

Dr. Angelo Pagano

On May 8, 1979, thirty-eight people, united by their active participation in the parish of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, located on the “Colle di Acireale,” decided that something concrete needed to be done for the city and, in particular, for the Piazza Dante neighborhood.

From this idea, the *Misericordia di Acireale* was born.

This group of thirty-eight people was led by one of them, **Don Michele Micalizzi**, then parish priest of the district, who had become acquainted with the *Misericordia* movement that had developed over the centuries in central and northern Italy. (The first *Misericordia* was founded in Florence in 1244 on the initiative of the preacher St. Peter of Verona as a lay Christian institution based on the practice of the seven works of mercy.) The movement was beginning to take root in Sicily, with the first *Misericordia* established in Acicastello, followed a few months later by that of Belpasso.

Don Michele, a keen observer of the needs of the local community, recognized the chronic social and health care deficiencies that characterized Acireale at that time, particularly in the densely populated Piazza Dante area. Together with a group of dedicated parishioners, he had already initiated several projects to meet the emerging needs of the population.

Among those who offered their time and active support to Don Michele’s initiatives was the young **Angelo**, then in his early twenties, together with his girlfriend and later wife **Rosa**, and many other young and older volunteers.

One of the main problems concerned the care and transport of the sick to hospital. At the time, there was no emergency medical service (the “118” was only introduced in 1992). Medical emergencies were handled by the *Old S. Marta e S. Venera Hospital*, which had only one ambulance—an Alfa Romeo—often unavailable due to breakdowns or lack of staff.

Thus, before the notary Tropea, these thirty-eight dedicated people formally founded the *Misericordia di Acireale*. The young university student **Angelo**, a founding member together with Rosa, devoted his human and Christian commitment to this new organization aimed at supporting brothers and sisters in need. These were years of intense activity during which Angelo, while studying at the Faculty of Physics at the University of Catania (where he graduated in July 1980), lived his Christian faith through voluntary work at *Misericordia*—a love expressed in action, seeing in every person in need a brother to whom both hands must be extended.

Angelo once wrote:

“To love means to give of oneself. For many of us, *Misericordia* is a true school of life where we learn to recognize our true neighbour.

Little by little, our neighbour has become a real person and no longer a mere concept: a child in need of blood, an elderly woman with a broken femur, an adult who has had a heart attack, a woman in despair.”

Over the years, Angelo always found time to serve others through the activities of the parish, *Misericordia*, and the Blood Donors Group, as well as through various cultural associations of which he was an active member. He devoted his free time with great enthusiasm, joy, and Christian spirit, encouraging others to donate blood—a practice then still uncommon and often feared.

Angelo was one of the four volunteers (together with Don Michele Micalizzi, Cristofaro Furnari, and Giovanni Sciuto) who in 1979 travelled to Prato to collect the first *Misericordia* ambulance—an old Fiat 1100—and drive it back to Acireale, where the newly established association began

offering free emergency services to the city.

With youthful enthusiasm and remarkable determination, Angelo became a driving force for everyone—young and old alike—holding important positions and contributing to the association's human, organizational, and cultural growth.

He served as **Vice President** of the *Misericordia di Acireale* and was responsible for the newly formed **Fratres Blood Donors Group**. As **Head of Ecology**, he promoted several public debates on topical scientific and medical issues. Notably, in November 1986, he spoke on “The necessity—or otherwise—of nuclear energy and whether energy is compatible with life,” addressing the related entropic phenomena and anticipating (in the 1980s!) issues that today are central to ensuring a sustainable future for the coming generations.

In 1980, one year after the foundation of *Misericordia*, the young Angelo wrote in the parish bulletin:

“Volunteering means the joy of serving others, a full and loyal availability to those in need, the desire to give one's life, feeling unique yet part of everyone, sharing the joys and sorrows of others, discovering day by day that life only has meaning when it is lived for others, and realizing that selfishness is the negation of humanity.

The volunteer is not someone who plays the hero, who passes the time, or who pretends to be a nurse as a hobby. The volunteer is someone who loves. It is from this perspective of love that one gives their time. The volunteer does not seek medals or recognition.”

Although his studies and professional commitments took him away for several years, Angelo remained deeply connected to the ideals and projects he had helped create. He was always ready to offer his advice or practical help whenever asked. Within *Misericordia*, and in the hearts of all of us who knew him and worked alongside him, his memory and teachings as a *living Christian* continue to inspire. He was convinced that Christianity must be lived daily through good deeds, love, and practical help to those in need.

Despite his many responsibilities in work, culture, and family life, Angelo always remained actively committed to the growth of *Misericordia*. I am certain that the living bond among all of us Volunteers of Mercy—nourished over time through a mutual relationship of faith and friendship—helped sustain Angelo through the difficult trials he faced, with the certainty of always finding a brother by his side ready to offer both hands, Christian love, and comfort.

Angelo always expressed his **passions** openly and wholeheartedly, always placing the **human being** at the center—in all their cultural, material, and spiritual dimensions.

Indeed, his many achievements can be seen as the fruit of his deepest **convictions**. Though these evolved over time through study and life experience, they always remained focused on humanity and on the mystery of life, to which he offered a rational and coherent understanding.

Angelo—a scientist and, at the same time, a man of the people—always looked at human beings through their essential needs, serving the community both through his scientific work and through institutions such as *Misericordia*, the *Fratres Blood Donors Group*, the *Popular University*, and the *Accademia degli Zelanti e dei Dafnici*. In all of these, he not only held leadership roles but also worked side by side with others, preferring action to words.

Like all of us, Angelo had his human weaknesses, but they never limited his creativity or his boundless desire to serve others. Deeply attached to his family and his hometown, he even declined prestigious roles that would have taken him far from his “passions.”

In light of his life, I dare say that this very “weakness” was his **greatest strength**: he managed to

combine work with his passions and, even during the years he spent abroad (from 1982 to 1984, as a contract researcher at the Atomic Energy Centre near Paris), he remained close to his loved ones and to our city. He ultimately achieved a distinguished career that led him to the **Directorship of the INFN – Catania Division**.

For many of us who had the privilege of growing both as individuals and as volunteers by following his example, **Angelo Pagano** remains a strong, reliable, and inspiring reference point for the human values that underpin modernity, equality, and democracy.

We remember him with the ancient motto of the *Misericordie*:
MAY GOD REWARD YOU.