

The Servant of God Mons. Giuseppe Cognata

A light never extinguished!

SF spirituality days 2021: Jan 16-04 video

On 18 April 2020 the Rector Major of the Salesians, Fr Ángel Fernández Artime, announced, in the celebration of the Easter season and at the first Vespers of Divine Mercy Sunday, that the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, in a letter sent on 15 April 2020 had sent the following communication: "the Holy Father" after careful and thoughtful examination, gave his august consent to the requests of religious and lay people who requested the opening of the Cause for the beatification of Mons. Giuseppe Cognata, S.D.B., Bishop of Bova ".

What is the reason why the Pope himself authorized the opening of the Cause of Beatification of Mons. Cognata, manifesting the conviction and commitment of a choice that reintegrates the values of truth and justice in their fullness?

To answer this question, we must ask ourselves: but who is Mons. Giuseppe Cognata?

Born in Agrigento on October 14, 1885, Giuseppe Cognata showed a great wealth of human gifts and talents as a child. At the age of twelve, he entered the "San Basilio" Salesian College in Randazzo (Catania), ready to accept the call to religious and apostolic life among the Salesians; a vocation strongly opposed by his father and grandfather. On May 5, 1908 he made his Perpetual Profession in San Gregorio di Catania, in the hands of the then Rector Major Don Michael Rua - Don Bosco's First Successor, and the following year he received his priestly ordination in Acireale. He had brilliantly graduated in both Literature and Philosophy and was now going to the young people not only as a professor and assistant, but as a zealous priest. He was Director of works, but even more so director of souls. Pius XI in the Consistory of March 16, 1933 appointed Don Giuseppe Cognata, at that time Director of the "Sacred Heart" of Rome, Bishop of Bova, a particularly poor and disadvantaged Diocese of Calabria. He received

episcopal ordination on the following 23 April in the Basilica of the Sacred Heart in Rome from Salesian Cardinal Augusto Hlond, today Venerable.

Through steep paths and mule tracks Monsignor Cognata - who had chosen the Pauline expression "*Caritas Christi urget nos*" as his Episcopal Motto - wanted to visit and comfort not only all the villages of the Diocese, but also the groups of poor families scattered here and there in the places more remote and more inaccessible. He gave birth to a pious society of generous young people, willing to work with courage and joy in the smallest, remote, abandoned centers. Thus, was born on 8 December 1933 the Congregation of the Salesian Oblates of the Sacred Heart. In 1939 a hellish storm broke out against the Founder and his Institution. On December 20, 1939, the Holy Office, on the basis of false accusations, unjustly condemned Mgr. Cognata to the dismissal from Episcopal dignity, to expulsion from the Diocese and from the Institute he founded. He lived for many years in silence and solitude, welcomed in the Salesian houses of Trento and Rovereto until 1952 and then in that of Castello di Godego (Treviso) until 1972, carrying out an assiduous and appreciated ministry of confessor and spiritual guide. The Cross is hope, the certainty of resurrection and of life. In Easter 1962 he was reinstated by Pope John XXIII in the Episcopate. He participated by the will of Pope Paul VI in the Second Vatican Council. On January 29, 1972 he had the joy of knowing his Institute recognized by the Holy See with the "Decree of Praise". He died on July 22 of the same 1972 in Pellaro (Reggio Calabria), the initial seat of the missionary activity of the Salesian Oblates.

Mons. Cognata is one of the Lord's disciples who was persecuted for having lived his commitments with God and with others, entering into a battle with a world made up of ambitions for power and worldly interests. After receiving the sentence in which the Holy Office deprived him of Episcopal functions, Msgr. Cognata wrote to one of his most faithful collaborators: "We are at the last act of Calvary: on the Cross Jesus consumed what he wanted to suffer, showing himself dead as defeated: but later, the triumph of the Resurrection. The Master also associated me with this last act to hasten the triumph of his Oblates, in which my resurrection will also be ... So, my daughter, we are at the burial! It's time for the last test; we know how to sustain it in silence, abandoned to the Heart of Jesus ... Let us continue to work and triumph in the Name of Jesus, suffering and overcoming everything, trusting in the Master ... Do not worry about defending me; the Lord is there for this".

A light that never turned off

Mons. Cognata is a witness of hope, a light that has never been extinguished, which today shines in the Church with a singular light: victim of slander and lies, he pushes us by example and intercession to ensure that it ceases in the Church and in society the spread of that virus from which Pope Francis never ceases to warn: slander, slander, falsehood. In particular, in the light of the Strenna for 2021, our Rector Major underlined how «Mons. Giuseppe Cognata took the vaccine of forgiveness. For him forgiveness was the norm of life, in living a life of suffering, but a life full of the sense of God, of faith and of waiting for a justice that, without a doubt, he thought that God would give ».

Mons. Cognata sends us a great message: «Find the courage to embrace all the difficulties of the present time, abandoning your worries for a moment to give space to the creativity that only the Spirit is capable of arousing. In the cross of Christ, we have been saved to welcome hope and let it strengthen and support all the possible ways that can help us to guard and keep us». With Mary, Immaculate and Help of Christians, we sing the Magnificat for the event of grace for the full rehabilitation of Mons. Cognata wanted by Pope Francis and expected and hoped for by many. A gift that as Salesian Oblates of the Sacred Heart pushes us to make our witness of consecration and service of charity fresher and more renewed in the footsteps of our beloved Father and Founder, the Servant of God Monsignor Giuseppe Cognata.

The *Spe Salvi* Choir, with the participation of the Congregation of the Salesian Oblates of the Sacred Heart, directed by Giacomo D'Angelo and accompanied on the organ by Marco Columbro, moved by gratitude and joy for the very recent opening of the Beatification process of the humble bishop, intends to raise his praise and thanks to the Lord with the performance of the piece "Your life, a love song", dedicated to Mons. Giuseppe Cognata, composed by Giuseppe Verardo, based on a text by Sr. Michelina Portuguese.