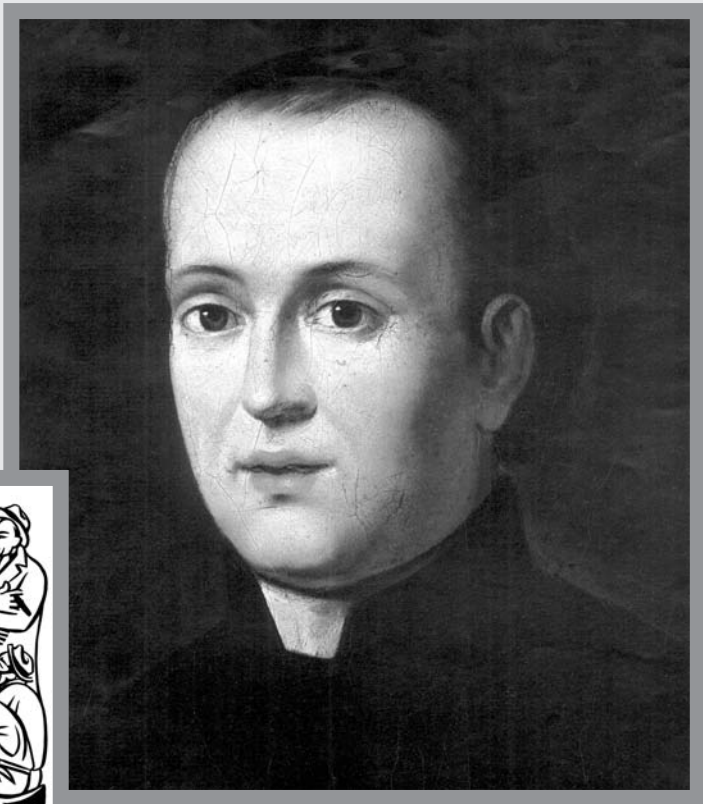


# ST. GASPAR DEL BUFALO

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*Founder of the  
Missionaries of the Precious Blood*



*A Saint in Motion*



“It is necessary  
to send  
out workers  
everywhere,  
so that the earth  
will be cleansed  
in the Divine  
Blood.”

- St. Gaspar  
del Bufalo

*St. Gaspar del Bufalo:  
A Saint in Motion*

is produced by the Cincinnati Province of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood. The Missionaries of the Precious Blood is a religious society of priests, brothers and lay associates founded in 1815 by St. Gaspar del Bufalo. Society members work as missionaries in parishes in the U.S. and abroad, in education and in a wide range of apostolates, promoting the cause of God's reconciliation worldwide through the ministry of the Word of God.

For more information about our Congregation, please visit our website at <http://cpps-preciousblood.org> or contact the Cincinnati Province of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, 431 E. Second St., Dayton, OH, 45402-1764 (phone 937-228-9263).



Canonization banner of St. Gaspar del Bufalo.

# ST. GASPAR DEL BUFALO: *A Saint in Motion*



**I**n many parishes around the world served by Missionaries of the Precious

Blood, there is a painting or statue of St. Gaspar del Bufalo, the founder of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood. But anyone who ever painted his portrait or sculpted his image got it wrong, because none of the images of St. Gaspar are moving.

The little saint was a dynamo, a rushing river of new ideas, a perpetual motion machine. Although prayer empowered everything he did, his was not a monastic life, contemplative and silent. He was always happiest when he was out among the children of God, whether they were devout Catholics or those who had never heard the Word.

Born on the Feast of the Epiphany, January 6, 1786, in Rome, Gaspar Melchior

Balthazar del Bufalo was named after the three Magi who visited the Christ child. It was an apt name for a man who would spend his life on a quest to fulfill the will of God, constantly on the move as a missionary.

He was raised in the bustle and activity of the

**“I cannot, I must not and I will not,”**

St. Gaspar said to the Napoleonic government, as he refused to sign an oath of allegiance.

Eternal City by his father, a failed entrepreneur who had dabbled in the theater and in professional soccer (even in those days, there were professional sports teams), and his mother, a devout and devoted woman who held the family

together. When Gaspar was still a young boy, the family moved to the Palazzo Altieri, in the heart of Rome, so that Gaspar’s father could take a job as a cook for a family with royal connections.

Gaspar always knew his calling. While still a 17-year-old student at the Collegio Romano, Gaspar was already preaching and teaching in his parish, where some complained that the seminarian was overstepping his bounds.

“Seminarian del Bufalo does better than I” in preaching, the pastor serenely replied.

While Gaspar was learning, he was also active in several ministries. He visited the sick and the poor, often stopping at a bakery first to buy a sweet treat to share with them. He offered constant encouragement to others, and founded a young persons’ religious organization whose members prayed and did charitable work together. He had the gift, said one of his biographers, Amilcar Rey, of multiplying time, “of forcing his day to expand to include everything his busy mind could imagine.”

Gaspar was ordained in 1808, and soon after formed an evening society for the laborers and farm workers who came into Rome from the countryside to sell their wares. He wanted to bring

them back to the Church, and to show those who slept in the streets of Rome that they had value.

Soon after, he faced his first crisis as Napoleon swept into power in the Papal States. The anti-clerical Napoleonic government was demanding that priests sign an oath of allegiance to Napoleon. "I cannot, I must not and I will not," Gaspar replied. His declaration began four years of exile and imprisonment. Even the pope, Pius VII, was forced from Rome at the same time.

During that time of exile, Gaspar's beloved mother died, which added immeasurably to his misery. Away from home, unsure about his future, unable to continue in the ministries that meant so much to him, Gaspar struggled against despair.

It was a defining time in his young life as a man and as a priest, writes Italian author Mario Spinelli, who authored a 1996 biography of the saint. "Life would not be stingy with trials for Gaspar," Spinelli writes. "But that moment was surely the severest, and his soul was to emerge forged and brilliant,

## To Learn More About St. Gaspar

A more detailed story of the life of St. Gaspar, founder of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, can be found in the biography *No Turning Back*, by Mario Spinelli (Fr. John Klopke, C.P.P.S., translator).

The work was commissioned by the Italian Province of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood. Fr. Robert Schreiter, C.P.P.S., and Fr. Raymond Cera, C.P.P.S., edited the English version.

*No Turning Back* is available for \$8 plus \$3 shipping and handling from the Precious Blood Resource Center, St. Charles Center, 2860 U.S. 127, Carthagena, Ohio, 45822.

A daily calendar featuring the writings of St. Gaspar, *St. Gaspar del Bufalo: Our Daily Companion*, compiled by the Moderator General, Fr. Barry Fischer, C.P.P.S. is also available, for \$10 plus \$3 shipping and handling.

The images of St. Gaspar in this publication were taken from *Saint Gaspar Del Bufalo in the Arts*, by Fr. Milton Ballor, C.P.P.S., also available from the Resource Center, for \$30 plus \$3 shipping and handling.



**ST. GASPAR'S FEAST  
DAY IS OCTOBER 21**

ready for an undertaking without limits in the service of God, the Church, his brethren and his own sanctification.”

In 1814, with Napoleon’s rule over, the Pope returned to Rome, and Gaspar with him. He threw himself into the new work of preaching missions with his friend, Don Gaetano Bonanni, who had formed a society of preachers called the Gospel Workers.

While preaching a mission in the town of Giano with the Gospel Workers, Gaspar saw for the first time the Abbey of San Felice (St. Felix), which had been used then abandoned by the Benedictines and the Augustinians during its long life. With its beautiful and serene setting, it was, he

thought, the perfect home for the new missionary society he felt driven to form.

Of course, an abandoned 10th century monastery would be a money pit, and Gaspar faced his share of temporal problems in fixing it up, getting the money to run it, and dealing with the local bishop, who wasn’t sure he wanted this new congregation in his midst. With the help of local people, Gaspar himself laid brick and whitewashed walls.

Even his close friends in the priesthood did not necessarily want to follow him to Giano, Spinelli writes: “It was one thing to give missions then return home (to Rome). It was quite another thing to become full-time apostolic militants, like soldiers chosen to be stationed in an advance post with endless territories to defend or reconquer, as Gaspar wanted.”

But he would not be discouraged. And on Aug. 15, 1815, to the music of pealing bells, and with the countryfolk who had helped him by his side, Gaspar opened the first house of his new Congregation of the Missionaries of the Most

Precious Blood (C.P.P.S.).

There were only four of them, including Gaspar. But their good works soon spread through what is now central Italy, as they preached mission after mission, lighting fires of faith among the people in the countryside. In those days a mission would last two weeks, opening with the bishop or his representative meeting the C.P.P.S. missionaries at the edge of town.

They would then process to the village church with all the people following, accompanied by the sound of ringing church bells. During the day, the missionaries would station themselves in a popular piazza in town, drawing attention to the mission. At night they would preach, offering special sessions to working men, and religion lessons to the children. They visited the sick and those imprisoned, so that the Word would be carried to all. It was an all-out, ambitious effort, so characteristic of the little saint.

In the years that followed, he opened new houses for his missionaries, 15 in his lifetime, and saw his



Stained glass window of St. Gaspar at Our Lady of Good Counsel Church, Cleveland.

Throughout his life Gaspar struggled with poor health and an anxious spirit. Underneath his iron convictions, Gaspar was a fearful man.



**Statue of St. Gaspar protecting the victims of violence, located on a hillside outside the village of Patrica, Italy.**

congregation grow. He stepped forward when the countryside fell into the grip of bandits who robbed and murdered at will, negotiating a peace with the *banditi* and saving the town of Sonnino, whose people still claim Gaspar as their personal saint (Pope Pius VII had threatened to raze the town, which had become the bandits' headquarters, but Gaspar begged for the chance to try to save it).

The way was not easy for Gaspar. He was often threatened, both emotionally

and physically, by those in the anti-clerical movement of the day. They printed pamphlets outlining arguments against his preaching and plastered the towns where he had planned a mission with mocking posters that cast the missionaries as a comic theater troupe.

Gaspar faced other problems as well. He wanted his congregation to live modestly, but many times money was too tight and Gaspar did not know how he was going to feed his growing flock. "Lord, give us your



grace and some small change," Gaspar would pray, as sporadic income trickled into the C.P.P.S. houses.

He also had to deal with the problems that come along with leading any group of people – fractious, opinionated, discontented people can be found in a religious society too. Fellow priests not a part of his congregation accused him of pride, hypocrisy and ambition. Even popes questioned Gaspar harshly and often about the sincerity and purpose of his Congregation.

Through it all, he inspired others to follow him, always expanding his circle. Early on, the Congregation included lay brothers. Also, through the preaching of Gaspar, a young woman named Maria de Mattias was moved by the spirituality of the Precious Blood to found the Sister Adorers of the Blood of Christ in Acuto, Italy, in 1834 (Maria was canonized in 2003).

Gaspar accomplished so much, and he did it with so little – throughout his life he struggled with poor health and an anxious spirit. Underneath his iron convictions, Gaspar was a

fearful man whose missionary work ran counter to his meekness. Gaspar suffered from insomnia all his life. He spent his sleepless nights writing or praying, stretched out on his bed with his eyes wide open in the dark.

From this physically frail, emotionally charged little man came great things, and through him, his followers said, God worked many miracles. There was about him an air of one who lives with his eyes on heaven. As he prayed, other members of his Congregation said they would see the light of heaven about him; if Gaspar was praying in his room, the light generated by his conversation with God would shine through the cracks in his door. Gaspar preached with a fervor and intensity that convinced those who heard him that they were truly listening to a man of God. "There was more to it than words," said his first successor in the C.P.P.S., Don Biagio Valentini.

Gaspar died on Dec. 28, 1837, in Rome, where he had spent the previous summer ministering to those affected by an epidemic of cholera. The physician who examined him said Gaspar died a victim

of charity, worn out from his work for others.

The cause for his sainthood began just two years after his death. Gaspar was beatified in 1904, and, in 1954, with Missionaries from around the world gathered in St. Peter's Square, he was canonized by Pope Pius XII.

Gaspar's work continues through his Missionaries throughout the world, through the lay people who study his life and through all those who pray to him for

support and guidance. Gaspar never turned back. Weakened by ailments, called a fanatic or a fool by people who should have supported him, imprisoned and impoverished, challenged at every turn, his answer to God's call was always yes. His followers continue to turn to him for inspiration, as they fulfill the wish he once expressed: "I wish that I could have a thousand tongues to endear every heart to the Precious Blood of Jesus."



The tomb of St. Gaspar, in Santa Maria in Trivio Church, Rome.

## *St. Gaspar's Message Still Resonates*

**S**t. Gaspar's message and his ceaseless devotion to the Precious Blood of Jesus remain relevant to the Missionaries and to the people they serve still today, said Fr. Angelo Anthony, C.P.P.S. the director of the Cincinnati Province of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood.

"When I think of the impact the life of St. Gaspar can have in our own day, I recall something that Fr. Raymond Cera, C.P.P.S., wrote concerning the scope of St. Gaspar's vision of the Precious Blood: 'For Gaspar the Blood of Jesus was not merely a "devotion" (like so many others) but the compendium of our whole religious creed, the secure way to obtain personal sanctity, the yeast that would ferment all of society, the real stimulus for any apostolic activity,'" Fr. Anthony said.

No other cure for the world's troubles has come forward since the time of Gaspar, Fr. Anthony said. Jesus' endless stance of forgiveness and his call to each of his people to live a life of service remain a beacon to all

Christians, as they were to St. Gaspar.

"When there are so many voices in the world today calling out for our attention; when there are so many abuses against the sacredness of life; when there are so many people looking for healing and hope and a true and lasting peace, the Precious Blood of Jesus is offered to us each day as the foundation and focus of our lives," Fr. Anthony said.

"Who of us does not stand in fear at the disturbing reports that we hear night after night on the evening news? The Blood of Christ is that anchor which helps us to put things into perspective and keeps us from being tossed about aimlessly in the storms of life.

"I have heard it said that our primary vocation as Christians is to be people of hope. St. Gaspar knew this at the depths of his heart, not giving up on anyone, for the mercy of God knows no end. Each of us, whose lives have been stained in the Blood of Christ, is called to be an anchor of hope, a beacon of truth, a harbor for the weary."

# *The Missionaries of the Precious Blood today*



C.P.P.S. priests, brothers and lay associates who follow the example set by St. Gaspar work around the world to bring God's love to His people. Their devotion to the Precious Blood of Jesus calls them to hear the cry of those on the margins of our society.



If you would like to learn more about how you can help our Congregation in our many ministries, please contact the Office of Mission Advancement, 937-228-9263, [mission@cpps-preciousblood.org](mailto:mission@cpps-preciousblood.org), or visit our website:

***<http://cpps-preciousblood.org>***

*(C.P.P.S. stands for the Congregatio Pretiosissimi Sanguinis, the Latin name of the Congregation.)*