

Was Pier Giorgio active in the St. Vincent de Paul Society?

Pier Giorgio belonged to so many Catholic organizations and clubs that it was impossible for him to attend meetings for all of them. But his affiliation with the Conference of St. Vincent de Paul was very special to him from the day he first joined at the age of 17 until hours before his death.

Pier Giorgio was not one to do the minimum when it came to works of charity. As one testimony states, "Amazed, people saw this young man in the streets of Turin dragging hand carts filled with household goods belonging to the poor who were looking for a home. He would enter the most squalid houses and give away all the money he had, so that he did not have enough money to take the bus home."

Pier Giorgio disagreed at times with how things were being handled within a certain Conference. In 1922, he wrote to his friend Carlo, "if you really want to know, one of my ideas is that I would abolish certain conferences of St. Vincent..." His frustration stemmed from the decision of the Conference to stop helping a destitute family because of immoral activity on the part of one of the family members. Pier Giorgio thought the family should be instructed in proper conduct rather than abandoned. Eventually, he resigned from that Conference and joined another.

Even when Pier Giorgio was studying for exams and not taking time to visit his friends, he kept up his visits to the poor whom he was caring for through the Conference of St. Vincent de Paul. In a beautiful speech on charity, he exhorted his fellow college students to get involved in the Conference. "I don't know if you are all aware what these institutions are that were so marvelously conceived by St. Vincent de Paul," he wrote. "It is a simple institution suitable for students because it does not involve commitment apart from being in a particular place one day a week and then visiting two or three families every week. You will see, in just a little time, how much good we can do to those we visit and how much good we can do to ourselves."

Pier Giorgio did not even let his imminent death interfere with the needs of his beloved poor. According to his sister Luciana, with a hand nearly paralyzed by polio, he scribbled instructions to be delivered that day to a colleague attending the weekly meeting of the Conference of St. Vincent de Paul. Medicines needed to be delivered. A pawn ticket needed renewed. Only then could he rest in peace.