
Artemide Zatti, a Saint of everyday life. Bishop Laxague (Viedma): "Still today, people consider him 'one of them'"

A Saint of everyday life, a Saint of encounter with people and especially with the sick. A Saint whose experiences make him a modern-day example of today's sufferings: he was an emigrant, from Italy to Argentina, working in the healthcare sector, as a nurse and as animator of the first hospital in Patagonia. And he was a Saint with a simple but deep-rooted spirituality. **Artemide Zatti**, who will be canonized by Pope Francis on Sunday October 9, in St Peter's Square, was all these things. A Salesian coadjutor, he was born in Boretto (Reggio Emilia) on October 12, 1880. He died in Viedma, a city along the coast of Argentina's Rio Negro province, on March 15, 1951. In 1897 he emigrated with his family to Argentina, where he came into contact with the Salesians of Don Bosco in Bahia Blanca. After contracting tuberculosis, he was sent to Viedma, gateway for evangelisation in Patagonia. Although he did not become a priest, he made his perpetual profession in 1911. A nurse and pharmacist, he dedicated the rest of his life to helping the sick, in charge of the hospital founded by the Salesians, he visited patients in the area by bicycle. In 2002 he was beatified by Pope John Paul II. **The Bishop of Viedma: "Holiness practised in daily life."** He was perceived as someone who was genuinely close to the people, the Bishop of Viedma, Monsignor **Esteban María Laxague**, himself member of the Salesian Order, told SIR: "All saints are a gift from God, they bear witness to His work in history. We feel this Saint to be in touch with our times. He manifested his holiness in practice, in daily life, by doing what is "good in a good way," managing the hospital, travelling through Patagonia by bicycle, concerned about not only bodily health, but also about spiritual health. He gave hope to the sick, but he also sowed joy, as Don Bosco had asked. He was a member of the immigrant community, he would meet with the Catholic Workers' Club, and play the game of bocce with them. That is why, even today, people consider him 'one of them'. His life became known even beyond Argentina, since the miracle that paved the way for the canonization process took place in the Philippines. It is therefore only natural that people are eagerly anticipating his canonisation throughout Patagonia. A Thanksgiving Mass will be held on October 30. "People here have always considered him a saint, the hospital was named after him, as well as a neighbourhood in the city of Viedma. Many people who knew him are still alive. In the past years of pandemic, he was made the patron saint of pastoral healthcare. In November, during the bishops' assembly, he will be proclaimed patron saint of Argentine nurses. Finally, the canonisation of John Baptist Scalabrini coinciding with his canonisation is of special significance, since Zatti was a migrant." **Celebrations in Patagonia.** **Father Pedro Norambuena** from the Salesian community of Viedma is working at full speed organising local events to mark the canonisation ceremony: "It will be possible for only a few to go to Rome with our bishop, but we are planning a big celebration, including a procession to the church that is the shrine of his tomb", he said. "We have also made a short film about his life, and a book will be forthcoming and we are planning to extend the shrine. Artemide Zatti was always very popular here. His funeral was attended by a multitude of people, involving the whole town, he was immediately recognised as a saint. This is a time of grace and joy, which allows us to continue adhering to the call of John Paul II who came here in 1987 and called on the Christian community of Patagonia to "continue to be missionary." After all, it was a land dreamed of by St John Bosco as a frontier mission. And hence the Salesians arrived in Viedma." Fr Norambuena highlights Artemide Zatti's "ability to see God in his brothers and sisters", his reputation for being the "kinsman of all the poor", his ability to "weave relationships for the service of life", and his existence devoted to caring for the sick, ever since - while he was still undergoing vocational discernment - he fell ill with tuberculosis to assist a young priest. He was a 'callejero' ('street') Saint, dedicated to accomplishing his duties and to the encounter with the most disadvantaged." **Widely prayed to during the pandemic.** From Córdoba, **José Sobrero**, author of a biography of the saint, added: "He was a simple and good man, but he also had multiple talents, and he managed to reorganise the hospital of

the small town, to animate the whole surrounding area. He integrated various different dimensions and experiences into his life: in particular, being a Salesian, an immigrant, having been ill and, following that experience, having realised that his vocation was to make the sick the primary focus of his life, and most of all the poorest. Of all these qualities, I personally believe that his goodness, emanating from his deeply rooted faith, shone through. This is a moment of great joy for many: for the Salesian family, for the community of origin in Boretto, Italy, for the Church in Argentina, and in particular that of Viedma. He has been strongly invoked in these years of pandemic, and his message is not to lose hope, even in difficult times like those we have experienced and are experiencing now". For this reason too, [in a letter addressed to all the faithful](#), the bishops of the Patagonia-Comahue region of Argentina wrote: "The entire world of healthcare" is placed under the protection of the next Saint, both the sick and the doctors, nurses, volunteers and orderlies, that they may be inspired by him in their service. "May Zatti intercede so that healthcare may become a priority in governments' public policies, a universal right, that no one may be excluded from quality healthcare services", the bishops concluded.

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