



DONALD WOODS

SEVEN OUTSTANDING LAYMEN

by

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Raul Follereau (1903-1977)

“GIVE ME THE PRICE OF TWO BOMBERS”

“...And I will solve the problem of the world leprosy once and for all”. This bold request Raul Follereau, the “vagabond of charity”, directed in vain to the two great leaders of USA and Russia in 1954, at the peak of the Cold War. A gifted poet and orator, the French man with his wife Madeleine toured the world to tell everybody that the real leprosy was our superstitious fear that condemned millions of unfortunate brothers and sisters to isolation and neglect.

It was the arms race that dominated the preoccupation of the world in the fifties, given the polarization of the great world powers, USA and Russia. Billions of dollars and roubles were spent in building up the nuclear arsenals. In this context, on September 1, 1954, Raul Follereau launched his open letter to General Eisenhower and president Molotov: “What I ask you is so little, almost nothing. Give me each a plane, one of your bombers, because I have calculated that with the price of two of yours planes destined to spread death I can cure all the lepers of the world”. The letter did not receive any answer.

Twenty years earlier, in 1935, while in Africa as the correspondent of an Argentinean newspaper, Follereau had two encounters which became decisive for his future: a spiritual one with Charles de Foucauld on the occasion of a reportage about the life and death of the saintly monk; and a shock encounter with the lepers in the tropical forest of Ivory Cost. This is how he describes the latter.

“Our car had hardly left that African village when we had to stop near a stream to fill the radiator. Before long, some frightened faces emerged from the bush, followed by skeletal bodies. I called to them to come nearer. Some did the reverse and run away, while the braver ones stood rooted to the spot, gazing at me with sad staring eyes. I said to the guide: ‘Who are these men?’ ‘Lepers’ he answered. ‘Why are they here?’ ‘They are lepers.’ ‘Yes, so you said, but wouldn’t they be better off in the village? What have they done be

cast out?’ ‘They are lepers’ he repeated obstinately. ‘Does anyone look after them?’ My guide shrugged his shoulders and walked away.

And it was then that I realized that there existed an unforgivable crime, a crime deserving of any punishment, a crime without appeal or pardon: Leprosy. And it was then that I made up my mind to plead one single cause for the rest of my life: that of the 12 to 15 million persons whom our ignorance, selfishness and cowardice have made lepers”.

The City of Love

Raul Follereau was born at Nevers, France, on August 17, 1903 of a family of industrialists. Since his adolescence he showed to be an outstanding person. It was at 15 that two happenings marked his life: he met for the first time Madeleine Boudou, whom he will marry seven years later and he held his first public speaking commitment. In 1920, at 17 he published his first book: *The book of love*, where we find a sentence which will influence his whole life: “To be happy is to make happy”. Still very young, he attained a law degree at the famous Sorbonne University, but he renounced his career as a lawyer in order to dedicate himself to poetry and the theatre.

Very soon two of his comedies appeared in the bill of the ancient and prestigious theatrical group the *Comedie Francaise*. His output is impressive: all together 44 books: poems, novels, plays, travel books. His whole work is marked by a fervent Catholicism that aims at fighting against social injustice, destitution, fanaticism, and the egoism of the rich and powerful. His most popular books are: *The Hour of the Poor; The Battle of Leprosy; One War Day for Peace*.

In one of his poems Follereau identified Christianity with charity. ‘Christianity’ he wrote ‘is the revolution of charity. Now he had found his personal vocation, the cause for which God wanted him to show the truth of what he had intuited in poetry and believed in his religious experience. He was determined to prove that Christian charity could ‘revolutionize’ the way lepers were treated all around the world.

Whatever plans he had in mind in order to start his crusade against leprosy had to be put to a halt because World War II broke out in Europe. In 1940 Raul Follereau was called to arms but before he could reach the frontline, the German army had already occupied Paris. He was obliged to go into

hiding because of some articles he had written where he compared Hitler to the Anti-Christ. In hiding, he continued to write against the occupying forces. Fleeing the Gestapo, he found refuge in a convent of the Sisters of our Lady of the Apostles near Lyon. There the call of the lepers caught up again with him.

The Sisters of our Lady of the Apostles were working as missionaries in Ivory Coast. After many years spent in caring for the lepers, they had conceived an original plan: instead of leaving the lepers to fend for themselves in the forest and deserts places, the sisters planned to build a village in Adzope, a healthy place where the lepers would live like normal human beings, while receiving medical attention. The project of the sisters was a revolutionary one but they lacked the material means to make it a reality.

Here Raul Follereau found the field for his newly discovered commitment: he volunteered to raise the money needed to build the village for the lepers in Ivory Coast. And thus, in 1942, he started his career as a beggar, “the vagabond of charity” as he was later called. Ten years of his life, thousand of kilometers by car, train and plane, more than 1200 lectures and conferences went into the gigantic project but by 1952 the village of the lepers named “City of Love” was a reality. Lepers were cured with proper medicines: they were living in freedom with their own families and some of them even cultivated their own garden.

The World Leprosy Day

After the success of this first enterprise, he was flooded by tens of requests of help by all the regions where leprosy was present. This made Follereau tour around the whole world several times to bring help and affection to the lepers everywhere and to assess and denounce the appalling conditions in which they were obliged to live.

Eventually, he decided to divide the year into two parts: six months in order to travel to the distant places where the lepers were, to look for them, to embrace them and distribute what he had put together for them and six months to roam around the rich countries to beg by means of lectures, interviews and any other means, disturbing the conscience of all, mobilizing them for his cause.

In 1942 he launched the initiative of “One hour for the poor” by which he invited everybody to dedicate the profit of one working hour for the most unfortunate. In 1944 he wrote to the president of the USA, Franklin D. Roosevelt, inviting him to dedicate the expenditure of one war day for peaceful purposes. His request received no answer.

At the end of 1952, Raul Follereau was able to draw up a well-documented and precise petition to the United Nations on behalf of the lepers of the world. Article 13 of the UN Charter states that the General Assembly of the United Nations encourages international cooperation in the fields of public health since health facilities are for everyone, the enjoyment of human rights, and the basic freedoms.

Based on that article, he asked the UN and its members states to proclaim that the lepers are subject to the common laws and equally protected by them. He also demanded that “the lepers be given “the same facilities, the same advantages, the same privileges as all other citizens, without exceptions”.

Another landmark of his worldwide campaign against leprosy was the launching of the World Leprosy Day that took place for the first time in 1954. The objective was to dedicate a day a year to promoting the rights and dignity of the people affected by the sickness. Adopted by 120 countries, today it brings the lepers not only material aid, but also the recognition of their human dignity. Most of the mistreatment and neglect lepers were suffering was caused by the superstitious fear the sickness provoked in people’s mind everywhere.

To help overcome those fears and misconceptions, Follereau managed to organize an international congress of experts to discuss the sickness. It took place in Rome in September 1956 with the participation of 250 delegates from 51 nations. The congress concluded that leprosy is only a relatively contagious disease and it is capable of being effectively treated.

Follereau’s own experience corroborated the findings of the specialists on the matter: “I have travelled the world holding out my arms to lepers and kissing them. The proof that I believe leprosy to be minimally contagious is that I kiss lepers and look at me, I haven’t caught leprosy...”

About thirty years after his first encounter with those persons affected by leprosy outside an African village, Raul Follereau's commitment brought about a revolution in the way people looked at a disease considered a curse since the beginning. Leprosy began to be considered as any other infectious disease; lepers were being cared for and their dignity restored to them. The fight against leprosy appeared to have been won.

Follereau died in Paris in 1977, on December 6, but his work lives on through organizations all over the world that call themselves 'Friends of Raul Follereau'.

“To give without love is an offence”

It was hoped that leprosy could disappear by the year 2000. Unfortunately it is not so. After 50 World Leprosy Days, more than 700,000 new cases are still discovered every year. The bacillus of Hansen keeps its mysteries, with a contagious incubation that can last ten years. The first marks of leprosy on the skin still provoke fear; lepers are still hidden or killed; families still hide their children lepers. Even when cured, lepers still need help in order to be re-integrated into society.

It needs to be said that when Raul Follereau started helping the lepers, nobody apart from catholic missionaries (and few protestant missionaries) was taking an interest in them. Lepers were abandoned by all, even doctors, since there was no real treatment in existence. Things have changed for the better and yet, even today, it is the religious communities that are the most numerous in taking care of lepers. The legacy of the “Vagabond of Charity” must go on.

Raul Follereau was a natural born public speaker inclined to action. Proudly a layman, he remained faithful to the faith he received from the priests of his childhood. He used to say: “After Easter, we know that death doesn't kill anymore”. A poet and a literate by inclination and formation, he leaves a body of works deeply influenced by the Gospel message and even nowadays his works are put into songs.

More than a charitable enterprise, it is an apostolate of the heart that he has left to his successors: “It matters little to hope, it matters nothing to live: what we ought to do is to love”. Quite a few of his statements have entered the DNA of the modern Christian: “Nobody has the right to be happy alone.

Gino Filippini (1939-2008)

THANK YOU, GINO!

Rough, stubborn, a man of few words, but imbued with a lively faith that made his blue eyes sparkle, Gino Filippini was capable of listening and sharing more than many. Consistent for more than forty years with his commitment, he lived his missionary service without the security of a religious order, without salary. He was not married, because such was the choice he made with joy when he was young. He wanted to belong totally to God and to the poor. A rare form of cancer contracted in the rubbish dump of Nairobi, claimed his life at the peak of its maturity.

It was in Karamoja, that isolated and violent part of Uganda, that I first met two members of S.V.I (*International Voluntary Service*), based in Brescia, Northern Italy, in the person of two young laymen, Giuliano and Luigi, both specialized in agriculture. They had come to teach the proud Karimojon cattle keepers how to plough the land and how to mend their farming implements.

Their approach was spontaneous and unsophisticated. In a short time both of them were courting two local girls and after a little while their marriage was celebrated by the African bishop of Moroto, among the jubilation of the populace and the less enthusiastic comments of the more experienced missionaries... Yet time has vindicated the young men's move.

It is from the same place and the same mould that Gino Filippini had come to Africa before them, had endured more than them and was coming home to die in September, last year 2008. He had arrived in haste from Korogocho, the shantytown of Nairobi, where he had spent the last fifteen years, because the doctor had diagnosed a lung tumor, *mesothelioma*: an occupational sickness that comes from the deadly amianthus dust.

Gino had picked it up most probably from the rubbish dump situated besides Korogocho, where he had followed the people he was living and working

with. A lethal, very swift disease: in only two months it destroyed Gino's strong fiber.

A passion for life

Fr. Alex Zanotelli, the Comboni missionary who started the Korogocho experience of insertion and had enjoyed Gino's company and collaboration, writes: "Several times I visited him in Brescia. The last time, November 19, at *Domus Salutis*, when George Otieno, the person responsible for the program devised by Gino, "*Education for Life*", arrived from Nairobi in order to greet him. Gino was already devastated by the disease.

With a great effort, he expressed what he wanted most about the program. He was driven by a passion for life, even in front of death. That was his last will. Then we celebrated his last Eucharist, together with the most intimate friends and his two sisters. We broke together that bread that had given him the strength to walk along the routes of the poor. The sickness undid him on November 28.

On November 30, Fr. Alex went back to Brescia to celebrate Gino's funeral. On the bare coffin, covered by the flag of peace, Sr. Martha Citterio had placed a broken crucifix from Korogocho and another friend the cross Gino had brought from Rwanda as if to say: "Gino, you have walked with the crucified people of history..."

On the coffin there were also the two books Gino loved most: the Gospels and the psalms of Fr. David Turoldo, both worn out by usage. The congregation spontaneously broke out to sing the Gloria as a thanksgiving for the great gift that Gino had been.

After listening to the word of God, Fr. Alex shared the content of two worn out little pages that Gino wrote when he was in Rwanda and had been given to him by one of his women friends. They helped everybody to understand how Gino had followed the footsteps of Jesus. He was a disciple of the Jesus of the poor as it was stressed also by the letter of St. John's community from Korogocho. It was really as if his poor people were present and still pressed around Gino as they used to do when he was alive.

At the offertory, his friends brought in all Gino's most significant signs: the flag of peace with the signatures of all his friends, the flags of the six African countries where he worked, his sandals, the broken bread and the T-

shirt with the program of “*Education for Life*”. In the gesture of “the breaking of bread” in which Jesus expressed the total gift of his life, it became clear how Gino had been bread for everybody, especially for the poorest brethren.

I will never leave in Korogocho

Gino Filippini was born at Rezzato, a small town in the province of Brescia, Northern Italy, on June 17, 1939, in a working class family. At twenty he qualified as a technical engineer, then went for military service, taught for few years and held a job in a steel factory. With the restlessness proper of youth, he was unsatisfied of a life of work and career and joined the voluntary service.

He started his new task at Kiremba, in Burundi, in 1967. Then, from 1973 to 1982, he lived an insertion experience in a rural context at Nyabimata in Rwanda. It was a very beautiful experience. From 1983 to 1992, as coordinator of S.V.I., he followed various rural projects in Congo, Rwanda, Uganda and Tanzania.

In 1992 he came back to Italy in order to assist his father who was terminally ill with cancer. A Comboni missionary, Fr. Giovanni Nobili who had known him in Congo, invited him to spend some days in the slums of Korogocho, Nairobi. Gino accepted but, taking his leave, he exclaimed: “I will never come to stay in Korogocho!” After his father’s death and after a serious reflection and many prayers, Gino decided to go to Korogocho where he stayed until his death.

He lived a beautiful experience of prayer and community in the heart of that frightening slum. He gave a providential hand to the cooperatives that were starting and to the people of Mukuru, the rubbish dump. It was very hard for him to pass from the rural areas of Africa to the chaos of a slum like Korogocho; but he was sustained by a faith strong as a rock. He never missed the weekly day of prayer. He loved the Gospel *sine glossa* (without footnotes), like Saint Francis of Assisi. He was the one who guided the other lay helpers who came to give a hand.

His dearest project

Gino was a great friend of the poor. He gave them dignity; he believed that they could stand on their feet. He believed neither in subsidies nor alms. He was touched especially by AIDS epidemics in Korogocho. This is why he decided to commit himself in making the youth realize the danger of AIDS. He understood that he had to aim at prevention. In this connection, he had seen an experience at Mulago hospital in Kampala (Uganda) that had very much impressed him. The program was called “*Education for Life*”.

Gino prepared a group of Africans, led by George Otieno in order to make both the students and the teachers aware of the AIDS problem. In fact, this program “*Education for Life*” is a method to form the conscience and influence the natural dynamics of the youth so that they may choose life. Gino had understood that AIDS was the result of the negation of the traditional values of life and a cultural vacuum. His program aims at recovering these vital values in the youth.

With the help of Doctor Gianfranco Morino, a surgeon who has been working in Nairobi for twenty years, he brought forward this work amidst a thousand difficulties. The last years at Korogocho were the hardest and most difficult for Gino. But he believed in the project. Even in his death bed, he gave the last recommendations to the leader of the eight Africans who are now running it.

An expert in humanity

Gino certainly was not a builder of structures; he lived always in a hut! He was rather a “facilitator”, keen on educating the conscience and fostering the growth of people and communities, with a profound incarnational sense.

“This year, Gino wrote in a letter in 2007, has a special meaning for me. Forty years ago, in 1967, I left Italy with destination Burundi. I must say that Africa has not betrayed my expectations, on the contrary... It has abundantly contributed to widen the horizons of my life, deepening its meaning by means of the service of others especially those lost in life and history rearguard.

I thought it was necessary for me to give a hand, just that, helping them to recuperate strength, dignity, hope. But it is a mission that never ends and it is for this that the adventure will go on as long as God gives me the energy to

Donald Woods (1933-2001)

CRY FREEDOM

He was a leading white South African journalist who befriended Steve Biko, a black freedom activist during the apartheid time. When Biko was brutally murdered by the police, he unmasked the truth about the activist's death. Fearing for his life, Donald Woods embarked in an adventurous escape together with his wife and children. Safely in London, he publish his book "Biko" and became one of the outstanding champions in the fight against the racist regime. His story was the subject of a very famous movie. Donald Woods had the satisfaction of seeing Mandela free and of casting his vote in the new South Africa. A practicing Catholic, he declared: "I think my opposition to apartheid stems directly from my religious beliefs".

On February 11, 1990, Nelson Mandela, the world famous South African freedom fighter, was released from prison after serving twenty-seven years on Robben Island. That Easter, Mandela came to London to attend a concert at Wembley Stadium to thank the members of the Anti-Apartheid Movement for all their years of campaigning against apartheid. One of the leading members of that Movement was the South African journalist Donald Woods.

On that occasion, Woods gave Mandela a tie in the black, green and gold colors of the African National Congress to celebrate the event. On Easter Sunday, Mandela phoned to thank Woods' family for the tie and said that he would wear it at the concert the next day, which he did. Woods stood at attention throughout the phone call. He had the rare experience of seeing the success of his lifetime struggle for which his friend Steve Biko had given his blood.

Donald Woods returned to South Africa in 1994 and went to vote at the City Hall in Johannesburg. A cheering crowd took him to the head of the queue,

giving him the place of honor so that he could be one of the first to vote in the new South Africa. On September 9, 1997, on the twentieth anniversary of the death of Steve Biko, Woods was present in his birthplace East London when a statue of Biko was unveiled by Nelson Mandela. He was awarded the Order of the British Empire.

“Ubuntu”:our common humanity

Donald James Woods was born in East London, Eastern Cape, South Africa. His parents, Edna and Jack were of Irish and English descent respectively. Donald’s ancestors arrived in South Africa in 1820. At his birth on 15th December 1933, there was a complication which the local white doctor was unable to fix. Riding 40 km cross-country on an urgent request from a black neighbor, Tiyo Soga, his grandson, Dr Lex Soga, arrived at East London and immediately remedied the problem. Born in the Bomvana area, Donald was given a Xhosa name by the indigenous people. He spoke Xhosa for three years before he spoke English. This helped him later on in life when arranging meetings with the anti-apartheid activist Steve Biko.

Schooled at Christian Brothers College in Kimberley, Donald’s values and beliefs came very much from his upbringing and surroundings. He had a strong sense of family and justice, with World War II taking place in his formative years. The former colonial homeland, Transkei, contained a range of contradictions between beliefs and values, at the same time being one of the poorest parts of rural South Africa.

Some of these values included “Ubuntu”, a Xhosa word which means "warmth of the human spirit" and implies that we only realize our own humanity when taking an interest in other people’s well-being. All these links between white and black population show the good atmosphere that existed before the imposition of apartheid.

Donald developed an interest in politics while studying law in Cape Town, but with a huge passion for literature and writing, he found that his character, personality and sense of humor were more suited to the print media and in 1956 he joined the *Daily Dispatch*, as a cub reporter. Being an active liberal in South Africa became more defined by the nature of government repression, and Donald’s beliefs forced him to reject a passive role within the parliamentary system and push the boundaries through extra-parliamentary means.

He admired the actions and sacrifices of people like Alan Paton, the author of “*Cry, Beloved Country!*”. In 1957 he stood, aged 24, for Parliament on a ticket of abolishing all racial laws, but was heavily defeated. He then worked on newspapers in England, Wales and Canada. He returned to the *Daily Dispatch* in 1960 and worked in turn as a senior reporter, sub-editor, political correspondent, columnist and leader writer, and was appointed the youngest editor in South Africa in 1965, aged just 31.

In 1962 he married Wendy Bruce and over the next ten years they had six children: Jane, Dillon, Duncan, Gavin, Lindsay and Mary. The youngest son, Lindsay, contracted meningitis and died aged 11 months in 1971. As a father, he was very loving. As a person, he had a strong sense for what was unique about the character of each individual and he loved relating to other people.

He never presumed to represent any great body of opinion and knew that others were making much greater sacrifices in exile, jail and death. The increasingly brutal nature of apartheid forced him along a much more radical path in challenging government Ministers directly through leader articles, particularly after encountering Steve Biko, whom he described as the most impressive person he had ever met.

By 1977 the *Daily Dispatch* had become the biggest-selling newspaper in the Eastern Cape, and was increasingly attracting the anger of the apartheid government for speaking out for the rights of the black majority and for attacking racial legislation. During the 12 years of his editorship Donald Woods was prosecuted seven times under apartheid’s publication laws and sentenced to jail – all unsuccessfully. During the same period he took on the apartheid state in court, successfully suing on eight occasions for defamation, for implying that he was an enemy of South Africa or otherwise disloyal to the country.

Friendship with Biko

During this time the *Daily Dispatch* became the first mainstream newspaper in the country to urge the release of Mandela, to have racially integrated social and sports pages without separate editions, and to print the views of black leaders such as Steve Biko, in defiance of banning regulations which forbade such publication.

Steve Biko was one of South Africa's most significant political activists and a leading founder of South Africa's Black Consciousness Movement. His death in police detention in 1977 at the age of 31, led to his being hailed as a martyr of the anti-apartheid struggle. From an early age Steve Biko showed an interest in anti-apartheid politics. After being expelled from his first school, Lovedale, in the Eastern Cape for 'anti-establishment' behavior, he was transferred to a Roman Catholic boarding school in Natal. From there he enrolled as a student at the University of Natal Medical School (in the university's Black Section).

While at medical school, Biko founded the South African Students' Organization which was involved in providing legal aid and medical clinics, as well as helping to develop cottage industries for disadvantaged black communities. In 1972 Biko was one of the founders of the Black Peoples Convention (BPC) and soon was elected as the first president and, because of this, was promptly expelled from medical school. He started working full time for the Black Community Programme (BCP) in Durban which he also helped found.

Under Woods, the *Daily Dispatch* was very critical of the South African government, but was also critical of the emerging Black Consciousness Movement under the leadership of Steve Biko. A young black woman, Mamphela Ramphele, berated Woods for writing misleading stories about the movement, challenging him to meet with Biko. After their meeting, the two men became friends, leading to the South African Bureau Of State Security monitoring Woods' movements. Despite this, Woods continued to provide political support to Biko, both through writing editorial in his newspaper and controversially hiring black journalists to the *Daily Dispatch*.

Steve Biko's murder

On June 16, 1976, rioting broke out in Soweto when young students participated in a march to protest against being taught in Afrikaans and against the Bantu education system in general. The children were met by the police and ordered to disperse. The children refused and the police opened fire. As the children pelted the police with stones, indiscriminate firing by the police killed and injured hundreds of them. South Africa went up in flames. The government responded by banning the entire Black Consciousness Movement along with many other political organizations.

Returning to his home one evening from a trip to Cape Town, Biko was arrested, imprisoned and mortally beaten. He was transported naked and manacled for more than one thousand kilometers in the back of a police van to Pretoria, and died on the way. At first the police claimed that Biko had died as the result of a hunger strike. The inquest showed that he had died of brain injuries received while in custody. The brutal circumstances of Biko's death caused a worldwide outcry and he became a martyr and symbol of black resistance to the oppressive apartheid regime.

Woods went to the morgue with Biko's wife Ntsiki and photographed Biko's battered body. The photographs were later published in Woods' book, exposing the South African government's cover up of the cause of Biko's death. Woods used his position as editor of the *Daily Despatch* newspaper to attack the Nationalist government over Biko's death. This description by Woods of Biko reveals why he felt so strongly about this particular death, one of many under the apartheid regime's security forces: "This was a new breed of South African -- the Black Consciousness breed -- and I knew immediately that a movement that produced the sort of personality now confronting me had qualities that blacks had been needing in South Africa for three hundred years."

A month later, Woods was arrested and served with banning orders for publicly accusing the apartheid government of being responsible for the death of Steve Biko in Security Police custody. His banning orders forbade him to write anything, to be quoted in the press, to be with more than one other person at a time, to travel, to communicate with more than one person at a time and a range of other restrictions.

Cry Freedom

Under constant Security Police surveillance, Woods wrote a biography of Steve Biko exposing what happened to him. He then realized that to publish it he and his family would have to leave South Africa since it ended with what then constituted a capital offence, being a call for international economic sanctions against the apartheid state.

The decision to leave was hastened by Security Police actions against the family, including bullets being fired into the house, and a T-shirt that was sent to five-year-old Mary Woods after being soaked in acid powder called ninhydrin. In December 1977, Donald Woods – disguised as a Catholic

Dr. Francis Canova (1908-1998)

PIONEER AND FOUNDER

Inspired by his Christian faith, Francis Canova pioneered in Palestine from 1937 to 1943 as a voluntary doctor in charge of a hospital for the Bedouins. He is the founder, in 1950, of the NGO “Doctors with Africa”, the largest Italian enterprise in favor of the health condition of the people of that continent, responsible for sending to Africa more than 1400 voluntary doctors and other health workers.

The hall of the Saint Cajetan Cultural Center, at Padua, Italy, was packed with people, on November 11 2010, on the occasion of the visit of the president of the republic of Italy, Giorgio Napolitano, for the 60th anniversary of foundation of CUAMM-Doctors with Africa. The President described the work of CUAMM-Doctors with Africa, as a patrimony of six decades of generosity and dedication. “This is also the Italy that we should not forget when we ask ourselves about our present condition and our future,” he concluded.

The most solemn moment took place at Padua University Hall with the conferring of the *honoris causa* degree in human rights to the priest who for many decades embodied the extraordinary performance of the CUAMM, Mons. Luigi Mazzucato, director of the organization from 1955 to 2008. Present in spirit was the founder Dr. Francesco Canova, whom the Lord had called to himself at the ripe age of 90, in 1998.

The coming of the highest Italian authority was a public acknowledgement that rewarded the CUAMM-Doctors with Africa, an organization that time has confirmed and sealed as a true Gospel initiative. The Gospel is carved in the heart of CUAMM-Doctors with Africa, in its very motto: “*Euntes, curate infirmos* (Go, and cure the sick)” from Matthew 10:7-8, a clear and well defined mandate, without uncertainty. The motto was chosen by Dr. Canova himself, at the very beginning.

The origin of a dream

Francis Canova was born at Schio, Northern Italy, in 1908 from a working class family. He had only a younger sister. His father, John, had emigrated to the USA and then come back to be employed as a skilled worker in a local factory. Unfortunately, he died when Francis was only 9. The widow, Dalila, with the two orphans, experienced extreme poverty until she was assumed as house-helper by the owners of the factory who also paid for the education of her two children.

Francis, on his turn, got scholarship and as a university student contributed to his upkeep by working. In 1933 he completed his degree as a medical doctor and immediately looked around to see if he could find service abroad, among the poor.

During his years at the university, he was always involved in apostolate. In particular, he was one of the founders of a charity group named from Saint Vincent de Paul which was caring for poor families at Portello, the most destitute section of the city of Padua. It was in the course of this activity that he met the woman who was destined to become his wife: Regina Dal Zio, whom he called Reginetta (My little queen). She soon joined him in his dream to be a missionary doctor, by expressing her will to follow him in the missions, once she became his wife.

The opportunity of making the dream become true materialized when an “Italian” hospital was planned in Jordan with the aim of offering medical care to the Bedouins who were the most neglected population of the Middle East. In 1935, Francis volunteered and soon became the medical superintendent in charge of the hospital at El-Kerak.

At the beginning of the year he left for Jordan, promising Reginetta that he will soon be back to marry her and then he will bring her with him to Jordan. He was soon in charge of the hospital and kept the position for five years, until World War II broke out and he found himself a prisoner of the British Government, confined forcibly into a camp until the end of the war.

A patrimony of experience

The work in the hospital soon prospered under his dedicated leadership. The Bedouins saw in him not only the medical doctor, but also a kind of witch-doctor capable of curing all diseases and even to guess the right diagnosis without asking the patient. He just loved them and cared for them with all the dedication and commitment he was capable of.

In 1936, he came to Italy to marry Reginetta and together they went back to Jordan and to the Bedouins, without even taking time for a proper honeymoon. Dalila, his mother, accompanied them. The years he spent with his wife in the mission, from 1936 to 1939, were the happiest for Francis and wife. They shared the same humanitarian ideal and had an ardent faith.

They enjoyed being in the Holy Land and visited the Holy Sepulcher and Bethlehem together. Reginetta was an amateur archeologist, having a degree in classic literature, and, while there, studied ancient inscriptions and cured some publications on the field. She went back to Italy for the birth of their first daughter, Maria Giordana.

Very soon Italy, led by the dictator Mussolini, entered into World War II and Francis, being Italian citizen, was taken prisoner by the British and spent the war years in different camps, always exercising his profession. After the war he could not go back to his hospital which was still occupied by the British army, and therefore he obtained to work as a doctor in Jerusalem, in the hospital of the Franciscans, the Guardians of the Holy Land. In 1947, he returned to Italy for good, and exercised his profession in different hospitals and was called to teach Tropical Medicine at Padua state university.

The twelve years in the Middle East constituted for Francis a kind of patrimony from which he would get ideas and images during his whole future professional life and special mission of founder of the NGO “Doctors with Africa”. He wrote : “I have always experienced in myself the duty of exercising the medical profession. Mine has not been a choice, but rather a gut urge...My place had to be in those distant lands, among those people”.

In 1949 his second daughter was born, Anna, and a new bishop was installed at Padua, a son of Francis of Assisi, Mons. Jerome Bortignon. It is from the collaboration of Dr. Francis Canova e his new bishop that Francis’ dream became a reality.

Champion in personal relationships

CUAMM-Doctors with Africa was initiated on December 3 1950, at Padua, in Northern Italy. The first idea was to gather young people who wanted to be missionary doctors and host them during their university studies and train them. The acronym stays for *University College for Aspirant Missionary Medical doctors*. The first doctor to reach his degree was a Nigerian young man by the name of Simon in 1964.

Dr. Canova, after his meaningful experience as a doctor in Palestine and Jordan, had even envisaged a University of Missionary Medicine. He had a prevailing interest for the human formation of the candidates more than fostering development in the field. This brought him in partial opposition with the priest director and this explained the fact that he never went to Africa, but he knew how to accept changes and had a very detailed knowledge of the people and of the projects. He died at 90, in 1998.

Until few days before his death, he used to ride his bicycle to attend evening mass at the college. He had a great capacity of personal relationships: at Easter and Christmas he used to send to the volunteers in the field gifts of books that he had painstakingly chosen for them in the bookshops. This was in addition to an extraordinary voluminous correspondence that he was keeping with them even in the last years of his life.

A worldwide dreamer

Francis Canova was a dreamer to world dimension. He has been the pioneer of the international voluntary service which later became widespread in the last decades of the XX century. But also in the life of the Church, he has pioneered the participation of the laity, both single Christians and married couples, to the mission “ad gentes”.

Of great present day importance is his image as citizen of the world, sharer of the Gospel world vision, which made him look at every country with its problems and riches, as his own country. An all-round personality, Francis Canova, in addition to his professional passion for curing the sick and pioneering in voluntary service, was also a singer of the feminine beauty which he experienced in the satisfying matrimonial relationship with his beloved Reginetta.

Canova was a natural born writer: he liked brevity and a sententious way of expression, he was attracted by paradoxes. He declared that he felt himself to be more physician than writer, but in fact, besides the articles about his specialization (medical and clinical pathology), he published 33 volumes of different size, popularizing a medicine befitting different stages in life and Christian pedagogy.

Finally, we have to recognize the spontaneity by which Doctor Francis was a promoter of the women voluntary service, something which was still unknown in Italy, but which soon blossomed not only in Italy but everywhere.

Saint John XXIII and Vatican II

Doctor Francis had his own idea, both Christian and humanitarian, of the medical profession and this idea came to full maturity during the time of Saint John XXIII and Vatican II. He saw the medical profession as an associate of Christianity and considered it to be a lucky profession and a blessing for a Christian, as well as for a committed man or woman.

He used to say that the life of a missionary doctor is beautiful even from a simply human point of view. Dr. Francis Canova is perhaps the most convincing figure of Christian doctor whom Italy had in the xx century. He saw in Jesus, who was moving about Galilee, Judea and Samaria, healing people, the most perfect example of a doctor and he was proud to have highlighted this aspect of Christ's person.

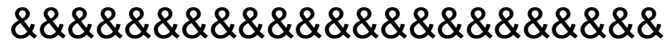
For Francis the skill of a doctor was first of all that of consoling. This is what he confided to his daughter Giordana. He embodied the type of physician who aims at curing the sick person, not only the sickness. Essential was to this purpose the personal relationship of the doctor with the patient. He was convinced that the soothing conversation of the doctor with his patients was the best way of helping them to overcome feelings of dissatisfaction and restlessness which often afflict them even after a successful therapy. He founded the CUAMM for the glory of God and out of the sense of pity for people. His personal and professional compassion are like an echo of the eventful times of pope Saint John XXIII.

The root of a Great Tree

First NGO specialized in the health sector to be recognized in Italy, CUAMM-Doctors with Africa is now the biggest Italian health organization for the promotion and protection of the health of the African populations. It implements long-term interventions, even in areas which are war-torn or facing a humanitarian crisis. It operates at all levels of the health system, from mobile clinics to universities, offering high quality services accessible to all. To this aim it commits itself, in Italy and in Africa, to the formation of the human resources dedicated to scientific research and implementation of health cooperation. It campaigns for the affirmation of the basic human right to health for all, even the most marginalized groups, promoting the values of solidarity, cooperation between peoples, justice and peace in the institutions and in the public opinion at large.

During these sixtysix years of existence, the organization sent more than 1200 doctors to Sub-Sahara Africa as well as 240 volunteers: nurses, technicians, etc...270 medical students from 35 countries of the developing world were hosted during their university studies. At present, the CUAMM operates in Angola, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique, Uganda, Tanzania and Rwanda, in 16 hospital started or run by the organization, employing every given year around 80 people, mainly medical doctors but also nurses, physiotherapists and administrators.

In these sixtysix years of existence, the CUAMM-Doctors with Africa has produced some heroes who have given their lives in the field of duty: the most prominent is Doctor Maria Bonino struck to death by Marbourg fever in Angola in 2005, while assisting the children threatened by the same disease. This is the huge tree that has developed from the root of Dr. Francis Canova's dream.



Dr. Edric Baker (1941-2015)

THE DOCTOR OF THE POOR

A Catholic medical doctor from New Zealand, Edric Baker was well known and loved in Bangladesh for his untiring service to the country's poor. In 1983 he set up the Kaliakuri Health Care Project to provide health care for the poor, free of charge, regardless of creed or race, with a very original approach. People used to call him "Doctor Bhai" (brother doctor). He was popular and highly respected among Christians but also among Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists. He won the hearts and minds of people through his love. People were struck by his kindness and saw that his goodness was due to his Christian faith. He spread the Gospel through his service. In 2014 Dr. Edric Baker was awarded Bangladeshi citizenship in recognition of his outstanding contribution to the nation.

Deep in the heart of rural Bangladesh, home to some of the most impoverished people on earth, lies the Kailakuri Health Centre, creation of Dr. Edric Baker, a New Zealander who devoted 35 years of his life to creating a unique formula of providing health care for the impoverished of this populous country. This formula can be described as "Health care to the poor by the poor".

Fairly recently however, the Christian presence in the Health Care of Bangladesh suffered a great loss: Dr. Edric Baker died on September 1, 2015 at the age of 74. He passed away rather suddenly of a lung condition he had suffered from in the last two years but had neglected because of the daily commitment to his institution: the Kailakuri Health Care Project, of which he was the founder and remained the Project Director and Medical Coordinator until shortly before his death.

What troubled him in the end was also the fact that he didn't see his hope to have a doctor to be his successor and carry on his life's work materialize. He was surrounded by people he loved and who loved him. Over the last few days he had been having a rough time with breathing but nobody expected his passing so soon.

Late last year he was diagnosed with idiopathic pulmonary hypertension, an incurable illness. Right up until the last hour he was giving orders and making phone calls. That was just like him. The word "retire" was not in his vocabulary. Within half an hour of his passing away his room became full of caring people whom he had helped over the years.

After the news of his death broke out, hundreds of villagers, many in tears, went to the centre to pay their last respect. It was a country in mourning. It is hard to describe how much loved and respected he was. Up to the moment of his death he was never once left alone. Later, during the wake, a local Mandi woman sang songs, people read from the Koran, others wept, and others stood silently keeping a vigil. Up until his burial he was still surrounded by those he loved and who loved him.

People came from all over Bangladesh, some arriving in the night and most refused beds offered to them for rest and preferred to tell stories of their time with Dr. Edric late into the night. Even in death he managed to bring different communities and cultures together. Christian, Muslim, Hindu, rich, poor, Bangladeshi and Badashees (foreigners): all worked side by side to fulfill his final wishes. By the evening he was laid out on a table in our waiting room. Hundreds of people came to give their goodbyes and show their appreciation.

By the morning many visitors and staff had not slept but no one minded and intense activity began early. By ten o'clock the whole compound was full of people. He was laid in his coffin and carried to the church (which doubles as a school) beside the Hospital. As the Mass was progressing, hundreds waited outside and then followed his casket back to his house. He had made it clear to the staff he wanted to be buried out the back of his house, underneath his veranda.

As he was being laid to rest, two lines of people formed surrounding his house and extending all the way out to the road. Slowly everybody gave their final farewells and each person sprinkled earth over his grave. At the

end of the day, the staff was happy that they were able to fulfill two out of three of his final wishes. His first wish was to take his last breath at Kailakuri. His second wish was that he had to be buried at the Kailakuri Health Care Centre. His third wish was that the hospital continues to stay open and operational long into the future. For this is essential that a doctor volunteers as Dr. Edric did. At the time of his death, this had not yet happened.

A universal chorus of praise

Speaking to *Asia News*, Mgr. Ponen Paul Kubi, bishop of Mymensingh, remembered him as “a simple man, who had a major role in our country and diocese. We shall remember him for many years. For all of us, he was an example of how we can sincerely take to heart caring for people.” In 2014 Dr. Edric was awarded Bangladeshi citizenship in recognition of his outstanding contribution to the nation. Local and international media often reported on his work. He was popular and highly respected among Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists, and of course Christians.

Many of those at the funeral recall how he won the hearts and minds of people through his love. People were struck by his kindness and saw that his goodness was due to his Christian faith. He spread the Gospel through his service. “Dr Edric Baker’s death is a great loss,” said Rajia Sultana Shully, a Muslim woman. “Doctors from Bangladesh should learn from him how to treat patients in a conscientious way.”

"He gave meaning to life in serving the poor. May his soul rest in peace," said Hanif Sanket, a director and anchor-man with state-owned Bangladesh Television (BTV). Sanket produced a documentary in 2011 on Dr Baker’s work, which raised his profile and led the Bangladeshi government to grant him Bangladeshi citizenship. The Catholic physician “loved our country more than we did, even though he was a foreigner,” said Masum Billah, one of his patients. Hasima, another patient, shares that sentiment. “I have only heartfelt love and respect for him,” she said.

Dr. Baker was a "saintly figure" and great missionary, according to American Holy Cross Father Eugene Homrich, parish priest of the local St. Paul's Catholic Church. "To help and understand poor people he lived like the poor. He used to eat little, sleep on the floor and wore simple clothes.

Truly, he was a holy man, both in his personal and professional life," said Father Homrich.

A progressive engagement

Dr. Edric Baker was born in New Zealand in 1941. He was from a rich, noble family of practicing Catholics. As a young man he went to medical school and obtained his MBBS degree from Otago Medical College at Dunedin, New Zealand, in 1965. At that time the Vietnam war was building up. In 1968 Dr. Edric volunteered to work with the New Zealand Surgical Team in Qhi Nhon, the provincial capital of Binh Dinh Province in what was then South Vietnam. The Surgical Team worked at the Province Hospital and attended to civilian casualties.

It was there that Dr. Edric said he learned his first lesson. These are his words: "After several hours of traumatic war surgery on a patient who made full recovery, I saw him come back three months later to die of dysentery. That was the first step in my awakening". That was to say that what the poor needed most was elementary health care.

From the New Zealand Surgical team, after a spell in New Zealand, Dr. Edric transferred to a highlands mission hospital established in Kontum by Dr. Pat Smith. This served the ethnic minority hill tribes, people known as the Montagnards. Kontum, near the Ho Chi Minh trail, was a volatile part of the country and at times the expatriate hospital staff were evacuated out. On returning after one of these occasions, Edric was struck by how the local (totally untrained) staff had managed to keep the hospital running. This awoke in him a vision of health services for the poor by the poor.

Here he was challenged to think about provision of health services for the poor and the marginalized. He became very much aware that for the poor in most countries health services do not exist. These experiences are the foundations of Dr. Edric's original approach to the health care of the poor classes who do not have the means to pay for their health care or live in far-away, isolated regions which are plagued by lack of qualified medical personnel.

In the meantime the situation deteriorated in the Vietnam highlands and Dr. Edric ended in a communist prison for four months. He may well have spent the rest of his life in Vietnam had he not been deported by the communists after this imprisonment. Back in New Zealand, he set about

equipping himself for a lifetime of service to the poor. Over the next few years he obtained Diplomas in Tropical Medicine, Tropical Child Health and Obstetrics. He obtained tropical experience by working in hospitals in Papua New Guinea and Zambia.

Services for the poor by the poor

By the early 1980s he was ready to embark on what turned out to be his life's work: developing health services for the poor, by the poor. In 1979 he went to Bangladesh, one of the most desperately poor nations on earth. Under the auspices of the Church of Bangladesh he proceeded to Thanabaird in the remote North of the country. Here, starting from scratch, he taught literacy and numeracy before training local people to become "barefoot medics" for the Church Clinic.

Through a mix of formal training and learning by doing, the Thanabaird clinic was built up to a staff of 55 by the year 2000. Of these only two had been to high school. The program was dealing with 16,000 outpatients and some 700 inpatients a year. With assistance from a volunteer pediatric nurse Libby Laing, village health-workers also provided antenatal care, preventative health, nutrition and family planning services.

A satellite health centre was established, some five km away, at Kailakuri, specialising in services for diabetics and TB. Here Dr. Edric was able to put into practice what he had been working towards for many decades. The diabetes programme was managed and run entirely by diabetics. The TB eradication programme was managed and run entirely by persons who either were being cured, or had formerly been afflicted by TB.

Dr. Edric's enthusiasm and energy brought together people of different ethnicity and faith – Bengali Muslim, Mandi Christian, Borman Hindu. They all worked harmoniously together for the good of their community, providing health services for the poor, by the poor. He soon realized that he needed to learn Bangla if he really wanted to understand his patients, many of them indigenous people. In a year, he learned to communicate in Bangla and over the years became fluent.

In an interview with *The Daily Star* in September 2011, he said he chose Bangladesh to realize his dream because the people there were "really good"

and they did not get healthcare due to poverty. “I’ve chosen this country in order to give them a little health support.”

The greatest humanist

What Dr. Edric has achieved is truly phenomenal and the essence of his “care for the poor by the poor” has been establishing a methodology attuned to the health needs of an otherwise ignored patient group, a service that can be maintained and implemented in large by this target patient group itself requiring very little in the way of outside intervention.

This man, who lived a simple but busy life with next to no personal possessions of his own, had a quality most of us are in awe of. The sheer volume of annual health care his operation got through each year – 33,000 outpatients, 1,000 inpatients, and 21,000 receiving health education – for an annual total budget equating to the salaries of just two developed countries’ middle operators, is something so unusual and yet so simple that bears the quality of real genius.

Expressing an honest, personal, sensitive, caring attitude in every patient-physician encounter, despite objective difficulties such as time constraints, is an essential part of medical care and healing. This Dr. Edric taught young boys and girls as health assistants and paramedics who used to visit the neighboring villages to give treatment to sick people, especially pregnant mothers and newborns.

He collected money from private donors, including his friends and well-wishers in New Zealand, the US and the UK and spent the same for the treatment and welfare of his patients; not for his own purpose. He lived in a hut, used to wear ordinary *lungis* which poor people usually do in the villages; and used an ordinary bicycle to visit the patients’ houses to render his kind-hearted treatment to them. For more than 35 years, “Doctor Bhai” has been a beacon of shining humanism to the people and the patients there. Throughout his life, he has consistently and boldly stood up for the dignity and respect of all.

Sitting in his mud-built one-room home, he told one correspondent of a reputed daily paper that he was then waiting for a successor. “Many students get MBBS degree in my country and here every year. I’m waiting for one of them to come and take the responsibility to provide treatment to the poor in the area.” But he lamented that no one did turn up! &&&&&&&&&&&

Jeremias U. Montemayor (1923-2002)

DEAN JERRY

This is how Jeremiah U. Montemayor was usually called since he was the first graduate of Ateneo Law School to become its Dean. Born in a landed family, he sacrificed his position as dean to embrace the cause of the farm workers. He started with them the Federation of Free Farmers in 1953. For fifty years he untiringly travelled, taught and organized them. And this up to the very day of his death. Eventually, he even heroically waived his rights to the ancestral land to promote the Agrarian Reform. The Federation of Free Farmers (FFF) is currently one of the largest and most effective non-governmental organizations of rural workers in the Philippines.

In the period following World War II, an uprising of the farmers, led by the Communist Party, took place in the Philippines,. The most important cause behind the communist-led peasant movement was the pattern of landownership where agricultural lands were concentrated in the hands of a relatively small number of big landlords and the majority of the peasants were their tenants. Emerging during the Spanish colonial period, this landownership pattern continued to intensify throughout the American and the Commonwealth periods.

In Central Luzon, where the rebels were most active, the ratio of tenant farmers to the total population was especially high. Most tenant farmers were sharecroppers, and the predominant sharecropping arrangement was fifty-fifty. Unlike lease holders who paid a fixed rent, the sharecroppers had to hand over half of their harvest. This type of sharecropping was helpful when the harvest was poor, but was a disincentive to efforts to increase production.

Nonetheless, even under these conditions, the traditional landlord-tenant relationship, characterized by paternalistic patron-client ties, maintained the social order in farming villages and large-scale peasant unrest did not spread. During the American colonial period, however, this traditional landlord-tenant relationship was gradually undermined mainly in the rice-producing plain of Central Luzon, due to the commercialization and mechanization of agriculture, the growing absenteeism of the landlords, and a rise in population. It is around this time that disputes between landlords and peasants in Central Luzon intensified.

The communist-led peasant movement organized the People's Army of Liberation (Huks) and staged an armed rebellion. The Huks not only fought bravely against Japanese troops, but also virtually carried out their land reforms in Central Luzon after the landlords took refuge in the cities during the war. After Japan's defeat, the Philippine government dominated by the landed elites came back to restore the old order. The Huks stood by the peasants and opposed this move, escalating their confrontation with the government and landlords.

The government outlawed the Huks and, with military and economic assistance from the United States, successfully put down the Huk rebellion by means of large-scale military operations combined with a policy of attraction. In 1952, Luis Taruc, the supreme commander of the rebellion, surrendered and this practically ended the civil war. It was under these circumstances that the Federation of Free Farmers was formed. It was Dean Jerry's brain child and was officially inaugurated in San Fernando, Pampanga, on the Feast of Christ the King 1953.

At close contact with the farmers

Jeremias U. Montemayor was born in 1923, into a wealthy landowning family in Alaminos, Pangasinan. When he was 13 years old, his mother enrolled him at the Minor Seminary run by the Society of the Divine Word (SDV) to start his studies for the priesthood. Two years later, he transferred to the Jesuit-run San Jose Seminary in Caloocan.

After three years of training at these two seminaries, however, he realized that he did not like the life of a priest. He left the seminary and entered a high school to take some subjects and units required for a high school

diploma. Jeremias subsequently enrolled in the College of Liberal Arts, Ateneo de Manila.

Dean Jerry later wrote that he considered the training he had received in the two seminaries as the best, most basic and most solid part and foundation of his entire education, and that he had never received such a strong, comprehensive, and completely satisfying grounding in his Catholic faith and religion.

Then the war came and with it the Japanese invasion. His family evacuated to a nearby barrio which the Japanese did not reach. They had the basic necessities and were surrounded by tenants who obeyed and respected them. It was during this period that young Jeremias got a clear picture of the lowly, simple and unexciting life of the farmers. He realized that they were humble and powerless in every way.

After the war he went back to school and finished Bachelor of Arts at the Ateneo de Manila, and graduated *summa cum laude*. Then he applied for a teaching job at the same school. While teaching he enrolled at the Ateneo Law School. He graduated *magna cum laude* and at the bar exams in 1952, he got the 8th place.

On new years' day 1949, he had married Nieves "Bing" Quimson, the finest pianist in town and the regular organist in the Church. They lived in Manila while he pursued his studies at the Ateneo. Then the children came, one by one. The desire to help the small farmers took some of his time away from his family, but his wife was very supportive of his project. He would often be away visiting provinces yet he found his family life very pleasant. Shortly afterwards he gave up his post as dean of the Ateneo Law School in favor of his work for the farmers.

The FFF

The Federation of Free farmers developed quickly but it did not gain acceptance in some sectors of society. Since it was working for the grassroots, a few Church leaders suspected it to be subversive. Nevertheless, Dean Montemayor had friends and patrons, who like himself gave their time and energy for the good cause. Even the late President Ramon Magsaysay lauded the FFF. He offered a jeepney and the driver to ferret the FFF Leaders around and took some exciting trips with them to the provinces.

Dean Jerry argued that the root of the country's social, economic and political problems lay in the poverty of the peasants, which, in turn, was a result of the fact that they had been merely tenants and had to look up to a landlord as their master. The peasants were at a disadvantage in almost everything except numbers. And herein lay their hope.

If they were properly organized, nothing could withstand their strength to improve their lot or to protect their rights. Then, Montemayor enumerated what a peasants' organization could do: it could be a weapon of common defense, and serve as a bridge between government and people, as an instrument for agrarian peace, as a means for economic advancement of the peasants, and as a voice to protect their interests in government action.

Dean Jerry envisioned the family-size farm as the paramount objective of the FFF. By giving every peasant a family-size farm of such area and fertility as would provide him and his family a decent livelihood, the problems of the peasantry would be solved from the roots. To him, the nationalization of farm land, as was the case in the communist countries, meant simply that all farmers became tenants tied to a single giant landlord, the state.

He thought that this objective could be achieved in either or both of two ways: by the settlement of public agricultural lands; by the expropriation and subdivision of landed estates. Despite all the obstacles, Dean Jerry believed that, peasants, once united and organized, could wield overwhelming political power to plan and apply such reforms to promote the well-being and the interests of the majority. He called this a democratic, peaceful revolution.

Together with other peasant organizations, many of which trace their roots to the FFF, the FFF has been instrumental in the enactment of practically all the relevant laws and regulations on agrarian reform since the time of president Magsaysay. The very existence of the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) and the Landbank of the Philippines (LBP) was a direct result of their efforts. The FFF was also a pioneer in cooperatives.

The Federation of Free Farmers (FFF) is currently one of the largest and most effective non-governmental organizations of rural workers in the Philippines. The growth of the FFF has been sustained. Today, it has branches and footholds in some 50 provinces. Memberships, consisting of agricultural tenants, owner-cultivators, agricultural laborers, fishermen and

settlers, total around 200,000. But the Agrarian Reform with the expropriation and division of the landed estates, as was Dean Jerry's dream, remains still largely unfulfilled as the following story unfortunately exemplifies.

Hacienda Luisita's tragic saga

Hacienda Luisita is a 6,453 hectares of agricultural land in the province of Tarlac, Philippines, an estate as large as the land area of the cities of Makati and Manila combined. It was once part of the holdings of Compañía General de Tabacos de Filipinas, better known as Tabacalera, which was founded in 1881 by a Spaniard, Antonio López y López. The estate was named after Antonio's wife, Luisa.

The HL was acquired after the war by the Cojuangco-Aquino family with the condition that it had to be partitioned among the tenants after ten years. To date, despite various promises including a Supreme Court decision in April 2012, overlooking the spirit of the Land Reform, the Cojuangco-Aquino have continued to deny the farmers' rights by deception and violence, like the Mendiola massacre in 1987 and the Hacienda Luisita Massacre in 2004.

The Mendiola massacre, also called Black Thursday was an incident that took place in Mendiola Street, San Miguel, Manila, Philippines, on January 22, 1987, in which state security forces violently dispersed a farmers' march to Malacañang Palace. Thirteen of the farmers were killed and many wounded when government anti-riot forces opened fire on them. The farmers were demanding fulfillment of the promises regarding land reform made during the Presidential campaign of Cory Aquino.

On November 16 2004, twelve picketing farmers and two children were killed and hundreds were injured at Hacienda Luisita itself when police and soldiers stormed a blockade by plantation workers. The protesters were pushing for fairer wages, increased benefits and, more broadly, a greater commitment for national land reform.

It is the story of one powerful family that has produced two presidents of the country, Cory and Benigno III, blind to its obligation to poor citizen and the decades long struggle of ten thousand of farm workers and their families for land and justice. The Cojuangcos have often garnered criticism for their unyielding ownership of the estate. The Filipino people see it as a symbol of

the country's paralyzing oligarchy, with some of the country's most powerful figures all having stakes in the property.

Up to the last day

Dean Jerry was aware of this difficulty and decided to give the example. Belonging to a clan of landowners, he suggested to his mother to award to the tenants their share of land according to the laws of Land Reform, but his mother and siblings kept quiet about it. Yet he was decided to follow his inspiration. In an unprecedented gesture, he waived his rights to whatever land would be his inheritance. He became landless, but God gave him what his family needed for the education of his children. Years later, he said: "I began to realize that I had started then not only to learn but to teach by word and example, the word of God, as I understood it". But even now, none of his relatives ever understood what he did.

In Christianity, a prophet is one inspired by through the Holy Spirit to deliver a message for a specific purpose. And for half a century Dean Jerry incessantly proclaimed the basic dignity of the small Filipino farmer and the peasant's importance as backbone of the nation. His books, particularly, *Ours to Share* and *Philippine Socio-Economic Problems*, became the "bible" of many social activists. The significance of his efforts to promote Catholic social teachings was recognized by the Vatican, which named him to the newly established Council of the Laity in 1968. It was there that he also became friend with Cardinal Karol Wojtyla who later became Pope John Paul II.

Yet, despite his great stature and intellect, Dean Jerry, in times of adversity, always tried to draw out the hidden strength of the farmers by depending on them. When big decisions needed to be made, he summoned all his powers of observation and intuition to determine their real aspirations and inclinations. In times of victory, he was quick to point out the strength, the generosity, and the virtues of the farmers and attracted everyone by focusing attention away from himself.

Perhaps his most enduring lesson was his humility. Mahatma Gandhi once said: "There go my people, I must follow them for I am their leader." And follow them was what Dean Jerry did in his entire prophetic life. Stories of the multitudes of farmers he met are filled with anecdotes of how he slept on the bare wooden floors of their *nipa* huts or under the trees, how he ate what

Blessed Joseph Toniolo (1845-1918)

PIONEER OF CATHOLIC SOCIAL DOCTRINE

Italian economist and political theorist, university professor, family man and father of seven, Joseph Toniolo (1845-1918) became known for his work with pope Leo XIII on the landmark encyclical “Rerum Novarum”. He put God at the center of his professional and family life. Toniolo is the first economist ever beatified by the Catholic Church.

The XIX century industrial revolution caused the social question which is the exploitation of the urban masses. Karl Marx and the Communist movement were the first to acknowledge the impact of the social question. Their success was possible only because Christians were slow in understanding that the new social problems needed a new approach. The preaching of the Church was still based only on the principle that the rich had to come to the help of the poor out of charity.

But in the second part of the XIX century, the social teaching of the Church developed enormously and Catholic movements started organizing the workers in Trade Unions in order to fight for a new social order. This social movement on the part of the Christians was encouraged by pope Leo XIII, with his encyclical: *Rerum Novarum* (The new things), 1891, which applied the Christian principles of the Gospel to the new social condition.

The Pope condemned the materialistic and revolutionary ideas of Communism and, at the same time, the liberal ideas. He said that work is not a commodity to be put on the market, but it is connected with the dignity of the human person. He spoke of just salaries, or working hours, working regulations, of the right of the workers to organize themselves in trade unions so as to improve their conditions and of their right to go on strike if necessary.

He spoke of the social function of private property and of the duty of the state to bring about social laws and reforms in order to bring equality and harmony among different social classes. Behind this watershed document

there was the contribution of a Catholic economist who had made the solution of the social question his mission: Prof. Joseph Toniolo.

Professor and family man

Joseph Toniolo was born in Treviso on 7 March 1845 as the first of four children to Antonio Toniolo and Isabella Alessandrini. During his childhood the Toniolos moved several times since his father, an engineer, took different jobs at various places in the Veneto region. He attended high school at Saint Catherine's school in Venice before entering Padua University. It was there that he studied law, but his father's sudden death caused an interruption of his studies though he later resumed his education prior to his graduation.

Toniolo married Maria Schiratti in 1878; the couple had seven children with three who died in their childhoods. Rather than pursue a legal career, he taught economics for more than four decades, the last three at Pisa University. In 1889 he founded the Catholic Union for Social Studies and later founded the International Review of Social Sciences in 1893.

Toniolo advocated worker protection and in 1889 founded a union to fight for worker rights. He said that economics "is an integral part of the operative design of God" which is considered to be an "obligation of justice" that should serve as an essential service to all people rather than a select few.

In September 1918 he urged Agostino Gemelli to establish a college in Milan after the war ended and Gemelli founded the "Catholic University of the Sacred Heart" in 1921 which it growing to become one of the world's largest universities with branches in Milan (the main one) as well as in Piacenza and Brescia and with its medical school located in Rome (the Gemelli Institute).

Toniolo died on October 7, 1918 and his remains lie buried in the Santa Maria Assunta church at Pieve di Soligo. He was beatified in Rome's Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls on April 29, 2012.

Forerunner of Vatican II

Toniolo was an early Catholic advocate of labor unions, the fight against child labor and exploitation of workers, mandatory days off work, just wages and access to credit, and a number of other social reforms.

On the level of theory, Toniolo advocated a form of what's known as "corporatism," a vision with historical roots in the guild system of medieval Italy. In practice, Toniolo put great stress on intermediary institutions standing between the individual and the state – the family, professional groups, voluntary associations, unions, and so on.

He saw these intermediary bodies as the best expression of what Catholic social thought would later come to call "subsidiarity," meaning not substituting centralized authority for what can better be handled at lower levels, or privately.

Politically speaking, Toniolo parted company with both the dominant trends of his time: laissez-faire capitalism as articulated by Adam Smith, and state-centered socialism as advocated by Karl Mark. He insisted that classic capitalism rested on a false anthropology of individualism and egoism, while Marxism centered on a false idolatry of the state.

Toniolo was a layman, a married man. In that sense, many observers regard him as a forerunner of the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) and its vision of the laity as the primary agents of the transformation of the secular world.

Champion of the Laity

In a message dispatched to a symposium organized to celebrate the memory of Toniolo, Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, the then Vatican's Secretary of State, underlined his importance as a model of lay activism.

"In every historical moment there were pioneers who gave a new impulse and vigor to the gospel's perennial message of salvation," Bertone said. "In the first millennium it was predominantly the monks, and in the second it was the mendicant orders. In the third, I'm convinced it will be principally the laity, as the witness of Joseph Toniolo demonstrates."

Italian Minister Lorenzo Ornaghi compared Toniolo to English Cardinal John Henry Newman, another towering figure of 19th century Catholicism, in the sense that both men "offered the motives for a reasonable faith to those who believe, and laid the basis for friendship with those who don't."



