

Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati

Pier Giorgio Frassati lived in the early part of the 20th century. He was Italian and lived in Turin in Northern Italy.

He was a member of a group called “The third order of Benedict”.

These are lay people who are in spiritual union with a formal religious order.

They do not take vows, or live in a community. They are regular folks who seek to live in the world while following the spirit of the religious order they follow. He was an OP, a member of the order of preachers. So, he was a man of prayer.

He was also someone who took his catholic social teaching that he learned while growing up and put it into practice. He became a member of a group called “Catholic Action”. He joined the Society of St Vincent de Paul at a very young age. He is known as the “man of the beatitudes”.

He was born into an affluent family. His father was an agnostic and his mother was an artist. His father ran a newspaper, “La Stampa”. His father wanted him to work in the newspaper but he chose to be an engineer. But he wasn’t absorbed in that culture. For example, when the family went on summer vacation to their summer house, he wouldn’t go with them because he said he had to look after the poor in the city. His life was marked by an extraordinary charity.

One time his father bought him first class train tickets for a trip he was going on. He turned around and traded in the first-class ticket for a third-class ticket. Then he would give the rest of the money to the poor. His father Alfredo had to continually buy his son new clothes. You see, Pier Giorgio would “lose them” to the poor.

He was a bit of a social justice warrior. He was outspoken about social action that would unite people to overcome inequality. He said “Charity is not enough; we need social reform”. He was an avid outdoorsman and enjoyed hiking, swimming, and mountain climbing. He cared for the environment.

He was inspired particularly by a piece of scripture. It is from the first letter of St Paul to the Corinthians. I am sure you all know it very well. It is often read at

weddings. He kept it on a small piece of paper in his pocket. He called it the "Hymn of Charity". Here is a small part of it.

"If I speak in human and angelic tongues but do not have love, I am a resounding gong or a clashing cymbal. Love is patient, love is kind. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."

He had a love for the outdoors, for social justice, for the poor and vulnerable. That made him stand out in his family and his city. He was described as a fun-loving troublemaker but he also performed many acts of service and charity.

He learned of God through his mother. He liked to play practical jokes and was jokingly called "a terror".

Pier Giorgio became ill and died of polio at the age of 24. It is believed he contacted it while helping the poor in his town. Huge crowds attended his funeral; the elite as well as workers and the homeless. It is said that this outpouring of love towards him even brought his father back to the church.

In 1933, it was said a man was healed of tuberculosis when they prayed for Pier Giorgio's help. He was declared blessed. In 1981 his remains were examined and they were found uncorrupted.

Those, who, like us, dedicate their lives to serving the people of God through acts of charity and social reform can see Pier Giorgio Frassati as their patron saint.

Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati pray for us.