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# **BOLLETTINO**

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## **Press Conference to present the Beatification of Pope John Paul I**

At 11.30 this morning, in the Holy See Press Office, a press conference was held to present the Beatification of Pope John Paul I (né Albino Luciani), to take place on Sunday 4 September in Saint Peter's Square.

The speakers were: His Eminence Cardinal Beniamino Stella, postulator of the Cause of Beatification; Dr. Stefania Falasca, vice president of the *John Paul I* Vatican Foundation, deputy postulator of the Cause; Don Davide Fiocco, *John Paul I* Vatican Foundation, representing the diocese of Belluno-Feltre; Dr. Lina Petri, *John Paul I* Vatican Foundation, the Pontiff's niece; Sr. Margherita Marin, of the Sisters of Charity (Suore di Maria Bambina); and Fr. Juan José Dabusti, priest of the archdiocese of Buenos Aires.

The following are their interventions:

### **Intervention of His Eminence Cardinal Beniamino Stella**

At the beginning of this meeting, it seems appropriate to briefly recall the history of the Cause for the beatification and canonization of Albino Luciani, John Paul I.

Forty-four years have passed since his death, since the year 1978 that saw three Successors of Peter succeed each other at the head of the Church. Several generations have passed. But we must remember that already immediately after the death of John Paul I - a Pope who in little more than a month had won the hearts of believers and non-believers throughout the world - his reputation for holiness, already present during his lifetime, began to spread. Many of the faithful had begun to pray to him. The then bishop of Belluno-Feltre, Albino Luciani's home diocese, received many requests to introduce the Cause.

The most significant stage of these requests is dated 1 June 1990, when the entire Bishops' Conference of Brazil asked John Paul II to begin the process. I have defined this stage as significant because it attests to the reputation for holiness and its growing spread over time, thus fulfilling a fundamental condition for the introduction of a cause for canonization. The 226 bishops who signed highlighted the motivations that had led

them to the petition in solidarity, considering the example of the virtuous *habitus* of the Bishop of Rome, Albino Luciani, who showed himself to be “a typical synthesis of the man of God, who is the fullness of humanity and at the same time the fullness of Christ” and as such he “was an apostle of the Council, whose teachings he explained with crystalline clarity and whose directives he translated into practice”. Therefore “our most intimate conviction”, the Brazilian bishops affirmed in conclusion, “is that we are interpreting the favourable judgement of many other brothers in the episcopate, and translating a very vivid aspiration of the faithful of the Church in Brazil, as well as of Catholics throughout the world”.

The time, however, was evidently not yet ripe. Unfortunately, that important petition from one of the numerically most important episcopates in the world did not move anything. In fact, the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints replied to the Bishop of Belluno-Feltre, Maffeo Ducoli, that the start of the process seemed premature, since the causes concerning other Popes (Pius IX, John XXIII, Paul VI) were already underway.

The turning-point was the initiative of Ducoli’s second successor, the Salesian Bishop Vincenzo Savio, who in 2002, on the eve of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the death of John Paul I, obtained permission to begin the process in Belluno, rather than Rome, the competent see inasmuch as it was the place where the Candidate to the Altars had died. Indeed, Luciani had lived his entire life – apart from the last 34 days of his pontificate – in Veneto, between Canale d’Agordo, Belluno, Vittorio Veneto and Venice, and so this derogation was more than justified. The enquiry therefore began on 22 November 2003 and closed on 10 November 2006. The diocesan trial was divided into 203 sessions, during which - in the episcopal seats of Belluno, Vittorio Veneto, Venice and Rome - 167 witnesses were examined, all *de visu* except one, of whom nine *ex officio* and to whom were added the depositions of three experts of the Historical Commission. This, in the Roman phase of the Cause, was followed by another supplementary one, in 2007, conducted by the vice postulator, Dr. Stefania Falasca, at the Patriarchal See of Venice to integrate the investigation of the sources with the acquisition of further documentation, in particular the papers of Albino Luciani's Private Archive, today the property of the John Paul I Vatican Foundation. New extra-trial depositions of another twenty-one witnesses were also acquired, with particular reference to the period of John Paul I's pontificate and death, of which the testimony of Pope Benedict XVI is of quite exceptional importance since it is the first time that a pope has given a *de visu* testimony on another pope, and that of Sister Margherita Marin, who lived with John Paul I for a month together with the other three sisters who looked after the papal apartment.

On 17 October 2016 the five voluminous volumes of the *Positio*, with a total of over three thousand five hundred pages, were submitted to the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints. On 8 November 2017 Pope Francis authorized the publication of the Decree concerning the heroic virtues of Pope Luciani, who thus became “Venerable”.

At the end of November of that same year, the Diocesan Enquiry, initiated the previous year by the vice-postulator, for the case of the alleged extraordinary healing in 2011 of a little girl for whom imminent death had been predicted due to a severe form of refractory epilepsy and septic shock, was also concluded in Buenos Aires, Argentina. We have here the priest José Dabusti who prayed for her healing and obtained the miracle, and we will hear his testimony. On 13 October 2021, Pope Francis authorized the Dicastery to promulgate the Decree concerning the miracle. The Medical Council of the same Dicastery had previously unanimously recognized that this was an inexplicable event for science. It was the step that paved the way for the beatification, which we are about to celebrate.

Nineteen years of work: the cause of Pope Luciani, even though it opened twenty-five years after his death, was neither longer nor shorter or easier than others, on account of him being a Pontiff of the Church. The research was carried out without any concessions: accurate, conscientious, scrupulous, conducted with a historical-critical method, on the basis of a serious and *omnino plena* investigation of the archival sources, targeted bibliographic research and a rich range of testimonies. Everything was done according to canonical rules, with science and conscience by those who worked on it for years with passion and dedication. The sources then made it possible to draw up the first complete biography. 1

Let me now say a word about the heart of this Cause, namely the holiness of Albino Luciani, whom I knew personally as a seminarian and then as a priest. He was my bishop and I have the best memories of him: a man

of assiduous and profound prayer, of attentive listening, and capable of human and spiritual support, as a pastor of priests and of the people of God, learned and prepared as a teacher of the faith and a good communicator of the Word of God, a friend and brother of priests, a visitor to the sick and an incomparable catechist. I would highlight three characteristics of Luciani: a priest who prayed, who lived poorly and who was at ease with people. In relation to poverty, my mother would sometimes quote Monsignor Luciani to say that a priest should not have bank accounts or a cheque book. I think she had heard this from him in the periodic visits and meetings of parents in the seminary.

The holiness of John Paul I's Christian life is that which is lived in humility and in daily dedication to the Church and neighbour, inspired by the theological virtues, practised with inner fervour, and where the cross and sacrifice, and sometimes humiliation, have to contribute to making the disciple of Jesus closer to his Lord. A faith that goes to the essentials of the Gospel, which is the proclamation and practice of charity. As priest, bishop and Pope he was able to manifest through his life the tenderness of a merciful and maternal God.

The holiness of Pope Luciani is important for the Church and for today's world, because through his example we are called back to the heart of Christian life: to the humility and goodness of those who know how to acknowledge they are sinners in need of mercy, of those who want to serve others with generous dedication and good works, announcing the joy of the Gospel. Luciani testifies to us the face of a humble, hard-working and serene Church, concerned with following her Lord, far from the frequent temptation to measure the incidence and value of the Gospel by the state of the opinion of it held by people or society.

But there is one last element I would like to point out: Albino Luciani taught us through his testimony as a bishop, who cherished the universal dimension of the Church, the importance of generous love and unconditional obedience to the Successor of Peter, as well as the great value of unity and episcopal communion. Several episodes of his biography speak to us of this attitude, the fruit of his deep faith, which recognizes the importance of ecclesial communion, lived at times in sacrifice and in the renunciation of personal positions and perceptions, for the good of the Church and its innate vocation to unity, so much desired by Jesus at the Last Supper. In the preface to the volume on the Magisterium of John Paul I - which presents for the first time now the complete and integral corpus of the texts and documents of John Paul I during his pontificate, a fundamental service that has been realized by care of the John Paul I Vatican Foundation - Pope Francis, taking up the words of the holy bishop Oscar Romero, states that: "the Successor of Peter is the rock of consistency on which the Church that Christ himself builds, with the gift of his grace, takes unity. And if the gates of hell and death do not prevail, this does not happen because of the Pope's 'frail shoulders', but because the Pope 'is supported by the One who is eternal life, the immortal, the holy, the divine: Jesus Christ, our Lord'. And this is the mystery that also shines out in the story and teachings of John Paul I". 2

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1 Stefania FALASCA, Davide FIOCCO, Mauro VELATI, «*Io sono la polvere*» *Giovanni Paolo I 1912-1978*, Biography *ex documentis*, ed. San Paolo, Cinisello Balsamo 2022.

2 GIOVANNI PAOLO I, *Il Magistero, Testi e documenti del Pontificato*, edited by the John Paul I Vatican Foundation, with a Preface by Pope Francis, ed LEV-San Paolo, Vatican City-Cinisello Balsamo 2022, p.7.

### **Intervention of Don Davide Fiocco**

1. A big event for a small diocese.

Belluno-Feltre is a small diocese, with around 180,000 inhabitants, but during these days it is living with intimate joy this event which involves it.

A journey that began several years ago, thanks to the intuition and foresight of Bishop Vincenzo Savio, bishop from 2001 to 2004, has now reached its destination. Opening the diocesan synod in 2003, he invited his diocese to rediscover the holiness that had blossomed among its valleys, especially the path of “don Albino” - as he is still called - who was its most evident witness. The bishop glimpsed there “the possibility of deepening the context of family and local faith in which Albino Luciani had grown up”; and he also pointed out “the particularity of the formation of the seminaries of Feltre and Belluno, from which outstanding figures came out in those years, in particular the Jesuit Father Felice Cappello and Father Romano Bottegal”. From this impulse came the process of canonization, which was exceptionally initiated in the diocese of his birth, rather than that of his death.

## 2. The relic

The relic comes from the Albino Luciani Private Archive, today property of the John Paul I Vatican Foundation, and will be brought to the Pope during the Beatification ceremony. It is the outline of a reflection that Luciani dictated in 1956 on the three theological virtues, which significantly was taken up in the audiences of September 1978.

The reliquary was designed and made by sculptor Franco Murer, an artist from Falcade, a fellow countryman of Albino Luciani. He has made a highly symbolic choice of materials: for the plinth he has chosen a stone collected from the valley floor of Canale d'Agordo, a symbol of that family and parish foundation on which the young Albino founded his life choices. The plinth is surmounted by the representation of a cross carved from a piece of wood, obtained from the wreckage left by storm Vaia (October 2018): it represents the travails of Luciani's existence, on which Providence was able to trace a path of holiness. The simplicity of its production gives due prominence to the handwriting of the future Blessed, set in the Christian symbol par excellence, the Cross.

After the beatification, the relic and reliquary will be kept in the Cathedral of Belluno, where Albino Luciani ministered from 1943 to 1958 and where, on 23 November 2003, the Cause of Beatification and Canonization was solemnly opened.

A return home, a return to the origins of his preaching, a return to his roots.

## 3. The roots of Pope Luciani's holiness

And in fact - in the wake of what Msgr. Savio indicated - the beatification of John Paul I also requires us to reconsider his background, in which the roots of his holiness lie, with a look at the parish community of origin.

We know that those decades between the 19th and 20th centuries were difficult years, marked by emigration, the First World War, and a subsistence economy. However - in spite of many *vulgata*, which have too often extolled the humility and provinciality of the hometown - historical research recounts the vitality of a borderland, which was the seat of economic and social initiatives that led the way even at national level and, above all, was a hothouse of personalities of a certain importance.

It is no coincidence that during the Second Vatican Council - perhaps a unique case in the world - this small mountain parish was the home of three prelates among the Council Fathers: Bishop Luciani of Vittorio Veneto; Fr. Saba De Rocco († 1984), general of the Somaschi; and Bishop Giovanni Battista Costa († 1996), son of emigrants and first bishop of Porto Velho in Brazil.

The parish library, consisting of the bequests of various parish priests, bears further witness to the cultural

vitality of Pieve di Canale d'Agordo. It demonstrates an astonishing variety of interests, ranging from theology to the exact sciences, books in German, Greek, Arabic, Hebrew, Chinese vocabulary and grammar, and even works that, strictly speaking, were among the "forbidden books".

The social and cultural vitality of the context was supported above all by the parish priests. Mention must be made of Don Antonio Della Lucia († 1906), standard-bearer of social co-operativism, who in 1872 founded Italy's first co-operative social dairy and was a proponent of literacy among the population; he was Albino Luciani's formator.

Also worthy of mention is Don Filippo Carli († 1934), the teacher of the future Blessed. It was he who taught him the need for comprehensible language, which Luciani had as his guiding star right up to the audiences in the Sala Nervi. It was he who in 1931 entrusted the young cleric Albino Luciani with the task of cataloguing the library, compiling and reviewing over 1,200 volumes: and the latter did it in his own way, even allowing himself some ambitious criticism, inflamed by the ardour of the neophyte student. This inventory was a significant building block for the solid humanistic and theological preparation that Luciani, aided by a formidable memory, would possess with mastery throughout his life.

Finally, if don Filippo gave the future pope a pastoral imprint, we must also recall the bishops and superiors of the Seminary of Belluno who invested in the young Agordo priest, encouraging him to prepare for Rome. This is what the diocese of Belluno-Feltre remembers with gratitude.

#### 4. The involvement of the local Church

A large representation of Bellunesi, authorities and faithful will be present in these days in Rome. They will join the diocese of Rome in the vigil on Saturday, 3 September, and above all they will participate in the celebration on Sunday morning. Bishop Renato Marangoni will formulate the petition for beatification, on behalf of the diocese that was the originator of the Cause.

During the spring and summer there have been various moments of preparation for this event, the historical importance of which we are aware. Consider that in the martyrology so far there is only one believer from our diocese, Blessed Bernardino da Feltre († 1494).

On Sunday, 11 September, a thanksgiving celebration is planned to take place in the square of his hometown, Canale d'Agordo. It will be presided over by the Patriarch of Venice, accompanied by the bishops of Belluno-Feltre and Vittorio Veneto. Next autumn, the vicariates into which the diocese is divided have been invited to organize a pilgrimage to his birthplace.

In the meantime, work has begun on the liturgical adaptation of the Belluno Cathedral: this is the church in which Luciani served for fifteen years. In 1980 it was elevated to the rank of minor basilica by John Paul II, in honour of his predecessor. It was precisely the beatification that gave impetus to this artistic project.

The diocese is also committed to supporting theological studies at the Higher Institute of Religious Sciences, which it shares with the dioceses of Treviso and Vittorio Veneto and which is named in memory of John Paul I.

Finally, the beatification is above all a call the diocese feels it is receiving to assume the style of the new blessed. In particular, it takes on the style of the life and ministry of Pope Luciani, solemnly confirmed in beatification. The diocese wishes to measure itself in this style on the synodal path it is following along with the universal Church, renewing in particular – as requested in the synodal groups and in the diocesan synthesis – its commitment to proclamation and catechesis.

In the same direction, after the pandemic, the Pope Luciani Centre of Santa Giustina, established forty years

ago as a centre of evangelization, will also regain momentum: in line with the spirit of “don Albino”, our diocese will dedicate to him not a monument, but a place of catechesis and Christian formation.

### Testimony of Dr. Lina Petri

For my part I would just like to share a few memories.

My uncle Albino became a bishop when I was two years old. Of when I was very young I therefore remember very little, but I do remember a few times that he would stop by our house in Levico, passing through on his way to some engagement in Trentino. They were sudden and brief visits, but they left Mum happy. My brother and I can say that we got to know our uncle in those years through our mother's stories. She would tell us about their childhood in Canale and in particular about many episodes of the harsh period of the war and the resistance. There are many episodes that have stayed with me, including a comment my uncle made on the meeting between Mussolini and Hitler at Villa Gaggia, between Feltre and Belluno, in July 1943. In a loud voice in front of others he said: “*Siòn ente man de doi matt*. We are in the hands of two madmen”. During those terrible years of the occupation, of the round-ups, I know that my uncle had also worked in Belluno to hide people in danger, Jews.

At the time of the Council, our mother made us pray that “the Lord would enlighten him”. Every time he was in Rome for a session, Uncle sent a postcard, just the signature, often the phrase “a blessed greeting”. He always maintained this habit, even in later years. I was already an adult when I noticed that the postcard was often the same and always depicted the basilica of Saint Anthony in Via Merulana: a small attention to my mother, whose name was Antonia.

When I was 15, my uncle invited me to spend a few days during the Christmas holidays at his place in the patriarchate in Venice. Those days marked the beginning of a friendship for me. So, during my high school and university years, from 1970 to 1978, I visited him many times in Venice. He would urge me to visit him whenever I wanted. He would inquire about my problems, take an interest in my studies. I remember how, at the beginning of high school, he asked me whether I liked Saint Thomas or Saint Augustine more, and seeing me disoriented on the subject, he sadly noted a decline in teaching compared to his time... He often spoke to me about Saint Augustine, saying that he felt he was closer to him, that to understand his works one had to know his life and the experience he had had of sin and God's mercy. When he also explained profound things to me, he would express the concepts with clear examples, as at the Wednesday general audiences.

He would often repeat that he was particularly attached to me by his affection for my mother, who had sacrificed so much for him and had had to emigrate to work. But I always knew my uncle to be poor: in the patriarchate of Venice, apart from the “historical” furnishings, there was nothing sumptuous or particularly valuable. When he had arrived in Venice he had had to furnish the guest rooms, as the relatives of Patriarch Urbani had taken away what belonged to the cardinal. “You, however”, he told us, “When I die, do not take anything away, even if they are things I bought out of my own pocket”. Even in dress he was extremely sober. It happened that Sister Vincenza would sometimes pass on to my mother his woolen vests, socks, and shirts, worn and mended several times, which were then used by my father, a bricklayer, at work. Sister Vincenza, the nun who followed him from Vittorio Veneto to Rome, used to say that it was the only way to “get rid of” those ragged undergarments without my uncle reclaiming them in order to continue to use them.

Many times, I would visit him alone. Always in those years he would invite my family (my parents, my brother and me) to spend Christmas and Easter with him. During those meetings, invariably my mother would express all her worries about the bad times we were going through: the post-1968 protests, terrorism, the protests against the Pope. And she would tell him: “It's all a *rebaltòn*... Albino, I'm so worried about you too”. However, Uncle was serene; he encouraged her and told her: “Nina, don't worry, over the centuries the Church has overcome even more serious and difficult moments because it is the Lord who guides her. He is always there”. He added: “What is Tradition over the centuries remains and returns, always”. Sister Vincenza, told me that

Uncle said to her: "The truths of the faith I learned as a child, they have remained the same, they are always the same, and they have not changed from when I became a priest to now. And it is this Word of God, which is unchanging, that we must proclaim, not our own". He told us to continue praying the Rosary in the family, "even though everyone now says it is an outdated prayer". He asked us in particular to pray for Paul VI, who suffered misunderstandings.

In the patriarchal palace he often hosted cardinals from various parts of the world. I remember an exchange of visits with Cardinal Marty of Paris. Once his uncle gave me a statuette of Our Lady, a copy of the one at Notre Dame, which he had received as a gift from the archbishop of Paris who had been to see him the previous day. He had hosted Cardinal Thiandoum more than once in Venice, and had told me about that African bishop. He told me that these visits opened up a wider horizon for him. More than once he also told me that he would have liked to experience a mission in Africa and that he would not have minded imitating Cardinal Léger who had given up the episcopal see of Montréal in 1968 to serve lepers in Cameroon. He said he too was thinking of asking the Pope later on.

In the autumn of 1975, I stopped by to say goodbye to him before I left for Rome as a university student, and before he left for Brazil. It was early November, a day or two after the murder of Pier Paolo Pasolini. The bishop of Udine, Msgr. Alfredo Battisti, phoned him to ask his advice on whether or not to hold a religious funeral. The circumstances of his death were scandalous and I was struck by how his uncle assessed the situation: "Let us leave his conduct of life to the judgement of the Lord. All of us, none excluded, need His mercy. His artistic works, however", he said, "spoke for him, and on the other hand, in Friuli, as a young man, he had been attached to Christian practice, and it was right that returning now to his homeland, the Church should welcome him with Christian burial". I was struck by his criterion of evaluation that first of all did not condemn, but saved the good, and I was struck by this clear explanation of his, as a true pastor.

I met him for the last time in Venice on the evening of 5 August 1978. I was passing through on my way to a holiday with university friends and he had just returned to the patriarchate from a few days spent at the Alberoni, where he always went in the summer for a rest. During dinner I told him about the death from leukaemia of a university friend of mine. I remember his face telling me that one must always be ready, because death can come at any time: "*L'importante l'é stare semper col Signor*" ("The important thing is to stay with the Lord always") he had told me that evening, which was also a customary phrase with which he always greeted me as I left. Towards the end of dinner on that 5 August he called me on the phone, and on his way back he told me he had heard that Paul VI was not well. I stayed overnight in the patriarchate. In the morning, my uncle told me he had heard from Rome that he had taken a turn for the worse. He greeted me with the recommendation to pray for the Pope. I saw him again in the audience with family members on 2 September and in the official meetings the next day. As a simple faithful I was also present at the Mass of taking possession at Saint John Lateran on 23 September. During the month of his pontificate, Uncle's serene and wise demeanour remained as it had always been. In a private meeting with us family members on 2 September, he immediately reassured us by saying: "I have done nothing to get here. So, stay calm as I stay calm". After all, this was always his attitude, in keeping with his lifestyle.

I finally saw him lying in his bed after his death. I remember his room in the papal apartment... from where I was sitting I was looking at him and in front of me on the right - between the two corner windows of the room - the desk... there was only a crucifix and the photograph of his parents, my maternal grandparents, holding my cousin Pia, their first granddaughter.

### **Testimony of Sr. Margherita Marin**

*Religious sister of the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity (Suore di Maria Bambina), assistant at the papal apartment during the month of John Paul I's pontificate*

I saw John Paul I for the first time two days after his election, along with the other sisters of our community

called to provide the service of assistance at the papal apartment. Until that moment I had never had the occasion to meet him personally, although Luciani was known to us, because ever since the times of his episcopate in Vittorio Veneto he had been accompanied by the Maria Bambina Sisters.

He welcomed us warmly, without intimidating us. He told us to pray, that the Lord had given him a burden, but with His help and our prayers he would carry it through. Knowing that I was the youngest of the sisters – I was 37 years old – he said, “I am sorry to have taken away a young sister”. He immediately treated us with familiarity. I remember that the day after our arrival I was sent, together with the secretary Fr. Magee, to collect the vestments and close the pope’s private chapel, the one where Paul VI used to celebrate mass in the morning with his secretaries, because John Paul I wanted that morning Mass be celebrated in the private chapel inside the apartment, and that we nuns also be present together with the secretaries: “We are a family and we celebrate together”, he said.

The day of the solemn mass for the beginning of his pontificate he also welcomed at lunch the sisters who had been with him at the patriarchate in Venice. He always showed great respect towards us nuns. I took care of the cloakroom and the sacristy in particular, but also performed other services when necessary. Sr. Cecilia was the cook, Sr. Vincenza was the nurse, and Sr. Elena coordinated our work. Sr. Vincenza was the eldest; she had known the Holy Father for many years, as she had met him in Belluno at the time in which, as a young priest, he had had health problems and she assisted him as a nurse. When he then became a bishop, he asked for a small community of Maria Bambina Sisters for the episcopal apartment and wanted her to assist him too. Sr. Vincenza followed him to Venice too, and she was the only one of the sisters who were with him in Venice to come to the Vatican. Sr. Vincenza said that she had not been keen to accept to come, as she already felt old, but that later she was fine. She had health problems and the Holy Father, I remember, told us: “You know, Sr. Vincenza suffers from heart problems, and I have told her not to walk too much and also to take the personal lift if she needs it”.

During that month I always saw him calm, serene, sure. It seemed as if he had always been the Pope. Even in prayer, you could see that he was joined with the Lord. He knew how to treat his collaborators with great respect, apologizing for disturbing them. I never saw him show any gestures of impatience with anyone, ever. He instilled courage. He was affable with everyone.

He got up early in the morning, around 5.00. He then went to the chapel to pray for an hour and a half. As we were always nearby, we sisters saw him from outside. He always prayed alone, and the secretaries came down later for Mass. Mass was celebrated at 7.00. While the Holy Father was in the chapel, we sisters would say Lauds in the lounge near the kitchen, then we too used to go to the chapel for Mass. During the celebration he did not deliver homilies. I remember that instead, sometimes, when he had to celebrate Mass somewhere, he would leave Fr. Magee to celebrate in his place, and he assisted as a simple altar server. He kept the Eucharistic fast, so only after Mass would he have breakfast. After breakfast he used to stay in his study to read the newspapers, and around 9.00 he came down for the audiences. Lunch was around 12.30, and he then retired for his afternoon rest. In the afternoon he would usually stay in the apartment; he studied, read, and walked while reading. Sometimes he would go up to the hanging garden. Only rarely did he go down to the Vatican gardens. Once Cardinal Villot had said to him, “Holiness, if you go down into the gardens, we must close up and not let anyone pass”. “Then”m replied the Holy Father, “if you have to close... I'll stay here”. And so he stayed in most of the time. He would receive some people at his request. Before dinner he would recite Vespers with the secretaries, often in English. Dinner was around 7.30 pm. We sisters did not serve at the table; there was the room help Angelo Gugel for this. He would then say Compline with them, and while we were still tidying up the refectory, he would come to greet us. Every evening. I remember that he would always recommend prayers for the many needs in the world, and he would always ask me something about the preparation of the following day’s liturgy; then he would wish us a good night, always greeting us with these words: “See you tomorrow, Sisters, if the Lord wants us to celebrate Mass together”. He would retire early.

His last day was like the others. In the morning, he entered the chapel to pray at the usual time and celebrated Holy Mass with us at seven. He had his usual breakfast, then took a short break to read the newspapers, and then went downstairs for the morning audiences. At around 11.30 he returned to the apartment and I remember that he came into the kitchen, as he often did, to ask us for a coffee: “Sisters, do you have a coffee? Could you



prepare me a coffee?" He sat down, drank his coffee and then went to his study. He lunched with the secretaries and then retired for his afternoon rest. That afternoon he always stayed at home, he never moved from the apartment and he did not receive anyone, as he said that he was preparing a document for the bishops. However, I do not know which bishops it was addressed to. I remember it well, because that afternoon I was ironing with the door open, and I saw him passing to and fro. He used to walk in the apartment with the papers he was reading in his hands. Every now and then he would pause for a moment to make some notes, and then he would start walking again, reading, and as he walked, he passed in front of where I was. I remember that, seeing me iron, he said: "Sister, I make you work a lot... But don't iron the shirt too well, because it's hot, I sweat and have to change them often. Just iron the collar and the cuffs, because you can't even see the rest". But he said it in Veneto dialect, which he often used with us.

After dinner, he received the call from the Cardinal of Milan, Giovanni Colombo. Already in the morning I had heard the Holy Father speak with Fr. Magee regarding that telephone call. And, after evening, the Holy Father went to answer the telephone and he spoke with the cardinal. I don't remember exactly how long the conversation continued, perhaps half an hour. Afterwards he came to us, as he always used to do, to greet us before retiring to his study. I remember that he asked me which Mass had been prepared for him the following day, and I replied "That of the Angels". He wished us goodnight, with the words he always repeated: "Until tomorrow, sisters; if the Lord wills, let us celebrate Mass together".

A detail of that moment there is still impressed upon my memory: we were all together in the little lounge with the door open. The door was directly in front of that of his private study, and when, after he had already said goodnight to us, the Holy Father was at the door of his study, and he turned around one more time and greeted us again, with a gesture of the hand, smiling... I seem to see him still there, at the door. As serene as always. It is the last image I carry of him.

### **Testimony of Fr. Juan José Dabusti**

A question I am frequently asked – starting from the deputy postulator of the Cause even before she came to Buenos Aires to open the canonical process to ascertain the miracle - and then by many journalists who have also repeated it to Roxana Sosa and her daughter Candela since 13 October 2021, that is, since the Church recognized the miracle of healing performed through the intercession of John Paul I. The question is this: why precisely John Paul I? And other questions have accompanied this "healthy curiosity":

Why did you pray to John Paul I when there are so many saints in Argentina?

Why did it occur to you that day to invoke him?

What inspired you, what prompted you to pray to him?

Of course, these are not the only questions. Many others have arisen. And they are questions that have helped me. In these months, since the approval of the miracle and the announcement of the beatification of John Paul I, I have been able to reflect in my personal prayer, in conversations with so many people, in the testimonies given what happened on that 22 July 2011.

I can tell you that three threads intersect to weave this miracle of God that had Pope Luciani as its intercessor. I like to call these three threads a historical thread, a spiritual thread, and an ecclesial thread.

These three intersecting threads are included in this simple testimony to recount the evening of 22 July 2011, when I was called by a mother, Roxana, to come to the deathbed of her dying daughter, and seeing her in those conditions, I was inspired to turn to John Paul I to ask for the healing of his child, and together with her, and some nurses present, I prayed to him.

Until that moment I had never prayed to John Paul I for healing. But his figure had been linked to my vocation. In August 1978, at just 13 years of age and at the beginning of my adolescence, I was profoundly struck by the election and the person of Pope Luciani: I saw he was very simple and very happy. These two traits had captured my attention, and roused my admiration and, above all, my spontaneous affection for him.

I remember that, in those first days of his pontificate, the media sent news, footage and photos of John Paul I. So it was that, on the door of a wardrobe in my room, I placed his portrait, along with other prints. And at times, looking at that portrait, I prayed for him.

I also keep in my memory the impact on me of his sudden death.

As I grew up, I prayed to him to help me discern the vocation to follow. To be a priest, or what? And I am sure that Albino Luciani was a mysterious spiritual father and a silent but effective intercessor for me in deciding to embrace the priestly vocation. As the years passed and I became a priest in 1991, the presence of John Paul I always had its place in my spirituality, more or less strongly.

The historical and ecclesial threads begin to join in Autumn 2011, when I found myself parish priest of the parish of Our Lady of La Rábida in the centre of Buenos Aires. In those months, I noticed a woman who often came to pray and on various occasions, at midday, participated in the Eucharist. She was Roxana Sosa. Her eleven-year-old daughter had been taken in a grave condition to the health centre near the parish, the Favalaro Foundation: a hospital centre renowned in Argentina and throughout South America. I used to go to the rooms of that hospital, visiting the sick and their families, when I was called by them.

It was then that Roxana spoke to me about her daughter Candela's serious illness: malignant refractory epilepsy. She came from the city of Paraná, more than 500 km from Buenos Aires. She used to come alone to see her daughter during the week. On Saturday and Sunday, the other twin daughters travelled with her to keep her company.

In this way I began to accompany Roxana: we spoke and prayed together. In all the Masses I used to ask the community to pray specially for Candela's health. I remember going several times to the intensive care ward where the little girl was intubated. On that fifth floor, with Roxana, we shared beside Candela's bed the sacrament of the anointment of the sick, which I administered, the blessings and the sadness for the desperate conditions of the child. I saw an exemplary strength flow from the heart of this mother.

On 22 July, around midday, while I was in the parish, Roxana came to tell me that the doctors had just told her Candela had contracted a virus in hospital. She had pneumonia and septic shock, and they did not think she would survive the night. Roxana asked me to go, to pray once more, and to bless her.

We went together and entered the intensive care ward. I don't remember, at that time, which medical staff were near Candela's bed. We approached Candela's body, which was in a fetal position; she did not weigh more than nineteen kilos. And there I stopped. I had to stop because those three threads that intersected were lost in ... How can I express it in words? In a few points. And in another thread, which is mystery. Because I had proposed to Roxana to pray there to John Paul I to intercede for the life and healing of Candela? I don't know. It was the Holy Spirit.

We, priests, frequently find ourselves in these situations of the end of life of people. When we visit hospitals and clinics we are continually faced with the reality of death. Therefore, I can affirm that it was certainly a motion of the Spirit that drove me to propose this prayer to John Paul I, there in that moment.

Roxana knew nothing of Pope Luciani. Given that we were in intensive care, the explanation I gave her to ask for his intercession to save Candela's life was very brief. So, together, she, two nurses who were present, and I placed our hands on Candela's body and I prayed spontaneously. I don't remember the exact words I said. I asked the Lord, by the intercession of John Paul I, to heal Candela.

The following day, Roxana came to the parish and told me that not only had her daughter survived the night, but there were also clear signs of improvement. The days and weeks passed, and Candela's healing continued, until I lost touch with them because she was discharged and returned to Paraná. I want to share with you that I have always kept this fact alive. Within, I was always sure of a special intervention by John Paul I.

Things remained in anticipatory silence until the end of 2014, when I met Roxana and Candela again in the parish of La Rábida. For me it was a great joy to see a girl of almost fifteen, full of life, whom I did not recognize, and her mother. They came to greet me. Roxana wanted Candela to meet me and also for me to see how she had recovered, healed. That afternoon I asked Roxana if she remembered for whom we had prayed. And then I added, "I think that one day we should report this miraculous event".

*Muchas gracias.*

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