Death Notice No. 12 (To all Unit Administrations):

The Province of Italy, recommends to our fraternal prayers our dear brother, **LUIGI GAMBERO**, priest of the San Giovanni Community, Rome, Italy, who died in the service of the Blessed Virgin Mary on June 2, 2013 in Rome, Italy, at the age of 83 with 65 years of religious profession.

Father Luigi Gambero was born on January 7, 1930, in Robbio, a large neighborhood of Lomellina, in the Province of Pavia, but included in the territory of the Archdiocese of Vercelli.

Brought up by his parents, Giovanni and Maria, with sound traditional principles within the context of a rural society and a parish that was pastorally vibrant and strongly devoted to the Madonna, upon finishing elementary school Luigi was ready to accept the idea of entering the diocesan seminary.

He was the altar boy in the parish church of San Stefano when a Marianist from the area, Father Secondo Casella, celebrated his First Solemn High Mass after his ordination in Fribourg. It was an occasion that the Provost, Monsignor Bogliani, a theologian with a broad vision and a big heart, experienced as a sign of Providence, leading him to the decision to send to the Marianists some of his aspirants for the priesthood.

And so, at the end of 1941 Luigi entered the Santa Maria Postulate in Pallanza, where he continued his studies in the Nuova Scuola Media Unica (New Unique Middle School), which the Marianist Vice-Province of Italy had opened up to external students and was in the process of bringing up to the legally mandated public school standards.

Upon finishing junior high school, Luigi experienced the adventurous founding of the house in Brusasco, where he completed his novitiate year and made his first profession in 1947, “drawn by the beauty of the religious life in the Society of Mary, by the character and sublimity of its apostolate, and by the possibility of becoming, within its ranks, a true apostle of Mary.”

After his scholasticate, during which he attended the classical senior high school in the Collegio Santa Maria in Pallanza, and after the years of formation in the community of Brusasco, he was admitted to perpetual profession, which he pronounced in the chapel of the Postulate of Giove on August 31, 1951.

Three years later he earned his degree in Classical Literature at the University of Turin, with a thesis (a premonition of what was to come) on “The Ascension of Christ in Greek Patristic Literature,” written under the direction of Professor Michele Pellegrino, the future Cardinal Archbishop of Turin.

Destined for the priesthood, Luigi undertook his theological studies at the Marianist Seminary and the University of Fribourg. During the same period he learned some foreign languages, especially German, thanks to his friendships with confreres and a summer stay in the community in Fulda. After his ordination to the priesthood on July 17, 1960, and his return to Italy, he exercised his pastoral ministry in various houses of the Province and in the Parish of the Holy Name of Mary in Rome. He was assigned to teach
philosophy in our high schools, he fostered the growth of lay groups of the Marian Sodality and the spiritual formation of our Affiliates.

He was Provincial Assistant for Apostolic Action, Rector of the Collegio Santa Maria in Verbania/Pallanza, Director of our University Center in Rome.

Nonetheless, he never interrupted the updating of his own cultural formation, earning the licentiate in theology at the Pontifical Lateran University, the teaching diploma in philosophy, and finally, after a year’s work at IMRI in Dayton, the doctorate at the Pontifical Theological Faculty of the Marianum with a massive study of St. Basil of Caesarea.

That work gained for him an academic appointment as Lecturer in Patristic Mariology in the same Faculty of Theology, a position he held for 32 years, until 2012. During that time he produced a valuable output of theological writings that merited his being named a fellow and councilor of the International Pontifical Marian Academy, a member of the Mariological Society of America, a consultant for important publishing houses from San Paolo to Città Nuova. He received international recognition with the René Laurentin Prize and with the XIth Pro ancilla Domini Award during the XVII International Marian Symposium in October 2009.

Father Luigi’s publications, all Marian and patristic, range from the popular style required by a wide variety of reviews and periodicals to the highly specialized style of the articles published in L’Osservatore Romano, in entries in Mariological dictionaries, in volumes and collections of “Marian texts” of the first and second millennia.

To “academic rigor and critical theological accuracy,” Father Gambero matched a real “friendliness in welcoming and patiently following the many students who came to him to find positive outcomes for their theses for the Licentiate or the university degree.” That was the witness of the Dean of the Theological Faculty, Prof. Salvatore M. Perrella, osm, in announcing the death of Father Luigi, which occurred on June 2, 2013, Corpus Christi Sunday, after a brief illness of two months from an incurable illness.

At the Funeral Mass, presided over by the Superior General, Father M. Cortes, besides his confreres and the Marianist Sisters of the Rome communities, there were also present numerous teaching colleagues of the Pontifical University, the president of the International Marian Academy, university students, the pupils of the choir and their teachers from Santa Maria, and the Marianist Fraternità.

The Provincial, Father Luigi Magni, in his homily, stressed the spiritual and priestly “lesson” left us by Father Gambero, above all to his Marianist confreres: to continue to “experience the beauty of the Marianist religious life, with esteem and love for a vocation that offers fruitful fields of apostolate among young people,” to be “an ardent and impassioned apostle of souls,” overcoming “the facile illusion of loving souls when one is actually loving oneself in souls.”

There came significant attestations of esteem and friendship: from the Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, Cardinal A. Amato, his former colleague in teaching at the Marianum; from Cardinal R. Farina, Archivist and Prefect of the Vatican Library; from the Rector of the Lateran University, Bishop E. dal Covolo; from his good friend Bishop N. Pescarolo of Cuneo and Fossano; from his ex-student Prof. Luiselli of la Sapienza University of Rome.

Those sentiments and appreciations were well summed up in an article in which René Laurentin described our confrere: “Father Luigi Gambero: the Courage of Commitment to Patristic Research.”

In an article in L’Osservatore Romano in 1983 he wrote: Mary, the door of Christ open towards us, Mary our Mother, who opens that door towards the Father of Light and of Peace without end.