

**Documented chronicle of  
THE LAST FEW DAYS OF SAN LUIGI ORIONE**

by Alessandro Belano SDP

**Wednesday, March 6, 1940**

[On 9 February 1940 Don Luigi Orione was hit by a serious attack of angina pectoris in Tortona. On this occasion, he receives the Anointing of the sick, then slowly recovers, but, after about a month, it is not yet fully restored. The doctors who treat him suggest a rest in San Remo, so that the healthy climate of the Ligurian town can benefit his health].

At dawn on Wednesday March 6, the eve of his departure for San Remo, Don Luigi Orione went to the Cathedral from the Mother House of Tortona, in a car driven by his Co-brother Don Adriano Calegari. Before leaving, he wants to pay homage to the urn of San Marziano, patron of the city, whose liturgical memory occurs on that day. For a few minutes he remains in prayer near the urn of the Saint.

Immediately afterwards, still in the car, Don Orione goes to the Sanctuary of Our Lady of the Safe Keeping: «Let's go and say goodbye to Our Lady!», he says to the driver. He goes to the right end of the balustrade of the high altar, then kneels and remains for a few minutes in prayer.

Returning to the Mother House, Don Orione celebrates Mass at the community. Talk about San Marciano and mention some personal memories.

At noon, Don Orione comes to the refectory to have lunch with the community. Some clerics take the wooden statue of our Lady of of Divine Providence, the Marian statue venerated in the first college opened by the founder in the San Bernardino district, and place it on the table in front of him. Don Orione, although still visibly debilitated, expresses his intimate contentment.

During lunch, a photograph is taken: close to Don Orione the canon Fr. Arturo Perduca, the Superiors of the house and some clerics. At the end of the lunch, the religious brothers who are part of the band play some marches in honor of their director.

**Thursday, March 7, 1940**

At the Mother House, in Tortona, on the morning of Thursday March 7 everything is ready for Don Orione's departure for San Remo: the date of his departure, in fact, has been set for that day. Unexpectedly, Don Orione announces the postponement. On seeing the disappointment of Don Enrico Bariani, treasurer of the Mother House, surprised by that incomprehensible decision, Don Orione says to him: "If you knew why I don't go, you wouldn't insist because I don't leave." A little later, in the presence of the canon Fr. Arturo Perduca, of Dr. Guido Codevilla and other confreres, confides: "They insist that I go to San Remo and I will go, but remember that I will return in a coffin!".

In the morning, Don Orione orders the young secretary Giuseppe Zambarbieri (future third successor of the Little Work of Divine Providence) to put the register of Masses in order. Then he dictates some letters address to different people.

Also in the morning, Don Orione receives the visit of Count Agostino Ravano, benefactor of the Congregation, who arrived from Genoa to greet him and do the check-up on his health. Conversing with the usual kindness, Don Orione said to his friend: "I dreamt of my mother and my brothers who said to me: "Five more". At the moment, Agostino Ravano does not pay attention to these words, the meaning of which will include five days later, on March 12, the day of the death of the founder.

Don Orione spends the rest of the day in the Mother House, sharing the life of the community. He receives other visits and writes several letters, including one addressed to Don Angelo Bartoli (which will end the next day, March 8): «Charity cannot be measured by the meter, and it is never too much. I finish this one on the evening of March 8. Tomorrow [i.e. March 9] I'm leaving for San Remo: I'm going to enjoy it! And to think that it's just an exact month that I don't do anything anymore! Patience!, and I go on in the Lord's name. But you see that I don't want to die among the palms of San Remo, but among our poor who are Jesus Christ. Today [March 8] I went to greet Our Lady, our religious brothers and aspirants, the blind and non-blind religious sisters: as you can see, I am fine. I went also to greet His Exc. Rev. Bishop and in the curia. Tonight I will say goodbye to these here at this house and then I will go in Domino".

### **Friday, March 8, 1940**

After the first postponement decided by Don Orione, on the morning of Friday March 8 everything is ready for his departure to San Remo. The car waits in front of the door of the Mother House, in Tortona. Unexpected new difficulties arise: Don Orione is in the room and is discussing with Dr. Guido Codevilla and Fr. Enrico Bariani. Don Orione would not like to leave at all and repeats it clearly. Finally, following the insistence of those present, his departure to San Remo was postponed to the following day, Saturday 9 March.

In noticing a small tear on his already worn cassock, Don Orione murmurs to his secretary Giuseppe Zambarbieri: "Poor my clothes, it can't do it anymore, like my life!".

Around 10:00 am, being accompanied by car, Don Orione goes to the Episcopate, to greet the Bishop, His Exc. Egisto Domenico Melchiori.

Immediately afterwards, he goes to San Bernardino district: he goes to the Sanctuary of Our Lady of the Safe Keeping for a short prayer. Once out, he goes to the adjoining house of the Aspirancy. In the courtyard, the young aspirants are lined up in two rows, with their director Don Alfonso Franceschini. When the founder appears, they kneel. Don Orione has a few seconds: «I give you the blessing. I leave you a memory: prayer and study, prayer and study! ». The visit continues by greeting the religious brothers who live at the shadow of the Sanctuary. He then

went to the Mother House of the Little Missionary Sisters of Charity: all the sisters rushed to hear his word again and receive the blessing. On returning to the Paterno, he greets and blesses the Sacramentine Sisters, in Groppo.

In the afternoon, Don Orione meets the eleven religious Brothers who will receive the Diaconate in the Cathedral of Tortona the following day, Saturday March 9, together with the Deacon Francesco Pigoli who will be ordained priest: "We are humble, fervent at the foot of the Church!". In Rome, there is another Deacon who will be ordained as priest on March 9. It is the Slovenian Rev. Kolomanno Kisilak, to whom Don Orione sends a short letter: «Dear Don Kisilak, the Lord be always with us! (...). I will be spiritually present in your sacred ordination. You will be the first one for whom I will pray in tomorrow morning Mass, and I invoke and invoke all the greatest and most consoling blessings from God and Holy Mary, tomorrow and always upon your Priesthood! (...). I embrace you and bless you in osculo sancto. Pray for me and for everyone, tomorrow and always ».

Towards evening, the secretary Giuseppe Zambarbieri brings to Don Orione the register of Masses which he has arranged with the help of Don Gino Carradori. The founder says to his young secretary: "we has spent the last day together."

At the end of the evening prayers, in the Chapel of the Mother House, Don Orione gives the last good night: «I have come to give you the Good night, and I have also come to greet you, because, pleasing God, tomorrow I will stay for some time, for a little or for a long time or even forever ... They want to send me to San Remo because they think that there, those auras, that climate, that sun, that rest can bring some benefit to that little life that can still be in me . But it is not among the palm trees that I want to live! And, if I could make a wish, I would say that it is not among the palms that I want to live and die, but among the poor who are Jesus Christ ... Dear children, I have come to give you a good night: it could be the last .. So, farewell, dear children! ». Almost by silent agreement, nobody moves from the benches. Don Orione kneels and rests his head with his arms entwined on the altar table. There is a silence full of emotion. Many cry. A few minutes pass. Then the canon Fr. Arturo Perduca begs a cleric to go and ask the director for the blessing. Don Orione gets up, recites an Hail Mary and with an open gesture he blesses, saying: «Gratia, misericordia, pax et benedictio Dei Onnipotenti: Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti descendat super me et super vos et maneat semper nobiscum. Amen».

On returning to the room, Don Orione inquired, different to other times, if Fr. Luigi Orlandi and his assistant secretaries were present at his Good night, thus suggesting the tacit desire that his farewell words had been fixed in writing. The reconstruction and writing work of that last Good Night will continue until 1:30 am.

### **Saturday, March 9, 1940**

At dawn, Don Orione celebrates the community Mass in the chapel of the Mother House. In distributing the Eucharist, rest your left elbow on the altar table, without moving. At the end, he asks Fr. Vittorio Gatti to confess: «What do you want, they want to send me to San Remo and I

see that there I will not find the facility of in confessing; it is better that I will do it here that I have every the opportunity ». He kneels on one of the benches used by the clerics and confesses.

He then goes up to his room to prepare for his departure for San Remo. He takes with him a briefcase for correspondence and an old cloak: he leaves the new coat hanging on the nail, behind the door of the room. When he leaves, he entrusts the key to the cleric Costanzo Costamagna. Together with the key, he gives him, without counting it, a certain sum of money for daily expenses, saying: "Then others will give it to you...". The money will be sufficient to cover ordinary expenses until March 12, the day of his death.

At 9:00 am Don Orione comes out of the room. In the corridor on the ground floor of the Mother House, priests and religious brothers are lined up in two rows, who feeling touched greet him. He gets into the car, led by Fr. Adriano Calegari and goes to Tortona railway station.

Arriving at the Tortona railway station, he remains in the waiting room. Only two tickets are purchased: one for Don Orione, one for the Bro. Modesto Schiro, 42 years old, in charge of accompanying him and assisting him in San Remo as a nurse. Don Bariani, who was supposed to accompany him, is dismissed by Don Orione and returns to the Mother House.

In the meantime, Paolo Marengo and Michele Bianchi, two friends of the Congregation, arrive in the station, in the company of Fr. Giuseppe Zambarbieri. The two decide to accompany Don Orione to Genoa. While waiting for the train, Fr. Francesco Pigoli, the new priest and the eleven deacons immediately after their ordination arrived from the Cathedral. Don Orione blesses and dismisses them, not wanting to create attention toward his person.

When the train's arrival signal is given, Don Orione gets up and, seeing a photographer who is waiting for him, sent by Fr. Orlandi, tries to escape and the photographer only catches him in passing. These are the last two photographs of the living Don Orione.

Don Orione gets on the train with the Brother Modesto, a nurse and the two friends Marengo and Bianchi. The train is very crowded. There is hardly a free seat for him in a third-class carriage, with wooden benches, for smokers. There are already seven people, Don Orione is the eighth. Sitting down, he takes some sheets out of the small suitcase and starts writing some letters.

After a few kilometers, the controller, recognized Don Orione, invites him to go to the first-class carriage. Seeing the red cushions and coverings, Don Orione declines the invitation and returns to his place.

In Serravalle Scrivia the train stops for the service stop. Without being noticed, Don Orione gets out of the compartment and goes back into another wagon. With the train moving, the three companions are disconcerted. At the next stop in Ronco Scrivia, Don Orione appears on the sidewalk and, in a hilarious tone, turns to his companions: "Excuse me, gentlemen: where are

you going?". Back on the train, Don Orione adds: "You are great guardians: three behind one and you let him escape!".

Once in Genoa, Don Orione greets Fr. Enrico Sciaccaluga, director of the Istituto Paverano, who is waiting for him at the station. Then he dismisses his friends Marengo and Bianchi: «Now you go home to do something; I'm already here doing nothing."

Don Orione and Bro. Modesto leave for San Remo on another train. The two sit in a third-class wagon with wooden seats. The train is uncrowded. On the journey, no one recognizes or greets Don Orione.

At 2.30 pm don Orione and the Bro. Modesto arrive in San Remo. The weather is bad and it rains continuously. No one is waiting at the station, despite the due notice of the previous days. Don Orione would like to go on foot to Villa Santa Clotilde, but Bro. Modesto insists and puts him on a cab-taxi.

The two arrive at their destination and ring the door repeatedly. Nobody shows up. Finally Sr. Maria Eufrosina Cremasco arrives, who, having seen Don Orione, kneels and informs that there is no one at home, because they went to Bussana sanctuary: "Well, well! Have you seen how they receive Don Orione? Nobody at the station, nobody here », the founder comments smiling.

Don Orione immediately goes to the chapel for a visit to the Blessed Sacrament. In the sacristy hangs a photograph of Don Orione, who intervenes: "Take off, take off that deal right away!". Cleric Modesto does not know what to do and finally turns the picture with his face facing the wall.

Don Orione takes a seat in the parlor and goes to work. He takes the letters already written and another correspondence from the briefcase. Meanwhile, Fr. Bariani also arrives by car, to whom Fr. Sterpi has ordered to go to San Remo and always stay close to Don Orione.

Don Orione then goes to the assigned room, a small room on the ground floor. For a previous arrangement by Fr. Sterpi, the room has been reduced to the essentials: a bed, a bedside table, a coffee table, an armchair and a few chairs. The mirrored wardrobe and other furnishings have been removed. However, when Don Orione sees the room, he does not want to enter: the ceiling is decorated with a blue sky full of stars and he considers it too luxurious: "Will you put me here? Listen, Bariani, let's go away, let's go home. I don't feel like it, I can't be here. Give me this charity: look at the train timetable...". Only after numerous insistences, he lets himself be convinced.

In the meantime, Don Severino Ghiglione comes from the nearby Convitto San Romolo with the Tortona benefactor Gregorio Tononi and some assistants. Don Orione instructs him to provide him with postcards and a train timetable.

Around 18:00, after Don Orione consumed a chicken broth, Bro. Modesto takes him back to his room. Here we are witnessing a singular episode: the lights of his room remain off, while in the other rooms the light bulbs come on regularly. Don Orione comments: «Well, well, really well! Did you see? Also this!». The strange phenomenon will last all night until morning.

In the semi-dark room, there is a plaster statuette reproducing the Madonna of Lourdes. In front, a small wax candle burns. Don Orione turns to his nurse brother: «See? Don't you think it's a mortuary? But well, but well; really all right! ». After reciting the Rosary, Don Orione consumes dinner in the company of the cleric Modesto, Fr. Ghiglione and Fr. Bariani. After dinner, Don Orione goes to the chapel and kneels on the floor for the recitation of the evening prayers. At around 21:00 he retires to his room.

### **Sunday, March 10, 1940**

Don Orione gets up around 6:00 am. He will do so in the three days he passes in San Remo. After half an hour of meditation, using the instrument at the death of Saint Alphonsus, at 8:00 he celebrates Mass in the chapel of Villa Santa Clotilde, served by the cleric Modesto. Together with the small community of sisters, other people, especially ladies and benefactors, are present, informed of the arrival of Don Orione in San Remo: a total of fifty people. In order not to aggravate his tiredness, the sisters and the house' staff decide not to receive Holy Communion from him.

After Mass, Don Orione remains in his bench for thanksgiving: first on his knees and then seated. He pray collected, with his elbows on the bench and the face in his hands.

After about half an hour, breakfast is served: coffee, milk and some biscuits. Don Orione comments: "No, a little bread, bread is needed: it is more substantial. Once we didn't even have bread." He then takes a cup of coffee with milk, some bread, starting and ending with a cross mark.

Don Orione follows the community timetable. He prays and writes a lot. During the three days of his life in San Remo (10-12 March), Don Orione always remains inside the Villa Santa Clotilde, between the room, church, parlor and refectory. It does not even go out into the garden nor into the park behind it. The books he uses in those days are: the Breviary, the Divine Comedy, The Betrothed, the Instrument to Death and the Life of Saint Francis.

At midmorning, Dr. Giuseppe Panizzi, head of the San Remo hospital, came to his room for a medical examination. The founder reports to him some past facts concerning his health and, after a brief visit, the doctor leaves. On leaving, he reports to the cleric Modesto who intends to carry out the analysis of urine and blood and prescribes the following therapy: one injection of Resyl in the morning, after Mass, and one in the evening, before dinner; 20 drops of Coramina, three times a day, before meals; 14 or 15 drops of Strophanthus, three times a day.

Don Orione returns to work in his room until lunchtime. Occasionally, Bro. Modesto sees him interrupt his work and exclaim: "Jesus, Jesus!"; then he starts writing again. At 12:00 he recites the Angelus and then goes to the parlor for lunch.

After lunch, Don Orione goes to the chapel for the Eucharistic visit. In the church there are also some sisters. Once out, Bro. Modesto insists that he go to his room to rest. He replies: "But leave me alone for a while ... We will rest in paradise!".

Don Orione resumed his work in the parlor and wrote other letters. In the three days spent in San Remo, he writes about sixty letters. Saturday March 9: fifteen letters. Sunday 10 March: eighteen or nineteen letters. Monday 11 March: twenty-two or twenty-three letters, plus the telegram to the Pope. Tuesday March 12: five letters. At times, he rests his glasses on the table and puts his face in his hands, repeating his ejaculation: "Jesus, Jesus!". In the afternoon he still receives Fr. Bariani, Fr. Ghiglione and some other guests come.

At 18:00 the canon Fr. Alessandro Gazzaniga, guest in the Villa Santa Clotilde, celebrates the Eucharistic blessing, Don Orione present, who kneels at the balustrade. Immediately afterwards the recitation of the Rosary begins which Don Orione recites on his knees.

At 19:00 dinner is served; Fr Bariani is also present. The conversation is happy and serene, that Don Orione in a moment jokingly says: «But look what a sick person I am! See if I am sent here to buy health! ».

Three of them after dinner go to church for the recitation of the evening prayers. Fr. Bariani says good night and therefore everyone retires. Don Orione still works a little at the table, then goes to bed and reads the life of San Francesco. About half an hour later, he turns off the light and sleeps peacefully.

### **Monday, March 11, 1940**

Don Orione gets up regularly at 6:00 am. Brought to the chapel, recite the Angelus and morning prayers. He then sets himself up for meditation, using the Instrument at death again.

Don Orione celebrates Holy Mass at 7:30 am, after that celebrated by Fr. Bariani. In doing the genuflections, bend the knee to the ground, but struggles to recover. The sisters and the house staff again decide not to receive the Eucharist from him, so as not to tire him.

After thanksgiving, Don Orione goes to the parlor for breakfast. Then he goes to work. He is mainly concerned with the expedition of some missionaries to South America. He writes numerous letters. Addressing Bro. Modesto, he says: "Today is a committed day". He interrupts the work for a while and takes his head in his hands, with an attitude of prayer.

Around 10:00 am he gives the text of the telegram to Pius XII to the Bro. Modesto on the occasion of the coronation anniversary, and instructed him to go to the post office to send it, along with the correspondence already prepared.

In the morning he receives some visits at the parlor: two or three ladies. Upon hearing that a Mason lawyer is a guest in the Villa Santa Clotilde, Don Orione asks Sr. Maria Rosaria Baiardi, Superior of the community of sisters to meet him. After the interview, the man will live another three years in Villa Santa Clotilde, participating every day in the Holy Mass and often going to the chapel to pray.

At 12:00, after the Angelus recitation, Don Orione goes to the parlor for lunch. After lunch, he goes to the chapel for the Eucharistic visit. Then he goes to his room for some rest. The Bro. Modesto takes advantage of this to have his garment mended, worn on his chest. While waiting for the repair, Don Orione invites him to visit Bussana sanctuary. Bro. Modesto return after about an hour and a half and give back the robe to Don Orione.

Meanwhile, at 2.30 pm, Father Umberto Terenzi, rector and parish priest of the Sanctuary of the Our Lady of the Divine Love in Rome arrives at Villa Santa Clotilde, at the suggestion of Saint Fr. Pio of Pietrelcina. Don Orione greets him with a festive and cordial attitude. They exchange news, they drink coffee together.

Around 4:30 pm, Fr. Bariani invites Don Orione to take some snacks: an egg yolk with the broth: "Snack? But what a snack! I never had a snack, then I can't have dinner...". However he obeys.

Don Orione retires to write until 19:00. At 19:00 dinner is served: Don Orione talks about the serious events of the day, especially of Poland, occupied by the German armies. Then, after reciting the evening prayers, everyone goes to sleep.

### **Tuesday, March 12, 1940**

As in the previous days, Don Orione gets up at 6:00 am. He goes to the chapel and, after having done half an hour of meditation, he prepares for the celebration. The person in charge of the sacristy, Maria Teresa Wasescha, prepared the color white for the liturgical memory of San Gregorio Magno. Don Orione would like to celebrate with purple being Tuesday of Lent, but immediately agrees: "Oh, let's leave, let's leave it like this!".

Don Orione celebrates Mass, served by Bro. Modesto, who, immediately afterwards, absent himself to prepare breakfast. The nuns, the house staff and some guests of Villa Santa Clotilde attended the celebration: in total, about twenty people. In making genuflections, Don Orione leans strongly on the altar.

Fr. Terenzi goes to the sacristy to celebrate in turn. In dressing the sacred vestments, he is helped by Don Orione, who prepares himself to serve the Mass, kneeling on the ground in front of the



sanctum sanctorum. Bro. Modesto arrives and invites Don Orione insistently to sit on the pews, so that he could not feel tired. Don Orione obeys: "Oh, I can't even serve Mass anymore!"

After Fr. Terenzi's Mass, Don Orione still remains in the church for a while to pray. The two priests then go to the parlor to have breakfast and join them Fr. Bariani and Fr. Ghiglione, from the San Romolo boarding school.

Don Orione goes back to work. Around 11:00 it starts to rain. Before midday, the Superior of the Discalced Carmelite Sisters comes to visit him, from the nearby monastery, where Fr. Bariani celebrated Mass on the morning of Sunday March 10.

At noon, Don Orione is called several times for lunch, but he tells them do not think of me and eat. Finally, with a little delay, he goes to the parlor and begins to eat, in the company of Fr. Bariani and Fr. Terenzi. As soon as lunch began, Don Orione was informed that from Tortona came the canon Fr. Perduca, the Argentinean Bro. Ignacio Merino and the benefactor Paolo Pedevilla. Don Orione goes to greet them and brings them wine and glasses. He goes back to the table and continues eating, talking with Don Terenzi.

After lunch, they all go to the Chapel together for a visit to the Blessed Sacrament. Then they return to the parlor, until around 4:00 pm. Fr. Perduca, Bro. Merino and Pedevilla prepare themselves to leave. Fr. Perduca asks for the blessing. Don Orione says: "I gladly give it to you, if you give it also to me." In saying goodbye, Don Orione gives a letter to Don Sterpi: "Dear Don Sterpi, the Lord be always with us! ... I'm fine, I do not have any disturbance: I eat with appetite and sleep a lot, I have never slept like this, I am ashamed. I have not yet gone out because the weather is not good; if it becomes better, I will go to visit Bishop Rousset and Bishop Daffra and perhaps I will go as far as to visit Our Lady Costa and the sanctuary of Sacred Heart, in Bussana». The three of them will arrive at the Mother House of Tortona around 10.30 pm, to inform Don Sterpi about the improved health of the founder: just at that moment Don Orione, in San Remo, was dying.

Don Orione spends the evening as usual: at 6:00 pm, prayer of the Holy Rosary; at 7:00 pm, dinner in the parlor in the company of Fr. Terenzi, who decided to leave the same evening. At 8:00 pm Don Orione instructs Fr. Bariani to accompany Fr. Terenzi to the San Remo station. At the request of the rector, Don Orione writes on the back of a postcard: «Hail Mary and onwards! Hail Mary and onwards! Hail Mary and onwards! to the Daughters of Our Lady of Divine Love. Don Orione. A great blessing for you and pray for me». Then Don Orione greets his guest: "Grow in the love of Our Lady and spread it everywhere!". Fr. Terenzi asks Don Orione if he can celebrate the Holy Mass for him and the works of the Shrine the next morning, March 13. Don Orione remains silent for a moment and then replies: "Yes, I have no commitments in the morning, I am free".

Don Orione was left alone and goes to his room. The nurse Brother Modesto greets him good night. Don Orione replies: «Have a good rest. Praised be Jesus Christ". Then he retires, leaving the door half open which connects his room with that of the Bro. Modesto.

At the back a little picture, dated March 12, 1940, Don Orione wrote: "Lord, I want today and always to reign in your paternal heart and in the arms of the Holy Mother Church, Mother of the Saints and also Mother of my soul". It is not excluded that this is the true last writing of San Luigi Orione.

Around 9:00 pm the telephone rings: it is Achille Malcovati who, from Rome, asks for the hospitalization of an infirm woman. Don Orione gets up and goes to the telephone set. He assures the interlocutor of his speech and suggests that the woman be sent to Genoa. Then go back to his room.

At 10.30 pm. Modesto hears a lament. Hurry: Don Orione is not well and is struggling to breathe. The nurse Brother would like to give an injection immediately, but Don Orione stops him: "Wait a little, it will pass, let's wait...". Spend a few minutes. Don Orione is lying on the bed, in silence, with his back raised on two pillows. Occasionally he presses his hand to his heart and moves his eyes upwards, but does not pronounce words. Realizing the situation, Modesto gives him a few drops of Coramina in three sips. Immediately afterwards, he practices an injection of Resyl, raises Don Orione's back with the cushions and puts the oxygen nozzle close to him. Then he runs to tell Fr. Bariani on the upper floor. Returning to the room, he places an armchair near the bed and, with the help of Fr. Bariani, manages to make Don Orione sit there, wrapping him in a blanket. Don Orione murmurs: "The doctor, the doctor...". Fr. Bariani runs to the phone, but is unable to contact anyone. He rushes out and leaves by car, looking for Doctor Panizzi, but he cannot find him because he is on duty outside the house that evening. In the meantime, Sr. Maria Rosaria, aware of the hustle and bustle, appears in Don Orione's room, who, seeing her, lets her out with a gesture of the hand. The superior obeys and kneels outside the door. A few moments later, Modesto invites her to enter: Don Orione is dying. A cold sweat falls copiously from his forehead. Don Orione asks to be dried by sweat. Bro. Modesto, with the help of Sr. Maria Rosaria, cleans him with some handkerchiefs. A few moments before dying, Don Orione seems to be looking for something, perhaps the Crucifix. Then he crosses his hands on his chest, raises his eyes to heaven and, without rattling or wheezing, exclaims: «Jesus! Jesus!... I am going... » He rests his head on the nurse cleric's arm and dies: it is 22:45 on Tuesday 12 March 1940. At the time of his death, Bro. Modesto Schiro and Sr. Maria Rosaria Baiardi are present.

Realizing the subsequent death, Sr. Maria Rosaria burst into tears and went out sobbing to warn her sisters. Meanwhile, the nurse Modesto places two pillows on the sides of Don Orione's body to support his back and head. He then collects everything on the work table and places it in the correspondence case. Then take the sheets off the bed.

At this point Fr. Bariani arrives with a young doctor, recently graduated. The doctor sits down next to the body, touches his wrist and confirms the death. Then he returns on foot to his residence. Fr. Bariani leaves the room to notify the confreres of Tortona, Genoa and San Remo by telephone.

The nurse Modesto managed to lay Don Orione's body on the bed and put on his cassock. The canon Fr. Gazzaniga, who stands at the foot of the bed and sprinkles the body with holy water. Then, with the help of Sr. Maria Rosaria, Maria Teresa Wasescha and a lady, a guest of the retirement home, the cleric Modesto proceeds to coat the body of Don Orione with the priestly vestments: cingulum, stole and the chasuble. Don Orione's hands are joined with a white tape, at the elbow, to be able to place the Rosary crown on it.

In the meantime, Fr. Bariani, who went out to tell the confreres, tries to call Tortona, but it was not possible, as long distance calls are suspended at night.

Around 11.00 pm, informed by telephone, Fr. Don Ghiglione arrives from the boarding school San Romolo with the Brothers Eugenio Manduca and Attilio Ruggeri. The room is cleared of furniture and around the body of Don Orione, now composed and tidy, two candlesticks are placed.

Fr. Ghiglione calls all the religious sisters to participate in that solemn moment. Sr. Maria Rosaria Baiardi, Superior of the community, Sr. Maria Signum Crucis Ensabella, Sr. Maria Eufrosina Cremasco, Sr. Maria Domenica Lapadula and the then second year novice Sr. Maria Priscilla Di Berardo are present. Everyone starts to pray.

Fr. Bariani decided to leave immediately by car to reach the Mother House and bring the news to the confreres, since he was not able to inform them by phone.

### **Wednesday, March 13, 1940**

Fr. Bariani arrives to Tortona around 5:00 am. Entered the Mother House, he informed the canon Fr. Perduca. Two of them go to Fr. Sterpi to communicate the painful news. There are no exchanges of words: Fr. Sterpi understands, raises his hands to heaven, covers his face and cries.

In general emotion, Fr. Sterpi communicates the news to the clerics, who have gone to the chapel of the Mother House waiting for the Mass. Don Sterpi celebrates the first Requiem Mass for Don Orione with difficulty. After Mass, he leaves immediately to San Remo by car, in the company of Fr. Bariani and Fr. Giuseppe Zambarbieri.

Meanwhile, at Villa Santa Clotilde, at 5:00 am Fr. Ghiglione celebrates the first Requiem Mass. At 5:30 am the doors of Villa Santa Clotilde are opened, to allow people, already informed, to pay homage to the body. At 7:00 am celebrating the Suffrage Mass Fr. Giovanni Ramboldi, guest of the San Romolo boarding school: all the boys of the boarding school crown him. The doors of the house are left open until Saturday 16 March.

In the morning, in Sampierdarena, Fr Sterpi, Fr Bariani and Fr. Zambarbieri, departed from Tortona, Fr Enrico Sciaccaluga was waiting for them, who gets into the car, while Fr. Sterpi and Fr. Bariani continue by train to San Remo.

Once in Genoa, Fr. Sciaccaluga and Zambarbieri telegraph to the confreres in Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, the United States, Albania, Poland and Rhodes, communicating the news of the death of Don Orione. They continue their journey by car to San Remo, where they arrive in the early afternoon.

Throughout the day, hundreds of telegrams leave and reach San Remo. The news of Don Orione's death is now public. A card with the announcement of death is also prepared. Bishop Agostino Rousset, Bishop of Ventimiglia is among one of the first to kneel before Don Orione's body.

Fr. Sterpi arrives at Villa Santa Clotilde around noon: he goes immediately in front of the body, then celebrates Mass in the chapel. He instructed Fr. Domenico Sparpaglione and Fr. Francesco Di Pietro to go to the town hall for the official report of the death. Other confreres arrive by train from Tortona and with them also canon Fr. Amilcare Boccio and Fr. Raffaele Macario, vicar of His Exc. Egisto Domenico Melchiori, Bishop of Tortona.

In the afternoon, Fr. Sterpi instructs Fr. Zambarbieri to take care of all the papers and documents that Don Orione had with him. He then asks him if he is aware of any of Don Orione's writings about his burial. Zambarbieri reports that there is a closed envelope, kept in Don Orione's desk. Don Sterpi appoints canon Boccio and Fr. Macario to go to Tortona, take the envelope in question and deliver it to His Exc. Bishop Melchiori. Inside the envelope, on a sheet dated February 2, 1938, Don Orione states that he does not want to be buried "within the confines of the Diocese of Tortona until the Diocesan Authority issues a public act, which declares that the foul slander that has thrown upon me for years has no basis."

Soon the room was not enough to welcome visitors. Thus, it is thought to display the body in the chapel, also because it is feared that someone will cut some pieces of the sacred vestments. Around 5:00 pm the body is transported to the church of the house. An endless procession of people begins to come. To satisfy the desire of those who want to touch Don Orione's hands, some clerics stand next to the body and receive crowns, images, medals, flowers, placing them close to the body of the revered founder.

Ecclesiastical and civil personalities come from all over to San Remo. The two Bishops of the Congregation, His Exc. Paolo Albera, Bishop of Miletus and His Exc. Felice Cribellati, Bishop of Nicotera and Tropea. In the evening, many other confreres, sisters, benefactors and friends arrive, coming from Rome, the Marche and other Orionine houses scattered in Italy. The long procession of faithful in front of the body continues. The tribute does not cease at night.

### **Thursday, March 14, 1940**

Immediately after midnight, some masses of suffrage are celebrated at the altar of the church of Villa Santa Clotilde. At 6:00 am the abbot Fr. Emanuele Caronti, O.S.B., apostolic visitor arrives. He celebrates Mass near the mortal remains of Don Orione and begins to make the first arrangements for the funeral of Don Orione. The funeral is scheduled for the following day, Friday 15 March, in the parish church of Our Lady of the Angels. The San Remo Town Hall offers the first class hearse, with an escort of honor.

In the morning, the San Remo sculptor Nello Pasquali creates the plaster mask of Don Orione's face. In the meantime, in Tortona, Bishop Melchiori calls Don Alessandro De Tommasi, parish priest of Broni, responsible for having thoughtlessly spread the slander against Don Orione. In the evening, after having a long discussed with the Bishop, Fr. De Tommasi issues the requested declaration, assuming his responsibilities. The text is immediately transmitted to San Remo and examined by Don Sterpi and Abbot Caronti, who consider it acceptable. The body of Don Orione can be brought and buried in Tortona.

Considering the request of the authorities and benefactors, the body is expected to stop in Genoa. At 9:00 pm a deputation of noble Milanese ladies made the request, supported by Card. Archbishop Idelfonso Schuster that Don Orione's body should be brought to the Little Cottolengo in Milan. The request seems unworkable, but thanks also to the intervention of the Apostolic Visitor, it is arranged that Don Orione's body be brought first to Genoa and then to Milan, from where it would then arrive in Tortona. No public authority put obstacles to it.

Don Domenico Sparpaglione was commissioned to draw up the text of the parchment to be placed in the coffin, after the signature of all those present.

Late in the evening, Dr. Ascquasciati practices some injections to the body, as a conservative treatment.

The body is watched all night by the group of Milanese ladies together with the nuns, priests, Orionine clerics and distinguished families.

### **Friday, March 15, 1940**

At dawn, Don Orione's deceased body is placed in the coffin. A large crystal covers it in all its length and allows seeing the body. Fr. Sterpi, Abbot Caronti, the Orionine Bishops Msgr. Albera and Msgr. Cribellati, the Superiors of the Sons of Divine Providence, Sr. Maria Paziienza Tersigni, Superior General of the Little Missionary Sisters of Charity, priests, sisters and benefactors are present to that ceremony.

Bishop Agostino Rousset, a diocesan bishop, while various priests take turns in celebrating Mass at the remains of Don Orione. Fr. Giovanni Penco, President of the Company of Saint Paul, who

came specifically from Messina, celebrates the last Mass before the body is removed from the chapel of Villa Santa Clotilde and prepared for the funeral.

At 9:00 am the body of Don Orione, surrounded by an imposing procession, is brought to the parish church of Our Lady of the Angels, for the suffrage Mass. Along the way, the coffin is surrounded by an immense and devoted crowd. At the passage of the body, some mothers reach out to their children towards Don Orione, invoking blessing and protection. Bishop Rousset celebrates the funeral mass, at the end of which he pronounces, in a moving voice, the funeral eulogy.

The procession is recomposed and proceeds towards Villa Santa Clotilde. On behalf of the Bishops and priests, Fr. Giuseppe Schena, who in those days is preaching a preparation course for Easter to the men of Catholic Action of San Remo, gives a farewell speech. The seals are then affixed to the coffin.

The coffin is loaded onto a van: everything is ready for departure for Genoa. We only wait to load the floral wreaths, left in the church of Our Lady of the Angels. On their return, those in charge report that all the flowers were taken by the faithful in order to have a memory of Don Orione. Even the straws that serve as a support have been removed.

The coffin leaves San Remo and moves towards Genoa. During the journey along the Ligurian Riviera, various stops and slowdowns are made to allow the population to pay homage to the body. In Alassio, a large influx of priests and people greets Don Orione. In Finale Ligure the Benedictine community of Finalpia meets the procession. A weeping and chanting people greet the coffin in Spotorno.

Upon entering Savona, all the city's bells ring. Carried by the Catholic Action youth, the coffin enters the church of the Sacred Heart, where numerous priests and people are gathered. Prayers, songs and the homage of the faithful follow one another.

In Celle Ligure, the Little Cottolengo of Turin placed his sisters on their knees. In Varazze the body is received by diocesan priests, by the Salesian Fathers and by many faithful. The same tribute scenes are repeated in Cogoleto and Arenzano. On the border with the great Genoa, an escort of honor of motorcyclists is placed at the sides of the coffin to accompany the van.

In Crevari, Voltri, Pra', Pegli there are other devout expressions. For the great crowd of people, the funeral van is forced to proceed at a walking path. In Sestri Ponente the transit of the coffin is greeted by an imposing mass made up of about twenty thousand people, gathered at the edge of the road. The coffin makes a brief stop in front of the entrance of the Assunta church. The body is blessed and leaves for Genoa.

Having arrived in Genoa, instead of going to the vault of the Paverano Institute, as had been established, the convoy goes to the headquarters of the Piccolo Cottolengo, in via Bartolomeo

Bosco. Here the coffin is placed and uncovered, so that the hospitalized can contemplate the face of Don Orione for the last time. There are moving scenes: sobs, invocations, moving apostrophes.

Shortly after 3:00 pm, the coffin arrives in the courtyard of the Paverano Institute, already crowded with people that city police and traffic enforces find it hard to hold back. The impetus is such that it threatens to unhinge the entrance gate itself.

Around 5:00 pm, Cardinal Archbishop Pietro Boetto arrives, in a simple coat and black stole, who goes to the entrance of the church to receive the body of Don Orione.

At 5:30 pm the coffin is placed in the center of the nave, on a raised support. The impetus of the crowd is now worrying: the police are struggling to contain the impetuosity of the people who flock to greet Don Orione. They try to act as a barrier to prevent the coffin from being overwhelmed by the impetus of the people.

Barriers are set up by the police to contain and guide the large line of visitors that lasts, continuously, until midnight. Throughout the night, priests, clerics and many young Catholic university students remain in prayer vigil.

### **Saturday, March 16, 1940**

During the early hours of dawn, various celebrations of Holy Masses follow one another. At 7:00 am, the coffin with the body of Don Orione moves from the Paverano Institute to the church of Jesus, where the solemn funeral is scheduled.

Along the way to the city center, there is a real triumph: mourning flags displayed in the windows of the houses, half-open doors, lowered shutters, rain of flowers, invocations, prayers and invocations. On Archimedes St., many workers are waiting to greet Don Orione before going to work. The surrounding traffic has been blocked due to the huge crowd that invades the streets.

The coffin is introduced into the church of the Gesù. Many people are forced to remain outside due to lack of space. Card. Boetto, Archbishop of Genoa celebrates the funeral mass. At the end of the mass, the Cardinal addresses, in tears, the farewell to the "dearest Father". Immediately afterwards, absolution begins. Two small orphans approach the authorities and offer a postcard with the image of Don Orione.

The procession is rearranged and proceeds towards the esplanade of the Camionale road, with destination Milan. Along the way, in Busalla, Vignole Borbera, Arquata Scrivia, Serravalle Scrivia, priests, schools, representatives and simple faithful await the coffin and act of veneration.

The coffin arrives in Novi Ligure and is welcomed by 500 students of the Collegio San Giorgio to be escorted to the church of the Institute. After a brief sort, the body is transported to the collegiate church of Santa Maria Assunta for the solemn funeral.

The hearse, resumed its path, is made a sign of homage to Pozzolo Formigaro, where parish priests and population await.

In Alexandria, the body is stop in front of the Institute of the Daughters of Divine Providence: the founder, Mother Teresa Michel Grillo, makes an act of devotion, together with Bishop Nicolao Milone, Bishop of Alessandria.

The coffin continues to Mede, where the population has been waiting for it for several hours. The provost recites a greeting and kisses the coffin for all the people.

In Lomello the whole town is crowded around the van. In Zinasco, in addition to the population, there are also the children of the First Communion of Mezzana Rabattone, who made several kilometers on foot to be able to witness the passage of Don Orione.

At the entrance to Pavia, a procession of cars from Milan awaits the coffin to stock up on their honor. They are the most distinguished benefactors and friends of the Piccolo Cottolengo.

At 6:15 pm, when the shadows are already beginning to fall, the coffin arrives at the Piccolo Cottolengo in Milan and enters the courtyard, in the presence of many authorities, faithful and hospitalized. The coffin is placed in the church of the Institute. We witness scenes of emotion: outbursts of tears, incessant rise of intercessions and invocations.

Card. Schuster arrives shortly after. When he went to church, he kneels before the body and prays in silence. In the Piccolo Cottolengo church, the Archbishop celebrates the Office of the Dead in front of the coffin, surrounded by the patients and sick people in the house.

At the end of the rite, the coffin is placed on an illuminated hearse. It is now dark outside the church. The coffin moves towards the basilica of Santo Stefano, on the edge of the city. A procession of about two hundred cars accompanies the body of Don Orione which passes between two uninterrupted rows of people, gathered and moved. Traffic is stopped. The balconies and windows are adorned with flags and drapes. Many throw flowers at the passage of the hearse.

The remains of Don Orione cross the city and reach Piazza Santo Stefano, illuminated by powerful spotlights among continuous prayers and scenes of deep emotion. Bishop Pietro Gorla, provost of the basilica and a great friend of Don Orione, welcomes the body which is placed on an artistic catafalque erected in the center of the church.

A long pilgrimage of devotees begins that lasts until late at night. It is an incessant flow of people of all social conditions who go to the church of Santo Stefano for a greeting and a prayer.



Everyone wants to touch the coffin, take something away in memory of Don Orione. It is a continuous handrail of crowns, images, clothes that are placed next to the coffin.

Shortly after 9.30 pm His Royal Highness Adalbert of Savoy – Genoa arrives: he kneels in front of the coffin and remains for a few moments in silence.

### **Sunday, March 17, 1940**

In the middle of the night, around 2:00 am, the coffin is opened for a quick reconnaissance, in order to ensure the integrity of the body, subjected to numerous sways and jolts along the transport, and to clean up the internal crystal that has tarnished and prevents viewing of the body. A handkerchief drenched in vinegar is passed over Don Orione's face.

In the early hours of the morning of March 17, Palm Sunday, the basilica of Santo Stefano is reopened. Confreres and other priests take turns in the celebration of Mass, while the pilgrimage of the faithful resumes. At 7:00 am, to satisfy the desire of the crowd, the lid of the coffin is removed and Don Orione's body appears visible through the crystal. Bishop Gorla celebrates the suffrage Mass. At the end, he distributed postcards to the present with the portrait of Don Orione.

After the solemn pontifical ceremony, the coffin is placed on a hearse and taken to the Maggiore Hospital. At the chaplain's request, the body is transported to the internal courtyard so that the sick can see, through the crystal, the appearance of Don Orione. From the top of the loggias, the most serious patients moved and comforted contemplate.

After receiving the blessing of the Prior and the homage of the Hospital Council, around 12:00, amid tears, applause and shaking handkerchiefs, the procession with the body of Don Orione leaves for Tortona.

At 1:00 pm the coffin arrives in Montebello della Battaglia and is placed in the internal chapel of the Orionine seminary, where it stops for about two hours. Here, Fr. Sterpi gives the blessing and the coffin is discovered, in order to allow the homage of the crowd, who flocked in large numbers not only from Montebello, but also from the countries of Oltrepò Pavese, especially from Casteggio and Fumo.

Around 3:00 pm, the coffin arrives in Voghera and is greeted with a vibrant display of affection and veneration. The coffin, taken from the van, is carried by the arms in the church of San Pietro and placed on a catafalque. Shortly afterwards, the body is carried in procession to the cathedral of San Lorenzo, for the funeral.

When the body arrives in Pontecurone, the birthplace of Don Orione, there is an enormous crowd awaiting, gathered from all sides, together with the Bishop of Tortona who waits at the doors of the church of Santa Maria Assunta. Bishop Melchiori imparts the funeral blessing. Then the van returns to Tortona, accompanied by an impressive supply of cars.

When entering Tortona, the wagon stops in front of the door of Paolo Pedevilla's home, located on the edge of the city, at Porta Voghera. This is the benefactor to whom Don Orione, on March 12, in greeting him, said: "I assure you that, as soon as in Tortona, the first one I will go to visit will be you". Pedevilla kisses the coffin and cries, remembering the prophetic words of Don Orione.

At 5:30 pm, it already becomes dark; the coffin enters Tortona and, among a huge crowded people in the streets, is brought to the church of San Michele, adjacent to the Mother House.

At 10.30 pm, the body of Don Orione is transported to the internal chapel of the Mother House. The wooden lid is removed from the coffin to allow all priests and clerics to be able to contemplate the face of their Father. The body is watched over by the religious until 4:00 am.

### **Monday, March 18, 1940**

From 4:00 in the morning on Holy Monday, the celebrations of Holy Masses of suffrage begin in the chapel of the Mother House. The following alternate in order: Fr Sterpi, Abbot Caronti, canon Perduca. At 5:30 am the coffin is brought back to the church of San Michele. Other Holy Masses are celebrated.

At 7:00 am the body is brought to the cathedral of Tortona for the suffrage Mass. The square and the surrounding streets are crowded by the people. The funeral Mass begins at 9:00 am, presided over by the diocesan Bishop Melchiori. There are many ecclesiastical and civil authorities and a large crowd of people. At the end of the Holy Mass, Bishop Melchiori pronounces the funeral oration and blesses the body.

After the celebration, the hearse, pulled by four horses, heads for the Sanctuary of the Madonna della Guardia. On the way to Via Emilia, the body stops silently in front of the entrance of the Mother House, the residence of Don Orione. It is a great moment of emotion for everyone. Many cry openly. A little further on, at number 18, the coffin stops in front of the house of the Sacramentine Sisters, lined up on the gallery. Informed of Don Orione's presence, they pray and cry.

The coffin arrives in the square of the Sanctuary of Our Lady of the Safe Keeping. The mayor of Tortona, Francesco Moccagatta, pronounces the funeral eulogy. Upon entering the Sanctuary, the coffin is placed on the ground, in front of the altar. The wooden statue of the Our Lady of the Safe Keeping is entirely covered by a veil, according to the liturgical legislation regarding the statues during Holy Week. An uninterrupted line of people pays homage to the mortal remains of Don Orione until late at night.

### **Tuesday, March 19, 1940**

On the morning of March 19, Holy Tuesday, the feast of St. Joseph, a last suffrage Mass is celebrated in the Sanctuary of the Our Lady of the Safe Keeping.

At 3:30 pm, the Sanctuary is closed to the faithful. For the last farewell to the Father, only the religious families of Don Orione are admitted.

After the singing of the Vespers of the dead, the blessing and absolution imparted by Fr. Carlo Pensa, those present parade in silence in front of the coffin, for a final farewell greeting.

In procession, Don Orione's coffin is transported to the crypt of the Sanctuary and placed in a temporary sarcophagus, in simple masonry, rectangular in shape, without any inscription. The act is accompanied by the emotion and open cry of many. The Miserere and then the Magnificat are intoned: without wanting it, instead of the Requiem the Gloria Patri is intoned. The ceremony ends with the singing of the psalm *Ecce quam bonum et quam iucundum habitare fratres in unum.*

Around 6:00 pm the burial of Don Luigi Orione's body ends.

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These are the overnight stays and the various stops, more or less long, that Don Orione's body made on his three-day itinerary from San Remo to Tortona:

March 12-14: San Remo.

March 15: San Remo, Alassio, Finale Ligure, Spotorno, Savona, Celle Ligure, Varazze, Cogoleto, Arenzano, Crevari, Voltri, Pra', Pegli, Sestri Ponente, Genoa.

March 16: Genoa, Busalla, Vignole Borbera, Arquata Scrivia, Serravalle Scrivia, Novi Ligure, Pozzolo Formigaro, Alessandria, Mede, Lomello, Zinasco, Pavia, Milan.

March 17: Milan, Montebello della Battaglia, Voghera, Pontecurone, Tortona.

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All the details of the chronological reconstruction above are taken from the reports of the direct witnesses: Fr. Ernesto Badino, Sr. Maria Rosaria Baiardi LMSC, Fr. Enrico Bariani SDP, Bishop Luigi Boccadoro, Antonio Boggiano Pico, Fr. Adriano Calegari SDP, Fr. Emanuele Caronti, O.S.B., Dr. Guido Codevilla, Bishop Felice Cribellati, P. Nazareno Fabbretti OFM, Fr. Alessandro Gazzaniga, Fr. Severino Ghiglione SDP, Fr. Luigi Orlandi SDP, Dr. Giuseppe Panizzi, Fr. Arturo Perduca, Agostino Ravano, Fr. Modesto Schiro SDP, Fr. Domenico Sparpaglione SDP, Fr. Carlo Sterpi SDP, Fr. Umberto Terenzi, Fr. Giovanni Venturelli SDP, Sr. Maria Teresa Wasescha, Fr. Giuseppe Zambarbieri SDP.

San Luigi Orione, pray for us!

**LITTLE WORK OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE**

2020

**TRANSLATED IN ENGLISH by the LITTLE MISSIONARY SISTERS OF CHARITY - PHILIPPINES**