

# *Saint Louis Versiglia*

**A good shepherd  
who gave his life for the sheep**

**Bishop and Martyr  
(1873-1930)**

**As you enjoy the story of St. Louis Versiglia,  
appreciate the wonder of God's plan**

*Who would have ever imagined that? A boy, totally disinclined to become a priest, once grown up, eventually became a great missionary to China. More than that, he was the pioneer of the China Province of the Salesians of Don Bosco, becoming the object of their admiration and imitation.*

*God's plan always works out beyond our fondest expectations. God knows everything. God knew that Louis had the proper ability to open up a new field of evangelisation and to take good care of the flock entrusted to him. What young Louis needed was only a pair of tender and strong hands that would lead him to choose the right path.*

*That is why God saw to it that young Louis met St. John Bosco. The time Louis and Don Bosco spent together was not very long. Still, Louis was deeply touched by Don Bosco's loving-kindness and holiness. This heartfelt touch made Louis decide to follow in Don Bosco's footsteps. Eventually, he established in China a very fruitful mission enterprise. In the end, like Jesus the Good Shepherd, he offered up his very life in defense of his flock. What a splendid conclusion to his mission on earth!*

*What mission has God given you and me to fulfill? Perhaps we find it difficult to answer this question. We can be sure, however, that at our side God has prepared many pairs of tender and strong hands: our beloved parents, our loving Superiors, our kind teachers... All these, hopefully, are our "Don Bosco". At all times, with a caring heart, they are ready to help us know the vocation and the mission given us by God.*

*Best wishes for your careful reading of St. Louis Versiglia's story! After that, best wishes also for your finding your "Don Bosco" : hold firmly that pair of tender and strong hands and fulfill the mission entrusted to you by God!*

**Fr. Lanfranco M. Fedrigotti, SDB**

It was August, 1885. There stood St. John Bosco's<sup>(1)</sup> Oratory<sup>(2)</sup> in the outskirt of Turin in Northern Italy. Beautiful sunlight was sheening over the pasture on a mid-summer day. And here came the new boys, ready to start their new school term. The Oratory was large in scale. The grand Basilica of Mary Help of Christians standing on the campus spread her wings like a mother gently looking after a family of over a thousand teachers and pupils.





The pupils there got along well and laughter could be heard everywhere. Yet, there was this 12-year-old new elementary student, always frowning with deep thoughts. He felt that he was like a little bird once lived in a forest but all of a sudden was locked in a cage with no freedom. The new student was good looking with open and good manners. One could tell that he came from a well-educated family. His name was Louis Versiglia.



Louis Versiglia was born on June 5<sup>th</sup>, 1873 at Oliva Gessi in the Province of Pavia in Northern Italy. Besides himself and his parents, he had an elder and a younger sister. They lived happily together.

The Versiglia family loved and venerated God devoutly and was a model family in the town. Little Versiglia was well behaved and did well in school. He enjoyed the activities in the parish and became an altar server at a young age. He was a role model for other children. People in the town praised him highly and said that he would one day become a respectful priest; but this is not what little Louis had in mind.

“Please don’t talk about this; I’d rather not be a priest.”



It so happened that there was a colonel living near the home of the Versiglia and he had a horse. Little Versiglia enjoyed visits to the colonel's house and learned horse riding. One day, the horse was ill. The colonel asked a veterinarian to treat the horse and the horse recovered after taking medicine. Little Versiglia was amazed.

“I decide to be a vet when I grow up and take care of horses!”

