

Christians, these people with whom I could say that, "Thy God is my God, Thy people are my people." So I have plenty of Christian fellowship now. I am in contact with many priests. Some years ago, I preached to 3,000 priests in Rome. A lot of Christian communities are growing up all over Italy. It is my desire to lead Roman Catholics to Christ, and if at all possible to convert even the Pope.

Comment from Rev. Geoffrey Donnan of Reformation Christian Ministries:

Rev. Franco Maggiotto is taking seriously the Great Commission to make disciples of all nations. His nation is Italy and perhaps no one man is doing more to make this nation a disciple of Christ than he is. Yet, he would surely tell you, that it is the collective work of many with whom he works. He considers Italy in a pre-Reformation stage. Having spoken before literally thousands of Roman Catholic priests in Italy, and in contact with perhaps over 20,000 world wide, he is hopeful that God will use Italy to spread the truth of the Gospel throughout the Roman Catholic world. Some have called him the Martin Luther of Italy. We invite your participation in his ministry in bringing the Reformation to the country of Italy where the Reformation has never really gained a serious foothold.

For more information on how you can assist the ministry of Reformation in Italy, contact Reformation Christian Ministries at one of the addresses below:

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Use the above contribution(s) where needed for:

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 - Audio (US\$5) Franco discussing the Roman Catholic Church, the Pope in Cuba and his work in Italy.
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Please send me the following information sheets:

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- International Office Fact Sheet
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Far From Rome, Near To God

Saved While Officiating Mass

A Personal Testimony by converted Italian Roman Catholic Priest, Franco Maggiotto.

When I was in my teens, I was in the Catholic Church. I was going to University to do a degree in philosophy, and I was working in an organization called Catholic Action. I was very active in the Catholic Church, but it did not give me meaning to my life. All these things could not suffocate the sense of sin that I had in my heart. I had in my soul the uselessness of everything. I despaired.

I had everything that a young man could have. My family was well grounded with feet in the ground as we say in Italy. They had money. So I had everything I wanted. I had everything that with human power you could have, but I did not have that which a man must have to live. You can have everything that you have that which a man must have to live. You can have everything that you want, but you are just alive; you do not live. You can't live without the meaning of life; the sense of life that only the life that comes from above can give you.



So, I went to my Bishop telling these things to him. My Bishop said that all of these things were helpful; that I was a very nice boy, but I did not need to have this kind of stupidity. Because Jesus Christ, before going up to heaven, gave up all His own authority into the hand of Peter, into the hand of the Pope, and the Apostles. Therefore in the church I would find the Kingdom of God. I would find everything about my sin. The church had all the means in the sacraments to cleanse souls and to cleanse even my soul, to make me ready to have a relationship with God. I could use the sacraments to cleanse my soul, to reach through the sacrament a sure way to meet God. And so I chose immediately as many times the young people do with enthusiasm, the hardest that the Catholic Church had, and I became a hermit. I went into a hermitage, just on a hill near Rome. I could see Rome from there. I shaved only twice a week. We did not have any hair at all. I was dressed in just one big dress made from wool, the same in winter and the same in summer. In summer the heat was terrible, and in the winter it was so cold, and the wind was blowing wherever I went. I was doing all these things with all my heart to try to destroy my sin through earthly power, through human will. I had to reach God and I was almost killing myself.

The doctor told me that I had to leave after almost one year. I planned to come back later on when I was older. I went to work in a seminary to study theology. I became a priest, and I was sent into a parish, a big parish with another parish priest. He was more than 80, so I had to do everything.

I tried to be very nice to the people. I was sad, but I was nice to the people, and I saw that the people were very much around me. I enjoyed being a priest, but I was not happy in my soul, in my heart. And notwithstanding everything I did, I did not have anything with which to meet God. I did not have any sense of assurance. My sin was still there. Always when I went to ask, they just told me what to read in the gospel of Luke, and one verse was really a stumbling block for me.

This sentence in the hand of religious power, in the hand of human reason – Jesus Christ saying to His Apostles, “*He that heareth you hears me, and he that despises you, despise me, and he that despise me, despises him that sent me.*” So my bishop said to me that before going up to heaven, Jesus Christ gave up all His authority to us. Therefore, if you do not listen to us, you do not listen to Jesus. If you despise Jesus, you despise God. So I was even afraid of thinking. I did not need to think. I needed just to trust my Bishop.

But one day, almost in desperation, some young people and I started to translate the New Testament from the Greek. It was good fun at the beginning but the more we went on, we saw the gap, and the biggest gap I could see was always Jesus Christ trying always to push men toward God, to face God, and the church always trying to bring men towards itself.

When we finished the first translation of the Gospel of Matthew, my parish priest was really upset. He was upset because I was teaching the Bible. “If they know what we know they will never come back, they will never come to the church.” But anyway when we came to the end of this chapter something became clear. Jesus saying to His apostles “*Go therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and Lo I am with you always even unto the end of the world.*” (Matthew 28:20).

So yes, Jesus Christ said to His apostles, “*Who listens to you, listens to me, who despises you, despises me.*” But Jesus never said to His Apostles, Go and teach whatsoever you like; go and teach whatsoever will make you a very important man; go and teach whatsoever will build up a big powerful earthly church; go and teach whatever will make the people happy; and if they despise you, they despise me. He, Jesus, said, “*Go and teach whatsoever I have commanded you,*” everything I have already said to you. And, of course, if you go, and if you say whatsoever I have commanded you, no more and no less, then if they despise you, they despise me. And so I started to think that if there was a gap, I had to see more and more.

So, I read the Scriptures more. And the more you read, the more the grass grows, and I found myself preaching some things that were against me.

I was not using any more my sermon on Sunday mornings to build up my authority, but I was using my sermon against me. But this brought me into trouble. At the beginning they pushed me to the 6 a.m. Mass. In the morning I had very few people, just a few ladies saying their rosaries. I could cry and shout there. But in a few weeks, the 6 a.m. Mass was packed. They knew that something was going to happen, so the Bishop called me, and he was very upset. And he told me that he had wanted to send me into another parish. I was promoted into a big parish of 35,000 people in the town of Imperia, with a new church, a priest under me, and so on.

Out there I found myself in a good position for one so young, I was a senior priest, and I liked to go there with all the other priests around me, listening to people and saying, “Oh, he is so young, he has a good career; what a good looking man.” When I look back on it now I am ashamed. But in myself, I was not happy. I tried to do some exegesis. I tried to find out something from the Scriptures, and always when I did that I drew people. Sometimes the people were coming by buses, but again I drew trouble with my authorities. The Cardinal told me there was no truth outside of the church. And he said that when Jesus went up to heaven He gave up His authority into the hand of the Apostles, so the Christian should seek from the Apostle, which is the Pope, guidance and teaching, preaching, teaching, rebuking, and so on. And so I went back, but the people pushed me and the young people pushed. So, I told them that when we come together, I would open the Bible to see what the Lord would do. And so we gather together with these young people. I remember now how we opened at Galatians, and I read Galatians 1. When I reached verse 8, I could not quote any more, “*But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.*” I was shocked, literally shocked. Here the Apostle Paul who built up his people to suffer, who loved his people more than his life, was saying to his people, “If I preached to you any other gospel, please throw me away.” If any of the Apostles preach to you any other gospel, please throw them away because there is no salvation in the Apostles. There is not salvation even in an angel who comes from heaven.

We have salvation in the Word of God. So, I said, now I know where I have to start, where I can find out. And I went on with my people. My Bishop was very clever and knew how to make me stop. He said, “You are very

proud, who do you think you are? You think that you can understand the Scriptures better than me, better than the Pope?” When the bishop said I was proud, I knew that I was proud. I knew that I liked my position, but now I knew where to look to find the answer — the Truth. I knew that I was a beggar, I knew that I was a poor sinner, and sin was still there to destroy me.

I turned then into the Old Testament to find out where our God said to the prophets, to the fathers, go and interpret my Word. I went to see where God gave up His authority in interpreting the Word, but I could not find the words. So, I went into the New Testament, and I did not find any Scripture, any idea where Jesus Christ gave up His authority to interpret the Scriptures. He never said to the Apostles, go and interpret my Scripture. And then I saw something very clearly. I do not know if it is clear for you, but for me it was very clear in those days there in John 14:26. Jesus Christ telling the apostles before going up to heaven, “*But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.*” — not in the name of the Pope or the Bishop or the Catholic Peter; not in the name of the pastor, but in My Name. He shall teach you. He is the interpreter. God never gave up His authority to interpret the Scripture.

This gave me a lot of courage. Of course, I had trouble. I was pushed into another church, an old parish, but with nine churches. They thought that in going around I would have lost my energy and my thoughts to study, but I went and I managed to preach. But almost all the time I was not happy because of my sin. Now I knew where to find out the truth, but what about my sin? What about my soul? I was spending nights kneeling in front of the altar, and the caretaker was helping me in the morning, sometimes because I was kneeling there until the morning. But the Lord had pity on me and He had pity on me just when I was blaspheming.

I remember one day it was 12 noon Sunday morning and I was leading the singing Mass. I had two priests with me and 25 young people in white dresses on one side, 25 dressed in white on the other side, and the choir was singing beautifully. I was at the foot of the altar, just praying, “You are a cruel God, why do you not kill me here? Why don’t you destroy me.” And while I was washing my hands at the altar, one young man read Hebrews 10:10; it was like a shock to my mind. While I was battling in my heart, he read, “*By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*” And I was shocked. “You little stupid man. Do you think that I gave up my life for nothing? Do you think that if everybody had said no I would have saved you for nothing? You stupid man, who do you think you are? I saved you because I wanted to save you, because I love you.” It was like a hammer in my mind, “*and every priest standeth daily ministering and offering often times the same sacrifices which can never take away sins.*” And I said to the priests who were with me, “Do you hear Him? Have you heard him?” I was looking at them, and they were looking at me, staring at me. “Look, look what is written here. He did the job, we are useless.” And I was looking around this big church. The people were groaning and crying, and I said, “But He has done the job and their sins I will remember no more. He did the job, we are useless.” I was so happy, I was crying and laughing. Finally something was clear in my mind — that I had got the sack [was fired], and nobody was more happy. Nobody that got the sack was more happy than me, to know that I had been sacked. Once forever, once for all, He did the job.

They said that I was ill, that all this responsibility for a young man like me was too much. Anyway, I was so happy, I was trying to tell my Bishop the same thing when he came to see me. They did not want me to resign, but I could not say the Mass any more because I was sacked. So they gave me a big college with 800 young people and, of course students and teachers and so on. I was there, but I did not want to attend the Mass. I was trying to even teach the others and the nuns. They were very attentive. It was Saturday evening and the people came to confess. I was asking them, “Why are you here?” “To confess my sin.” “Do you love Jesus?” “Yes” “Why do you love Him?” “Because He died for my sins.” “So, if He died for your sins, go and praise Him. Why do you come to tell your sins to me? What have I got to do with your sin?” And so the confession was very quick. But the nuns went to the Bishop, and finally I saw that they could not understand. So I left forever the Roman Catholic Church, with my people following me. I had studied in the University of Rome, and in England, and in Holland. I thought that many Protestants had thrown away the Bible. But then I met many born-again