

# BLESSED LOUIS GUANELLA'S VISION AND SPIRITUALITY

By Fr. Peter Pellegrini, S.C.

Blessed Louis Guanella had a plurality of interests; the arts, nature, science and new technologies. However, he had a special interest in the human person; the interpersonal rapport, friendship, service and dedication of each one.

A deeply held conviction of the Fatherhood of God was his inner discovery, a personal revelation and life experience establishing this great principle of Christian Theology. He believed in God as a Good Father who loves and longs to save each person from every moral, physical and material misery. He saw all people receiving the gift of partaking of this fatherhood and in turn, transmitting love, life, and salvation to others, becoming a father and a brother to all, like Jesus Christ, the Image of the Father among us and the first of brothers.

Father Guanella adopted a cross with a heart on it as his insignia and he adapted the Augustinian motto: "*In Omnibus Caritas*," love must be in everything, and love must bring life. His life was unique. He related to God as a father with an intense contemplative faith; he experienced God in conversation with Him during many hours of prayer, and through continuous invocations. His entire life was lived confidently trusting in the Providence of the Father; telling us "love and be happy!"

At the same time he had an urgent need to go to the brothers, that is the poor, with the same intense love. We must not regard piousness toward God as an excuse to be idle, lazy or selfish. We need to share this love of the Father. We need to build with our brothers a warm family so that no manner of evil can fool them and they may reach a happy goal in the path of life. However, Father Guanella instructs us of the need to taste the beauty of self-giving, and of the sacrifice that gives life. He states, as a reality, the law of suffering for each House had to be born through many difficulties and much opposition.

This law of suffering became for his priests and sisters the practical and necessary commitment of personal self-giving. They would always have the need to work, living their lives in poverty, with visible sincerity and simplicity. Father Guanella lived poverty personally; he understood that poverty must really be shared with the poor in order to reach together their own growth. The brothers come to the Guanellian family with the hope of rebuilding their lives without falsely trying to improve their own condition and status. They are allowed the possibility of attaining the right tools to improve their social, economic, cultural and mental conditions. They form a community founded on their own personal efforts and in solidarity with many friends. The poor learn how to build a life and if they are young, how to experience it. The elderly are able to know the joy of being among friends again, who care for them. They can be at the center of personal accomplishments and friendships; they are relieved of some of the bitterness they have toward a society that has abandoned them and counted them worthless. They may relearn the satisfaction of being useful and returning to hoping for a serene death.

Among the many different forms of poverty, Blessed Louis Guanella chose what he defined as "the most poor and the most abandoned of the poor children and the old people."