

Biography  
**Father Nicola Martino Capelli, SCJ**  
(1912 – 1944)



*"Missed missionary,  
fulfilled martyr".*

*"Oh Virgin, Queen of the Mexican martyrs, grant me that one day I will be the martyr of Christ the King and of You, the Immaculate Virgin. Oh Mother ... I am sure that through the intercession of your martyrs, you will grant it to me. Your son, Martino Capelli".*

*(Albino, 12-12-1931)*

Father Martino Capelli was born in Nembro (Italy) on September 20, 1912 to Martino (1862-1925) and Maria Teresa Bonomi (1873-1931). Together, they had six children, the last of whom was future Servant of God. Martino was baptized with the name of Nicholas Joseph. He attended elementary school in Nembro (1918-1922). Martino's Confirmation coincided with the coronation of the Sorrowful Madonna, in the sanctuary of Zuccarello, on 8 August, 1920.

At the age of twelve, Martino entered the nearby Apostolic School of the Sacred Heart at Albino, where the Dehonians had founded a religious minor seminary in 1907. Martino received his high school education in that seminary.

From Albino, he went to Superior school at the Dehonian novitiate at the Marian Shrine of Peace in Albisola. He made his first profession on September 23, 1930 and chose his religious name after his deceased father, Martino Maria. His religious and scholastic formation continued in Bologna, where he took three years of philosophy.

After graduation, Martino was transferred to Albino. During that year, he had a few special spiritual moments, including a conference with father Luigi Ziliani, who fled from Mexico due to the persecutions in his country. It was under those circumstances the young religious prayed, "To the Virgin of the Mexican martyrs, grant me

one day, I too will be a martyr of Christ the King and of You, Immaculate Virgin ... I am sure ... that you will grant it to me" (12.12 .1931). A few days later, his mother passed away. After that, he chose Our Lady of Sorrows as his new mother. He prayed: "Oh Mary, be my Maternal Mother".

Returning to Bologna, he continued his philosophical studies. On September 23, 1933 he made his perpetual vows, consecrating himself to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. For the next three years he continued his theological studies at Benedict XV regional seminary. In Bologna, he received minor orders and in 1938 the priesthood. He celebrated his first solemn Mass in Nembro, in the sanctuary of the Madonna of Zuccarello.

During his formation years Martino expressed his desire to become a missionary and a martyr. At the end of the fourth theological year, he asked his superiors to be sent to China. However, due to the war in China, he was sent to Rome instead, where he studied at the Biblical Institute for two years. In his third year, he enrolled at the University of Propaganda Fide, obtaining a licentiate in theology, graduating cum-laude.

Martino wanted to finish his studies and complete his thesis, but because of the lack of professors at the school, he temporarily transferred to Castiglione dei Pepoli. Meanwhile, the war in Italy was getting closer and more intense. In the summer of 1944, the Germans requisitioned the school with the intention of converting it into a hospital. Thus, he was displaced for a second time to the town of Burzanella.

Martino arrived in the new community in Burzanella. However, on July 18, the Germans surrounded the village, burned houses and captured five people. He witnessed the execution of two partisans in the church square.

A few days later, Fr. Martino went to Pioppe di Salvaro to help Mgr. Fidenzo Mellini, who had invited him for the holidays. He found a good friend who supported him as a brother, the Salesian Fr. Elia Comini. Together they lived the





triduum of their martyrdom.

On Friday, September 29, rumors spread that the German units were combing the area. The Canonica Parish hall and the church of Pioppe of Salvaro were certainly crowded with terrified people seeking shelter. The first thought of the priests was to save people, defending and sheltering them from danger. While Mass was celebrated, a breathless man came, warning them that entire families had been killed in Creda. Fr. Capelli and Fr. Comini, resisting the women's warnings, decided to go to those people to bring help and religious comfort. However, they were captured and arrested by the Germans. On the following day, at the sunrise, the priests were taken to the front of the church of Pioppe.

On Saturday, September 30 around noon, the German SS and a Republican official, accompanied by a traitor partisan, assembled a summary interrogation to receive information from the individuals rounded up to sort the right men to send to work in Germany. Fr. Capelli was accused of having been seen in San Martino, by Fr. Marchioni, and this was enough to make him a partisan, as was Fr. Comini.

The two religious, locked up in a small security room, understood what fate would now be theirs. Peoples could see them from the window: Fr. Comini raising his eyes to heaven while Fr. Martino bowed in prayer. No one realized they would face, experience and live the night of Gethsemane.

After two days of cruel imprisonment, on Sunday, October 1, Dina Pescio a teacher from Pioppe di Salvaro, was able to communicate with the priests. Fr. Elia tried to comfort her, to



reassure her mother and gave her a blessing. Fr. Martino was speechless, but he made a sign of blessing and continued to pray.

That afternoon, the inmates were led to the so-called "barrel", which regulated the water for the electricity by the Reno River. At the time, it was full of slime. The machine guns were in place. A few meters away, 44 victims were immolated.

Fr. Capelli stood up, spoke a few words and made the sign of the cross. Tracing a last blessing, he fell with his arms spread as if he was on the cross. He was 32 years old.

No one could approach to bring help or to bury the dead who remained there. Afterward, the Germans poured water into the canal, and all the dead bodies were swept away.

Recalling December 8, 1932, when Martino was twenty years old, he noted this invocation to Our Lady: "One day, oh Mother, we will meet again on the death bed of my martyrdom. Yes, I will always be yours, all yours! "

Fr. Martino was sinking into the slimy bottom of Pioppe's "barrel". The Sorrowful Virgin waited for him in that place, to take him with her, finally in the light and peace of the risen Lord.



Today, in the Salvaro graveyard, there are two plaques dedicated to Fr. Elia and to Fr. Martino. It summarizes the testimony of the shepherds of Monte Sole:

**"No one has a greater love  
than those who give their lives.  
Father NICOLA MARTINO CAPELLI.  
He revealed his life in the  
greatness of his death.  
Simply martyr".**

## Prayer

Lord Jesus, good Shepherd,  
we thank you for calling  
Father Martino Capelli  
to live in your Church  
as a religious priest,  
consecrated to your divine Heart.

We ask you through his prayer  
to be strengthened in hope,  
rooted in charity,  
so that we too  
can be a service

of love to you  
and to our brothers and sisters  
for the joy and glory of the Father.

Heart of Jesus, in your infinite love,  
grant us grace ...  
that we confidently ask you,  
through the intercession of Fr.  
Martino  
devoted son of Mary of Sorrows  
and ardent apostle of reconciliation  
and peace. Amen

**Recite with faith "Our Father",  
"Hail Mary" and "Glory to the Father".**



*dehoniani*

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+ Claudio Stagni, Auxiliary Bishop, Gen.Vic.  
Whoever obtains graces and favors through the intercession  
of the Servant of God, Fr. Martino Capelli,  
is asked to give a documented report  
to SCJ POSTULATOR