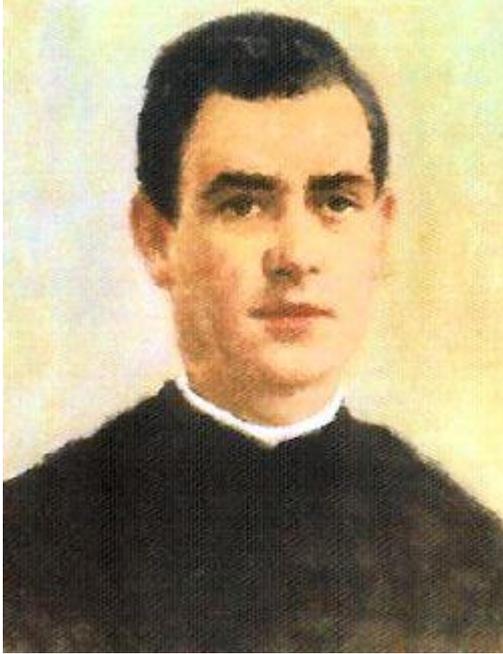


VENERABLE FRA GIOACCHINO M. STEVAN
(1921-1949)



Antonio Stevan was born on November 8, 1921 at Nove di Bassano (Vicenza). He was the fourth of five children born to Valentino Stevan and Lucia Toniolo, an exemplary Christian couple of modest but dignified means. Valentino supported his family with the bakery they owned.

He completed the first four years of elementary school in the Commune School (1928-1934). Only later he finished studying privately (1936-1937) and took the examination for an elementary school diploma.

In 1930 Antonio enrolled in Catholic Action Aspirants. He embraced the association's spirituality enthusiastically: prayer, action and sacrifice. He continued to practice these principles even later when he was in the army.

On August 20, 1939 he joined a group of amateur bicyclists in Bassano del Grappa. On May 30, 1940 he underwent a physical examination for the military and then on January 3, 1940 entered the army. His first assignment was at the *Alpini* camp in Strigno (Trent) and then in

October 1941 he was sent to the zone of operations in the Balkans.

He left Montenegro on August 25, 1942 and returned to Italy with his regiment. On November 15 of that same year he went with the Fifth Regiment of Alpine Artillery to France where he was stationed in various camps until September 8, 1943.

After the armistice he had some trouble returning to Italy and only reached Nove at the end of September. From that time until the end of the war he worked as a baker in his father's shop and managed to escape the various raids carried out by the Nazis and Fascists.

After two failed engagements he learned he was not too old to enter religious life and decided to join the Servites. On May 1, 1947 he was received at Monte Berico as a postulant. On October 3, 1948 he was clothed in the Servite habit, given the religious name Gioacchino Maria and began his novitiate at Isola Vicentina (Vicenza). Shortly afterwards he was struck down with tubercular meningitis and died a holy death in the Vicenza Public Hospital on April 28, 1949.

He was initially buried in the city cemetery but later his remains were exhumed and moved to the cloister garden at Monte Berico Priory in Vicenza. He was a man of great humility, a deep spirit of prayer and heroic obedience and poverty. The chastity of his life was known to everyone – even his comrades in arms. All these elements led us to introduce his cause for beatification in 1964. On April 8, 1997, the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints issued a decree recognizing the heroic Christian virtues practiced by Fra Antonio M. Stevan.