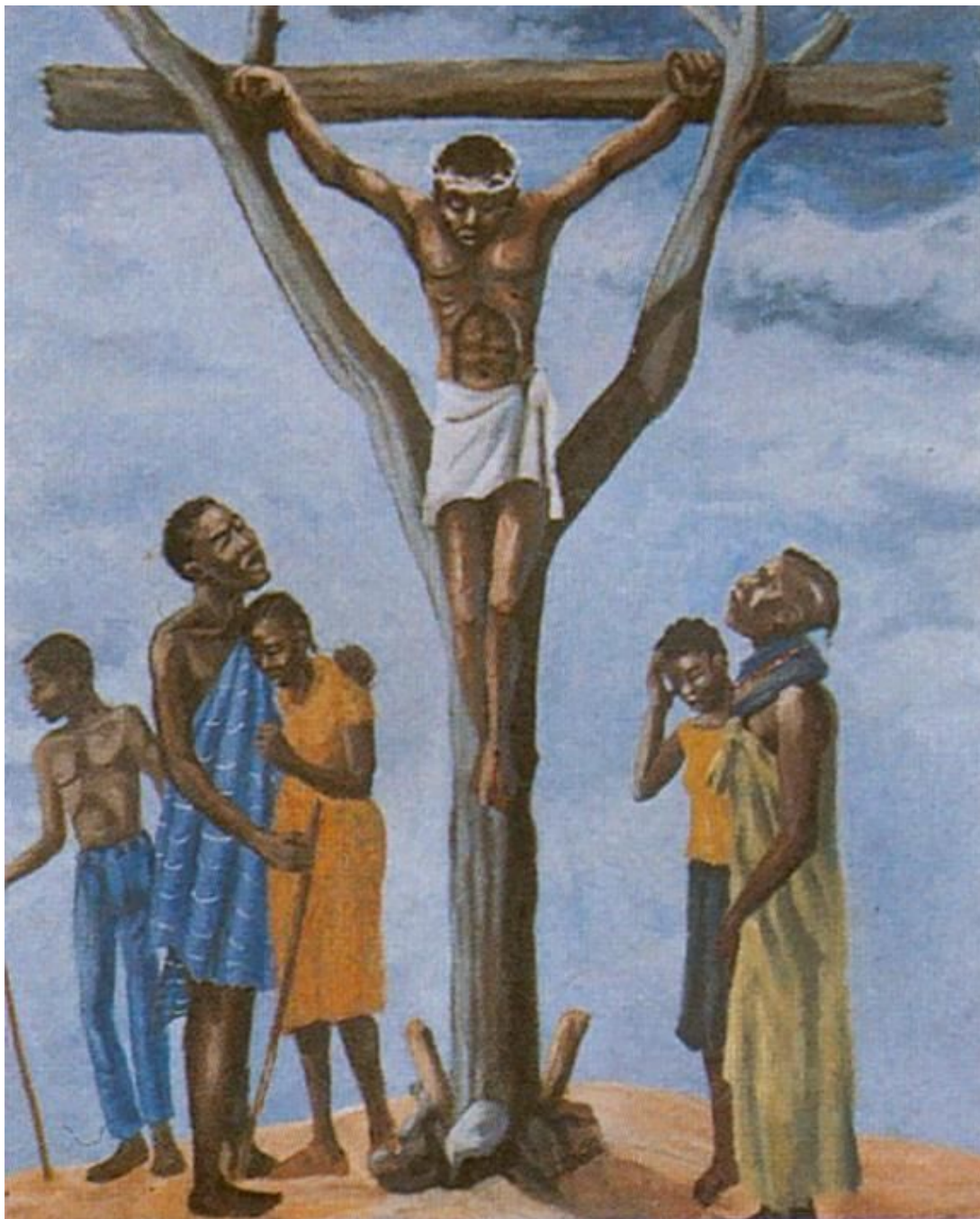


The servant of God, Father Bernardo Longo, martyr in the heart of Africa

Witness of the love of God



The servant of God, Father Bernardo Longo (1907-1964)

missionary and martyr



He was born in Pieve di Curtarolo (Padua - Italy) in 1907. Before reaching the heart of Africa, the Congo, the destination of his youthful ideals, his path was very troubled. He started in middle school at the diocesan seminary of Padua; but he had to stop for health reasons. At the age of 20 (May 5, 1927), he had to go to Verona for military service, and only in 1936 was he ordained a priest, becoming a spiritual son of the servant of God Father John

Leo, founder of the "Priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus" (Dehonians).

In 1938 he became a missionary in the Upper Congo region (Africa), in the middle of the equatorial forest, in the still unexplored area between Avakubi and Wamba, which he himself defined as the "home of the Walesse, pygmies and elephants". From 1950 onwards he moved to the village of Nduye (near Mambasa - Congo): it became his mission, his love, his martyrdom.

A missionary with a generous heart, he showed himself very quickly to be a volcano of ideas and initiatives, in support of the evangelization and the human and spiritual promotion of the people. Not high-tech, his projects were within everyone's reach: how to grow bananas or coffee, how to work wood to build a table or a hut, how to take apart and reassemble the parts of an engine, etc. And, for women, with the cooperation of the Pious Mothers of Nigrizia, he showed how to work with cutting and sewing and how to manage a school or a dispensary.

He has always lived poorly with the poor. He lived in a miserable hut of mud and straw. Also the church, school and workshop were made of mud and straw. But in such a poor environment he lived as a missionary with a big heart.

Everything in his life and his work was done for his Blacks, pagans, Muslims or Christians, all pulled together into a common work of love. And when, in the vortex of the 1964 revolution, they urged him to hide in the forest to save his life, he replied: "In the moment of danger the shepherd cannot abandon his flock". He wanted to remain in the

Mission with "his Sisters", exhorting them, despite everything, to be witnesses, to forgive and to live Christian hope. One day, seeing them surrounded by a group of threatening Simba, armed with spears and rifles, he spoke these inspiring words: "We accept death as an act of love, for the salvation of these people and the pygmies".

And when, subject to an unjust sentence, a nun asked him for his last message for their family, he replied from the prison cell: "Tell them that this is the most beautiful death for a missionary!".

He died at the gates of Mambasa, with his gaze turned toward his Nduye. He was hit in the chest by a spear, only because he was a missionary of the Gospel that announced love and forgiveness. Not a coffin, but only his cassock and rosary accompanied him into the tomb, thanks to a Protestant friend, a nurse from the nearby hospital. Over the tomb, a cross was placed: it summed up his faith, his life, his hope for eternity.



Prayer

We bless you,
Lord Jesus, good shepherd,
because you have given to the Church
the servant of God, Father Bernard Longo,
priest of your Heart.
You called him to proclaim
the Gospel to the poor
and to give witness to it with the sacrifice of his life.
Look at our poverty and, through his prayer,
grant the grace we ask of you ...
Allow us to participate in the feelings of your Heart
and give us your Spirit
so that our life will become
a living offering to God the Father
for his glory and his joy. Amen.

