

XAVERIVS MARIA PAVENTI  
DE SANCTO BONAVENTURA

ANTISTES VRBANVS

*1902 ~ 1977*

## **Saverio Maria Paventi di San Bonaventura**

(17 October 1902 – 18 April 1977)

Jurisconsult of the Sacred Congregation “De Propaganda Fide”, peritus of the second Vatican Council, editor of the Catholic Encyclopedia.

### ***Birth***

Monsignor Saverio was born into the family of the barons *Paventi di San Bonaventura*, *guelpho sanguine de Giniaco orta*, originally from the lands beyond the Alps like other Occitan families that came to Italy as followers of Charles I of Anjou in the crusade against Manfredi of Svevia called by Pope Urban IV under the auspices of Saint Louis IX. His ancestor William, soldier and family royal of Charles I of Anjou, as a result of his participation in the military campaign that under Clement IV's pontificate led to the end of Svevian domination with the victory of the Battle of Benevento on 26th February 1266, was rewarded <sup>1</sup> with a number of fiefs in the Kingdom of Sicily. This led to the establishment of his descendants in Italy (in the ecclesiastical province of the Metropolitan see of Benevento) who then took as their surname his dauntless Latin nickname *pavendus* (trad. "to be feared") using the current Italian spelling after the Council of Trent. Their rights of hereditary nobility were recognised and confirmed, on July 15, 1725, by the will of Pope Benedict XIII Orsini, holder of the Metropolis of Benevento from 1686.

### ***Franciscan religiousness***

The bond between the barons *Paventi di San Bonaventura* and the Franciscan order is consolidated by over seven centuries of family history, from the time of their ancestor Raimondo, of the Friars Minor, chaplain and confessor of the duke of Calabria, Roberto of Anjou the Wise, Franciscan tertiary, who, on 7th September 1308, was nominated by Charles of Anjou, as ambassador to James II of Aragon the Just. The latter's sister Violante had married the young duke in obedience to the Treaty of Anagni in a first attempt to bring an end to the Sicilian Vespers.

There are numerous historical testimonies to this uninterrupted bond with Franciscan spirituality. Among these is the predicate of the main branch of the family, placed under the protection of San Bonaventura, *Doctor Seraphicus*, in whose name chapels, religious bodies and orders of the Franciscan family even today enjoy benefits from the heirs, who on the eight centenary of Franciscan Rule established the *Paventi di San Bonaventura Pious Foundation* also to support the activities of the Custody of the Holy Land.

## *Formation*

Monsignor Saverio, second last of nine children was born between two eras, at the time of the cultural ferment of the avant-gardes of the 1900s. He entered the Roman Pontifical Seminary completely convinced of his vocation, which had been announced to his father in a premonitory dream by paternal ancestor Don Francesco Saverio, an enlightened ecclesiastic of fond popular memory and Vicar forane of cardinal Domenico Carafa della Spina of the dukes of Traetto, last archbishop of the temporal power of the Church in Benevento, a direct Papal possession, before being exiled because of its forced annexation to the Kingdom of Italy.

Animated by exemplary religiousness and heir to a tradition of men of arms, of faith, law, literature and science, the young Saverio diligently applied himself in his physical and spiritual formation and with great love in his philosophical and theological studies. He thus obtained his Bachelor's degree in Philosophy at just 17 years of age and on 6th July 1925 his Doctorate in Sacred Theology when he had not yet reached the age of 23 at the Pontifical Lateran University. In that same Holy Year he had already been conferred with Holy Orders by His Eminence Basilio Pompilj, Cardinal Vicar consecrated by Saint Pius X.

The Jubilee of 1925, that had been called with a deep missionary character by Pope Pius X, witnessed the canonization of, among others, St John the Baptist Maria Vianney (1786-1859), known as the Curate of Ars, and St Theresa of the Holy Child (1873-1897), Patron Saint of the Missions, as well as the opening of the Universal Missionary Exhibition. This documented the missionary activity of the Church from its foundation, in twenty-four purposely built pavilions in the Vatican Gardens. The exhibition obtained international success. A large number of the items on show, together with the collection of the Borgiano Museum of Propaganda Fide went to form the original nucleus of the works collected for the founding of the Ethnological Missionary Museum, established on 12<sup>th</sup> November 1926, and now part of the Vatican Museums.

It was in the spirit of this Jubilee that Monsignor Saverio developed his vocation for the science of Evangelization, Missiology, to which he was to dedicate his entire existence.

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1 *Registers of the Angevin Chancellery, collection of Riccardo Filangieri de Candida Gonzaga (Naples 16th April 1882-21st July 1959) Superintendent for the Neapolitan Provinces from 1940 to 1952, Director of the State Archive of Naples, President of the Italian Archives Association: from the Angevin Registers 1275 C vol. 24 fol. 20 / 1276 E vol. 26 fol. 68 of the State Archive of Naples at the Monastery of Sts Severino and Sossio.*

Student of the Major Roman Pontifical Seminary

Doctor in Sacred Theology at the Pontifical Lateran University

Chamberlain of Honour in purple livery, S. D. N. Pius XI Reigning

Supernumerary secret chamberlain, S. D. N. Pius XII Reigning

Domestic prelate, S. D. N. John XXIII Reigning

Prelate of Honour of His Holiness, S. D. N. Paul VI Reigning

Study Assistant of the Sacred Congregation *De Propaganda Fide*

Pro-rector of the Pontifical Urban College *De Propaganda Fide*

Professor of Moral Theology in the Pontifical Urbaniana University

Professor of History of Canon and Missionary Law  
at the Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy

Professor of Missionary Law  
at the Spanish Institute for Foreign Missions

*Peritus* at the Second Vatican Council  
and Consultant in the drafting of the Conciliar Decree "*Ad Gentes*"

Pro-president of the Commission for the Revision of Synods and Episcopal Conferences,  
of the Constitutions and Regulations of Religious Institutes and Seminaries  
that depend on the Sacred Congregation *De Propaganda Fide*

Director of the Pontifical Missionary Works and the Missionary Union of the Clergy

Member of the Pastoral Council of the Vicariate of Rome  
Expert for the Sacred Pastoral Visit of the Diocese of Rome

Member of the College of Postulators

Consultant of  
The Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of People *seu De Propaganda Fide*,  
The Sacred Congregation for the Religious and Schools,  
The Secretariat for non Christians,  
The Pontifical Commission for the Revision of the Code of Canon Law,  
The Commission for implementing the Sacred Liturgy

Polyglot juristconsult  
for French, Spanish, English, German

Editor of the Catholic Encyclopedia and Author of numerous papers and treatises among which:

*Brevis commentarius in facultates S.C. De Propaganda Fide* (Rome, 1944)

*De iuramento ac de titulo missionis* (Rome, 1949)

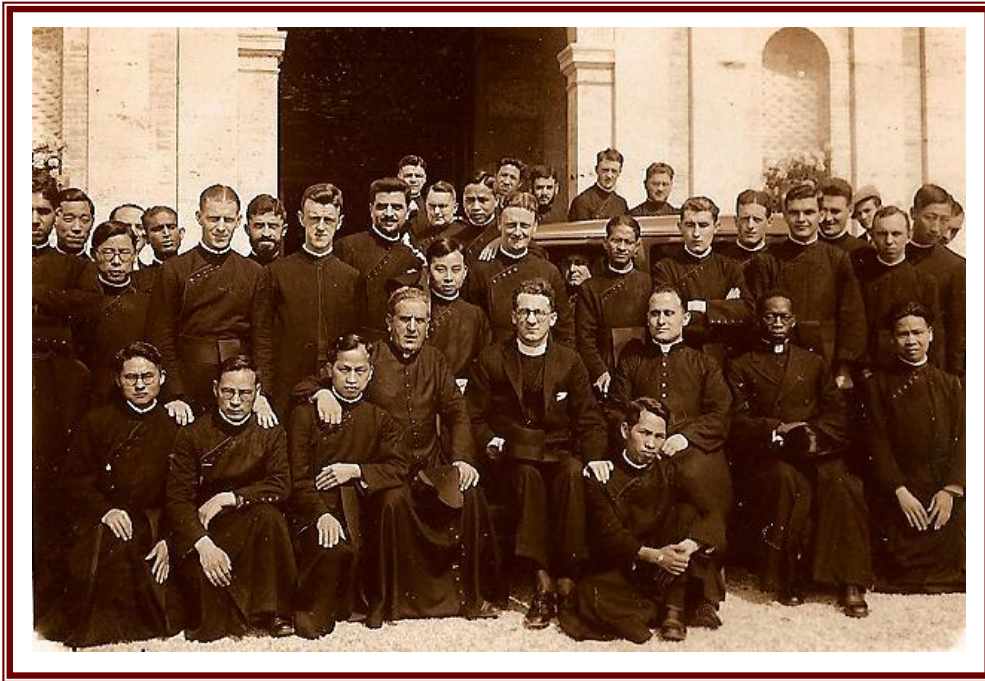
*La Chiesa Missionaria. Manuale di Missionologia Dottrinale* (Rome, 1949)

*La Chiesa Missionaria. Manuale di Cooperazione Missionaria e Missionografia* (Rome, 1950)

*Breviarium Iuris Missionalis* (I Ed. Rome, 1952 – II Ed. Rome, 1960)

*Prospettive Missionarie* (Rome, 1964)

## HEROISM IN THE APOSTOLIC SEE DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR



**Mgr Paventi di San Bonaventura at Mgr O'Flaherty's departure for Egypt  
Pontifical Urban College De Propaganda Fide on the Janiculum, 1934**

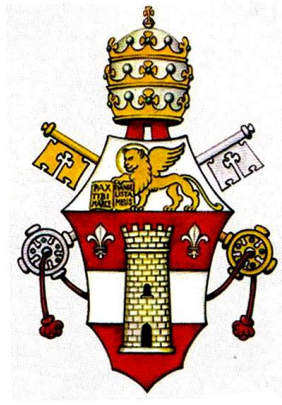
Mgr Hugh O'Flaherty "*the Scarlet Pimpernel of the Vatican*", (at the centre of the photo) Bursar of the Pontifical Urban College De Propaganda Fide on the Janiculum in Rome, with the Pro-Rector Mgr Saverio Maria of the barons Paventi di San Bonaventura (on his left).

*Hugh O'Flaherty (28<sup>th</sup> February 1898 - 30<sup>th</sup> October 1963) was an Irish presbyter. He was a Roman Catholic priest, originally ascribed to the Sacred Congregation De Propaganda Fide through which, in collaboration with the Cardinal Prefect, Pietro of the marquesses Fumasoni Biondi and the Pro-Rector of the Pontifical Urban College De Propaganda Fide, Monsignor Saverio Maria of the barons Paventi di San Bonaventura, he began to establish his precious network of assistants with whom he managed to save approximately 6,500 people between civilians, military and Jews, whom he lodged in Vatican extra-territorial residences and religious institutes during the Nazi occupation of Rome in the Second World War. It was as a result of that activity, carried out while evading German military intelligence, that he was given the name of "The Scarlet Pimpernel of the Vatican".*



**Chinese government delegation welcomed by the Sacred Congregation De Propaganda Fide, 1932**

Mgr Saverio Maria Paventi di San Bonaventura (first seated, on the left) and Mgr Hugh O'Flaherty "*the Scarlet Pimpernel of the Vatican*" (fourth of the second row, on the left).



#### EVE OF THE OPENING OF THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL

Private audience of the Holy Father John XXIII with the chief members of the preparatory Commission "*De Missionibus*": on his left the Armenian Cardinal Krikor Bedros XV Aghagianian, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation De Propaganda Fide and on his right the Conciliar *peritus* Mgr Saverio Maria Paventi di San Bonaventura, among those who drafted the Decree *Ad Gentes* on the missionary activity of the Universal Church, promulgated by His Holiness Paul VI, on 7<sup>th</sup> December 1965 (cfr. *Acta Synodalia Sacrosanti Concilii Oecumenici Vaticani II*).