

## Blessed Giacinto Longhin (1863-1936)



Andrea Giacinto Longhin, bishop of Treviso, was born in Fiumicello di Campodarego (Padua) on 22 November 1863 to a rural family. He was baptised Giacinto Bonaventura the following day. On finishing primary school, at sixteen he decided to become a Capuchin Friar. He faced a struggle with his father who opposed the idea, not wanting to lose his only son from work in the fields. Giacinto prevailed, and was clothed in the Capuchin habit at Bassano del Grappa (Vicenza) on 27 August 1879 and received the name Andrea. In the friary at Padua he completed his studies and made final profession on 4 October 1883. After his theological studies in Venice he was ordained priest on 19 June 1886. From 1888 he was spiritual director and teacher in the Capuchin seminary in Udine. From 1889 he was director and professor of the Capuchin clerics in Padua and of the Capuchin theological students in Venice from 1891. On 18 April 1902 he was elected provincial superior.

Saint Pius X appointed him bishop of his home diocese on 16 April 1904. Pius was pleased to have "chosen one of the more beautiful flowers of the Capuchin Order" for his own diocese. On 12 August 1907 Pius X elaborated, "It is one of my first-born sons, to whom I have entrusted my beloved diocese. I rejoice every time they report his praises to me. He is truly holy and learned, a good, old fashioned bishop whose apostolic zeal will leave an indelible imprint." Consecrated bishop in Rome on 17 April 1904 he entered Treviso on 6 August. He was determined to be a good shepherd, and would not spare "effort or sacrifice, ready to give all his blood and his very life itself" for his church. For thirty two years he was "the good shepherd of the Church in Treviso", while continuing to live in Capuchin austerity and poverty.

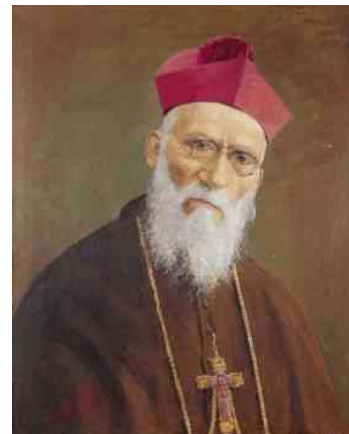
The proclamation of the word was one of his more preferred ministries. After the example of Pius X he was concerned about the catechesis of the children, of the young in youth associations, and of Catholic men. He encouraged learning competitions, study days, catechists days and two diocesan catechist congresses (1922 and 1932). He was seen as "the catechism bishop." Like a father he loved and accompanied his priests. He cared for them in a special way as soon as they left the seminary. He preached monthly retreats and spiritual exercises for his clergy, and conducted pastoral visits to all of the two hundred and thirteen parishes three times (1905, 1912, 1926). He organised a synod for them in 1911. This was considered a master piece of organisation and precision, which Pius X appreciated very much. Spiritually he followed Saint Maria Bertilla Boscardin, the servants of God Giuseppe Toniolo, Guido Negri and Mother Oliva Bonaldo. He had a close friendship with the Capuchin Saint Leopoldo Mandic and with Saint Pius X. The latter friendship is well documented by a copious correspondence and his own description, "We who ... were so much part of his dear heart."

He was a real leader among the lay people, particularly in the youth movements. He was convinced, and insisted even in his testament that "families and parishes, the country and the world need saints." In April 1914, he declared sacred "the right of the workers to organise themselves ... into unions for their economic and moral advancement." In 1920 he supported the *Leghe Bianche*, a Christian union movement, so showing

himself to be bishop of the poor, workers and farmers. In 1930 at Treviso he founded the Pius X Episcopal college to ensure a Christian formation for the young. Courageously he faced the trials of the Great War of 1915-18, without deserting his post. He remained close to the citizens, refugees, soldiers and the wounded, encouraging them. On the 27 April 1917 he made a vow to erect a church dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, Helper. Called the “bishop of the Piave and of the Montello”, honoured with the War Cross of Merit, at the end of the war he travelled throughout the diocese to encourage the reconstruction of forty seven ruined churches, to comfort souls and re-awaken the Christian life with courageous interventions to save his faithful from anti-Christian and subversive ideologies.

The Veneto bishops regarded him as the “Patriarca di compagna”, an advisor, a distinguished theologian and tireless apostle. In October 1923 Pius XI recognised the “great service” rendered by Longhin: “He has worked so much for the church.” In 1923 he was apostolic administrator of the diocese of Padua, and apostolic vistorator and administrator of the archdiocese of Udine in 1927-1928. He was appointed titular bishop Patrasso on 4 October 1928. On the twenty-fifth anniversary of his episcopal ordination in 1929, the servant of God, cardinal Pietro La Fontaine, wrote: “With delight and edification I see in him a copy of the gospel Good Shepherd, so similar to the original.”

Struck down by ailments on 3 October 1935 his Calvary lasted for nine months of suffering. He celebrated Mass until 14 February 1936. From that day he could only receive Communion each day instead. He died on Friday 26 June 1936. His funeral celebration on 30 June was striking, with the unanimous chorus, “He truly was a saint.” From 5 November 1936 his remains were entombed in Treviso Cathedral. On 22 November 1984 his body was found to be “entire, with some parts still tender, but in large part mummified.” The initial investigation was conducted in Treviso, 21 April 1964 to 26 June 1967, with processes in Padua and Udine. The decree on the revision of his many writings was issued on 17 December 1971. The decree introducing his cause is dated 15 December 1981. The apostolic process was completed in Treviso from 18 June 1982 until 26 June 1985. The *Positio* was delivered in 1998 and the decree of his heroic virtues was issued on 21 December. John Paul II declared him blessed 20 October 2002.



Translation based on the article by COSTANZO CARGNONI, *Sulle orme dei santi*, 2000, p.359-361.