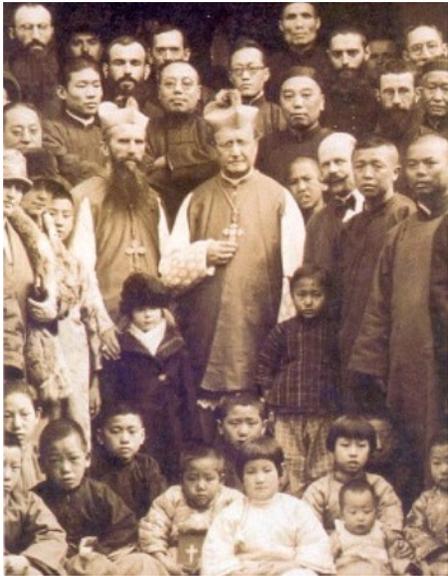


Visit to China and Death of a Saint



One last significant event in Conforti's life was his journey to China, which he undertook *"as a duty and a need of my heart."* Notwithstanding his ability to deal with missionary problems as a founder of a missionary congregation and president of the Missionary Union of the Clergy, he recognized that this trip would help him appreciate more the mission service and dimension of the church.

China gave him a new sense of the vastness of its territory: *"We don't need 3,000 missionaries in China, but 50,000!... I'll look forward to that day when the whole of China will be called a Christian nation!"* Before leaving China, Bishop Conforti addressed his missionaries by saying, *"I hope that my visit will bring great good, deepen our love, and give all of us greater*

encouragement to work willingly and constantly for the missions... I'm amazed at what you have accomplished for the good of these Chinese people. How I would like to be young again, and dedicate all my energies to them!"

Conforti's missionary plan was rooted on the look of Christ, and its many fruits. One of these fruits is the "forming of one single family that embraces the whole world." Indeed, his trip to China was a strong sign of communion among the sending and receiving Churches.



In spite of orders to rest, he began a final pastoral visit to the parishes of Parma, speaking time and again of his visit to China. These were to be his last visits. They drained his energy and still refused to take things at a slower pace. On October 25, 1931 he ordained eight sub-deacons and then was forced to bed feeling exhausted.

On November 5 1931, worn out by his work and apostolic activity, having received the Sacrament of the sick and Eucharist, and following a public profession of his own personal faith, Guido Maria Giuseppe Conforti implored God's blessings on his priests and people, and died in the peace of the Lord.

He was buried on November 8, and a procession stretching five miles followed him to his resting place. Monsignor

Cazzani asked rhetorically in his eulogy: *“Is this the funeral of a man fallen under the scythe of death or the triumph of a saint exalted to the glory of heaven.”*

Throughout his life Guido Maria Conforti was consumed two elements that live together: the Gospel and mission. He has been accredited as being one of the major contributors to the reawakening of mission in the last century. He may not have performed miracles or cures, yet he helped create a sense of hope: hope that our human family could become “One in Christ.”



His Holiness John Paul II proclaimed Bishop Conforti “*venerable*” on February 11, 1982, and on March 17, 1996 Pope John Paul II declared him (and Bishop Daniel Comboni, founder of a religious missionary community) “*blessed*,” at a celebration at St. Peter attended by thousands of pilgrims from all over the world. The prayers, the songs, the gifts and the dances from each continent during the Beatification ceremony represented that final vision of Conforti. He was proclaimed a Saint for the universal Church on October 23, 2011 by Pope Benedict XVI.

Today, the Universal Church gives thanks to God for the gift of a missionary bishop who lived the missionary spirit of the Second Vatican Council.