt. It is as if he were saying: "Do not stand at my grave and weep. I am not there, I do not sleep. I am the million stars that glow. I am the thousand winds that blow. I am the gentle drops of rain. I am the sunlight on ripened grain. I am the quiet birds in circled flight. I am the soft hush of restful night. Do not stand at my grave and cry. I am no there, I did not die".

On the occasion of Manglapus' death, Fr. James Reuter, SJ wrote how he remembered him in a particular verbal contest: "He was young, idealistic, in love with life, with stars in his eyes, passionately consecrated to the freedom of his people. In his peroration he said: 'After four hundred years in the chains of Spain, when our fingers were closing on the torch of democracy, came the Americans - to tear it from our grasp'. For this he received a standing ovation.

And he continued: "Manglapus really practiced the Gospel. He did not let his left hand know what the right hand was doing. An ordinary housewife said to me: "When I was student in college, he was my idol! They don't make men like him, anymore!" In a way, that is true. He was a good man.

We will not see his life again. But who can tell? Maybe, somewhere, in a tiny mountain school, a little boy will take inspiration from Raul, and come to Manila, and change the face of the earth. Goodness is never wasted. A nation grows, with men like Raul”.

Fr. Lorenzo Carraro, MCCJ

Prof. Alcide De Gasperi

AN OUTSTANDING CHRISTIAN POLITICIAN

Family man and daily communicant, Alcide De Gasperi (1881-1954) courageously led the Italian delegation at the Paris Peace Conference that concluded World War II in 1946 and guided Italy's reconstruction as Prime Minister. He is one of the fathers of the European Union. His cause of beatification was introduced in 1993.

“Opening my mouth in this world-gathering, I feel that everything, a part from your personal courtesy, is against me: it is especially my qualification as your former enemy which makes me to be considered as the guilty one, the defendant, having arrived here when the most influential among you have already formulated their conclusions...

“But I have the duty, in front of the conscience of my country and in order to defend the vitality of my people, of speaking as Italian...My position is by four/fifth that of defendant as responsible of a war which I did not do and the Italian people never really wanted and one/fifth that of co-belligerent in the new war we waged side by side with the Allies. Our whole effort aims at reminding the Allies that we have called them so because we have believed that this is what they are”.

These courageous words Alcide De Gasperi spoke on August 16, 1946 as the Prime Minister and Minister of External Affairs of Italy, which, with the dictator Benito Mussolini, had been defeated in the war, in front of the

representatives of the 21 countries which had won World War II, gathered in the Peace Conference in Paris, France.

He said that he had come “hat in hand” and had sustained with virility the humiliation of being made wait in the ante-chamber for three days. Yet the defeated one came out the winner. Such was the dignity and the moral nobility he showed that in the end he prevailed against all the odds and negotiated good terms for the future of the new Italy.

The Christian statesman came out from the ordeal as a giant and, even in that very trying moment, managed to re-position Italy in the international scene and start very good and lasting relationships with the highest representatives of the European democracies that would become the groundwork for the future European Community.

Politics as a vocation

Alcide De Gasperi was born in Pieve Tesino in Tyrol, which at that time belonged to Austria-Hungary, now part of the province of Trento in Italy. His father was a local police officer of limited financial means. From his adolescence De Gasperi was active in the Social Christian movement. At 19, he joined the Faculty of Literature and Philosophy in Vienna, where he played an important role in the inception of the Christian student movement.

After his degree in philology, he started to work as a journalist and politician. In 1911 he became a congressman for the Popular Political Union of Trentino in the Austrian Parliament, a post he held for six years. When his home region was transferred to Italy in the post-war settlement, he accepted Italian citizenship. He however never tried to hide his love for Austria and the German culture and often preferred speaking German to his family, many of whom spoke German as their first language.

In 1919 he was among of the founders of Italian People's Party. He served as a deputy in the Italian Parliament from 1921 to 1924, a period marked by the rise of Fascism. As Mussolini's hold on the Italian government grew stronger, he soon diverged with the Fascists. In November 1926, in a climate of overt violence and intimidation by the Fascists, the PPI was dissolved.

De Gasperi was arrested in March 1927 and sentenced to four years in prison. The Vatican negotiated his release. A year and a half in prison nearly broke De Gasperi's health. After his release in July 1928, he was unemployed and in serious financial hardship, until in 1929 his ecclesiastical contacts secured him a job as a cataloguer in the Vatican Library, where he spent the next fourteen years until the collapse of Fascism in July 1943.

Passion for justice

During the reconstruction years, De Gasperi was the undisputed head of the Christian Democrats, the party that dominated Parliament for decades. Although his control of the party appeared almost complete, he had to carefully balance different factions and interests, especially with regards to relations with the Vatican, social reform, and foreign policy. From 1945 to 1953, he was the prime minister of eight successive Christian Democratic governments.

Decisive were the general elections in April 1948 for the future of Italy. They were heavily influenced by the cold-war confrontation between the Soviet Union and the United States. Fortunately, the Christian Democrats won a resounding victory and the Communists were defeated once and for all.

Although De Gasperi could have formed an exclusively Christian Democratic government, he instead formed a "centrist" coalition with Liberals, Republicans and Social Democrats. "De Gasperi's policy is patience," according to the foreign news correspondent for the New York Times, Anne McCormick. "He seems to be feeling his way among the explosive problems he has to deal with, but perhaps this wary mine-detecting method is the stabilizing force that holds the country in balance."

In domestic policy, a number of social security reforms were carried out by various ministers of De Gasperi's cabinets in the areas of rents and social housing, health and unemployment insurance and pensions. He directed the Italian economic boom to the advantage of the many and contributed to create Italy's successful welfare state.

Founding Father of the European Union

The Holy See actively supported Christian Democracy, declaring that it would be a mortal sin for a Catholic to vote for the Communist Party and excommunicating all its supporters. In practice, however, many Communists remained religious. Giovanni Guareschi wrote his novels about Don Camillo describing a village, Brescello, whose inhabitants are at the same time loyal to the priest Don Camillo and to communist mayor Peppone, who are fierce rivals.

In August 1953, the seventh government led by De Gasperi was forced to resign by the Parliament. He consequently retired from active politics and gave his last year to the European cause. Alcide De Gasperi is considered to be one of the founding fathers of the European Union, together with Robert Schuman, French minister of Foreign Affairs and Konrad Adenauer, the leader of Germany, a country re-born after the Nazi nightmare.

De Gasperi used to speak of “Our homeland Europe”. He wrote: “At the origin of our European civilization, as stated by Toynbee, there is Christianity. I only want to mention our common heritage, that moral vision which enhances the responsibility of the human person, with its ferment of Christian fraternity, with its cult for beauty inherited from our forefathers, with its will for justice sharpened by the experience of two thousand years”.

Used as we are to the witness of holiness coming from convents or monasteries, we are amazed at the great moral and spiritual stature of a character like Alcide De Gasperi who knew how to embody the Christian faith into the complex socio-political realities of his time. He was passionately fond of the Church Social Doctrine with its ideals of putting into society the salt and yeast of the Bible’s integral humanism and the centrality of the human person so that the “City of Man” might be the vanguard of the “City of God”.

The highest form of charity

Concretely, politics was for him the highest form of charity in as much as it was the translation of the parable of the Good Samaritan in institutionalized reforms that respond to the needs of the poorest strata of the population. In Alcide De Gasperi politics and spirituality were inextricably intertwined so that the former was offering reasons to the latter.

He wrote: “The first commandment of God in the Bible is a social and cultural commandment: ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and conquer it’ (*Genesis* 1:26). Conquer the earth with progress, work, arts and sciences. Do not close yourselves in your individual microcosm, says the Creator, but live a social life and dedicate your energies to the earth and the community of men. The world with all its riches God has entrusted to the human beings, to their disputes, their efforts for progress and their search for goodness and truth”.

Conrad Adenauer wrote: "After the war, it was a true blessing for Italy to have entrusted the politics of the country to such a valid person as Alcide De Gasperi. My many encounters with him remain in my memory for the moral and spiritual seriousness of a man to whom I am still very grateful. He has been not only a great Italian but a European of high conscience and as such he will enter world history".

Alcide De Gasperi married Francesca in 1922, after a courtship during which he wrote very passionate love letters, and had four daughters. The eldest daughter Maria Romana is his biographer. On August 19, 1954, he died in Sella di Valsugana, in his beloved Trentino.

It is said that he had to be given a State funeral as he had died with almost no means of his own - a jaw-dropping fact in a country where, even then, politicians were expected to do well for themselves. He is buried in the basilica of San Lorenzo, in Rome. Declared a "Servant of God" by the Roman Catholic Church, he is considered a candidate for beatification together with Robert Schuman, the other European founding father.

Igino Giordani (1894-1980)

MR. FIRE

This is how Chiara Lubich nicknamed him because of his enthusiastic nature. Thinker, writer, editor of magazines, member of the Italian parliament, co-founder of the Focolare Movement, Igino Giordani, a married man and father of four, did not fear to oppose Fascism and paid the consequences of his opposition. He always tried to reconcile the defense of the Church with his independence of spirit and action. Non violence, brotherhood among peoples, love are some of the

topics he developed and fought for during his whole long and saintly life.

During the time immediately preceding World War II and throughout the length of the war, the Vatican became the safe haven for quite a few Italian politicians who had opposed the fascist dictator Benito Mussolini and were escaping harassment and persecution. It was professor Igino Giordani, committed Catholic writer, who had preceded him in the Vatican and was working as Librarian at the Vatican Library, who opened the way for Alcide De Gasperi, who was to become the father of the Italian Democracy and the first Prime Minister of the Italian Republic, who had come out of prison and was jobless. Even Pietro Nenni, the historical leader of the Italian Socialist Party, was smuggled inside the Vatican disguised as a priest.

The Fascist regime destroyed freedom and human rights, and even Igino Giordani had been persecuted. The Fascist party had organized a populist march into Rome and taken over the Government. Giordani lived the time of the march into Rome as an agony and did not hide his complete opposition to Fascism by means of strong articles in the press and, in 1925, with his book *Catholic Rebellion*, in which he dreams of the United States of Europe, based on the values of Christian civilization.

As a consequence of his courageous stance, he became the object of intense police surveillance and was threatened with internment, but he was protected by the fact that he had been wounded in the war and decorated with the Silver Medal. He however lost his teaching post and was subject to painful cultural isolation. From this he was rescued by an offer to study Library Technology at Michigan University and then at New York Columbia University.

After the specialization course in Bibliography and Library Studies in the United States, in 1928 he was hired as a librarian at the Vatican Library. He was the editor of one of the first organic manuals of cataloguing of its printed works and handwritten manuscripts.

It was during that time that Giordani took special care taking on and looking after Alcide De Gasperi who had been recently released from prison, contributing to remove the harassment against him by the police. In his *Memoirs*, Igino Giordani recalled his intervention with Benito Mussolini himself. He wrote: "I remember that I went to the Jesuit Fr. Tacchi Venturi

who enjoyed considerable credit with *Il Duce*, and begged him to intervene and subsequently De Gasperi was left in peace”.

During his long stint in the Vatican, Giordani developed his favorite interests: the study of the Church Fathers and the Social Doctrine of the Church. The successful books he published during this period like *The Social Message of Jesus* (1935) and *Papal Social Encyclicals from Pius IX to Pius XII* (1942) witness to this. From there he also directed the journal ‘Fides’, which was known in Catholic environments throughout the world. It was through them that the re-birth of a post-fascism Catholic political party came about, the Christian Democracy.

Out of the Vatican, in 1945, in the first elections after World War II, he was elected to the Italian Parliament and was one of the fathers of the Italian Constitution. Very soon he would reach the turning point of his life by meeting Chiara Lubich, the young woman who had started the Focolare Movement at Trent, during the dangerous war years.

Shooting in the air

Igino, the first of six children of Mariano Giordani and Ursula Antonelli, was born at Tivoli, near Rome, on September 2, 1894. In 1901 he began elementary school, while he also worked as a stone mason, in the footsteps of his father, in order to pay for his education. This how he wrote about it in his *Memoirs of a Naif Christian*: "As I entered a new century and elementary school, my father hired me to work with him as a bricklayer in my free time and summer holidays. I remember earning 5 pennies a week, the equivalent of one Italian lira every four weeks. I liked the trade and I strongly desired to become autonomous. And I viewed all this from an ethical and heroic point of view."

He was twenty and still studying when World War I broke out. Although an absolute pacifist by inclination and contrary to Italy entering the war, Giordani could not avoid being called to arms and assigned to the frontline as an infantry officer. He however confessed that he never fired a shot against his enemies, because Christianity forbade murder, but used to discharge his rifle in the air. All the same, in 1916, at the head of his men, he bravely took the extremely risky action of blowing up an enemy barbed wire position and was severely wounded in a leg. He was rushed to several military hospitals in succession and underwent several operations before being discharged after four years.

In the meantime the war was over and he had taken up again his university studies, gaining his Bachelor in Letters Degree at Rome University. He then started teaching and, at the same time, began the first collaborations and contributions to reviews, magazines and newspapers. He married in 1920. He and his wife Mya had 4 children, and he then began working for the newly formed Italian Christian political party, founded by Fr. Luigi Sturzo. After his adventure with Fascism and his long permanence at the Vatican Library about which I have written above, there came 1948, the most decisive year of his life.

A momentous encounter

Igino Giordani's meeting with Chiara Lubich, the Founder of the Focolare Movement, happened in his office at the House of Representatives, Montecitorio, in Rome, in September 1948. He was 54 and passing through a difficult moment in his spiritual and political life: "I was studying religious topics with passion," he writes in his *Memoirs of a Naif Christian*, "but also because I didn't want to look at my soul whose appearance wasn't very edifying. It was weighed down by boredom and, in order not to admit to the partial paralysis, I plunged myself into study and wore myself out with activity. I believed there was nothing else to do. To some degree, I possessed all the areas of religious culture: apologetics, ascetics, mysticism, dogma... but I possessed them only as a matter of culture. I didn't live them within myself."

That day, in front of his desk, sat a different group, four people including a young woman of 28, Chiara Lubich. Chiara spoke, greeted by some polite skepticism on the part of the parliamentarian. Later Giordani wrote: "I was prepared to hear a sentimental propaganda about some utopian welfare project. But that was not the case at all. There was an unusual timbre in her voice, the mark of a deep and certain conviction that comes from a life that is supernatural. Suddenly my curiosity was aroused and a fire began to blaze within me".

"When, after thirty minutes, she had finished speaking, I found myself taken up by the enchanted atmosphere: surrounded by a halo of happiness and light; and I would have wanted that voice to continue speaking. It was the voice that I, without realizing, was waiting to hear. It put holiness within the reach of all."

“That voice seemed to lead to the removal of the walls interposed between contemplatives and laity, between the consecrated and the common people: walls, behind which the Church had suffered as Christ in Gethsemane. Something happened in me. Love had penetrated and invested those ideas, and its gravitational pull drew me into an orbit of joy.” It was a real and true conversion and to explain the “discovery” he had made, Giordani would often repeat a phrase which he said to so many people during the final years of his life: “I moved away from the library clogged with books, towards the Church inhabited by Christians.”

The whole of humanity

On her part, in Igino Giordani, Chiara was offered by God the person who would complete her ideal in an extraordinary way. Igino Giordani was the first married layman to take the promises of consecration to God in the Focolare Movement. He greatly appealed to Chiara with all of his experience in the political and Christian sphere, with his familiarity with the realities of married life, being a family man, as well as an educator. She says that she "saw in him the whole of humanity". She regarded him as 'a seed for all the lay vocations' within the Focolare Movement.

She saw in him "this very humanity summed up and renewed by the ideal of unity". She nicknamed him '*Foco*', the 'Fire' of the movement for she considered him invested with a real 'charisma' for the movement. For all this, shortly after the death of Igino, Chiara declared him Co-founder of the movement. Of special note, the deep spiritual relationship with Chiara was the start of an intense mystical period in Giordani's life. From then onwards, Chiara clearly saw through Giordani's life confirmation that the ideal of unity was made for all, and was a gift for the whole of humanity.

Giordani continued his parliamentary activity. Among other things, in 1949 he was one of the authors of the first Bill on conscientious objection. But, due to some courageous political decisions (pacifism and unity in spite of the ideological differences, or because of them), in 1953, he was considered as a Christian Democrat out of step, and as a result was not re-elected.

That gave him “the secret joy of dedicating himself completely to the Focolare Movement” as he wrote in his *Memoirs*. He became the editor of the newly created 'New City' magazine, and from 1961 became a director of Centro Uno, a body within the Focolare Movement working with

ecumenism. In 1965 he was nominated president of the international institute *Mystici Corporis* in Loppiano.

After the death of his wife and with the agreement of his children, he lived the last seven years of his life in a “Focolare”. Already over 80 years of age, he wrote two of his most personal books: *Journal of Fire* (1980) and *Memoirs of a Naif Christian* which was published after his death. He left this earth on April 18, 1980.

A spiritual giant

Igino Giordani was a giant among 20th century Italian religious and civic writers, with over 100 books and some 4000 published articles. The eminent theologian, Garrigou-Lagrange OP, acclaimed Giordani as “a master among Italian writers”. Important as his theological writings are, even more important is the story of Giordani’s personal journey to God.

Giordani’s true genius is that he imbibed the words of Scripture and the reflections of the patristic writers, treasured their words in his heart, and endeavored to live them heroically in the ordinary occurrences of daily life: as a soldier on the front line; as a journalist in Fascist Italy; as a parliamentarian; as a husband and father; and in his work with the Focolare Movement, building unity especially in ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue.

Giordani witnessed to the fact that, by loving in each present moment, any lay person can transform their day into a liturgy and their human existence into a divine activity. This is the essence of our Baptismal Priesthood. “I see Christ in my neighbor; I unite myself with him in the name of Christ, and Christ sits in our midst.” He also gave witness with his life and through his books and his various activities as a journalist, he anticipated, in the years before the Second Vatican Council, some topics on the spirituality of the family and the role of the laity in the Church. For this reason, he is often remembered as a precursor of the renewal brought about by the Council.

Maria Voce, who succeeded Chiara Lubich as President of the Focolare Movement, said: “Politicians can also be saints! Igino Giordani believed it and wanted to become a saint. He said it's not true that one can't be holy while in politics, but that one can become a saint in politics, this is fulfilling his duties as a politician which is what God wanted from him.” He reminded

