

A MAN WITH A MISSION

Dr. Frank Bellomo, a big-hearted Italian immigrant, found in the Marianists perfect collaborators for helping some of the world's poorest people.

BY JAN D. DIXON

There are lots of things Dr. Frank Bellomo could have done with his life's savings. But after witnessing the suffering of poor families near his home in Bari, Italy, as a 10-year-old boy, he vowed someday he would do something to help people out of poverty.

Dr. Bellomo immigrated with his parents to the United States in 1930 where he studied medicine, but the call to work on behalf of the poor never left him.

"I recall discussing with my wife, Mary, that upon completing my professional training as a doctor of medicine, I would consider doing medical volunteering in the impoverished town of Eboli, Italy," he wrote in a reflection about his life.

But God had another plan. After serving in the Navy during World War II, Dr. Bellomo received a degree in biology from Loyola College in Baltimore and a medical degree from the University of Maryland and began private practice in Caldwell, N.J. Later, he studied psychiatry and worked as the chief of psychiatry at the Veterans' Medical Center in Lyon, N.J. Still, the dream of working on behalf of the poor persisted.

As his wealth accumulated, Dr. Bellomo, a devout Catholic, began reaching out to Catholic organizations with gifts of money. One day he placed a call to the Marianist Mission in Dayton, Ohio, after receiving one of its Mass cards. He explained that he wanted to give a

major gift to the Marianists to be used for the poor. Little did anyone anticipate the impact of that phone call.

A shared mission

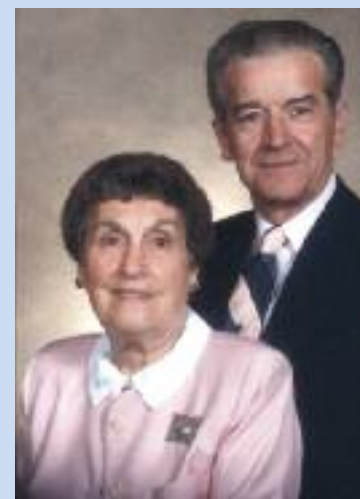
Marianist Father David Paul, director of development for ministries in developing countries, whose primary work is fundraising for Marianist work among the poor, was the first to call on Dr. Bellomo.

"He was the utmost gentleman — always pleasant, humble and incredibly thoughtful," recalls Father David, who struck up a decade-long friendship with Dr. Bellomo. The two found common ground in their love for the poor and their Catholic sense of social responsibility. "I found myself visiting him several times a year and got to know his life story. He became like a second father to me. When he had to move to a care facility two years ago, I flew to New Jersey almost every month to spend a few days with him."

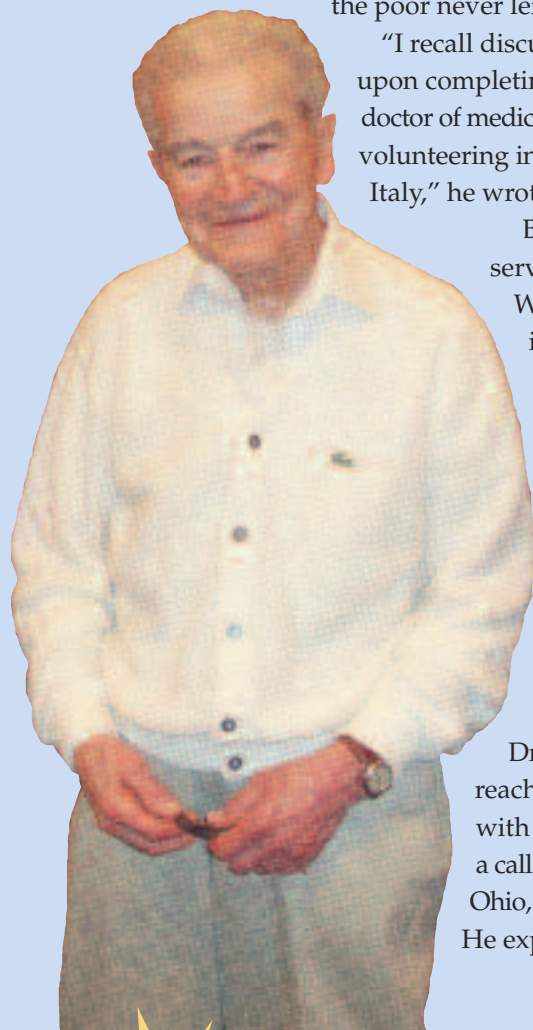
Dr. Bellomo was a big-hearted man. During his life, "he made a lot of major gifts to the Marianists and other religious orders, as well as the diocese of his local parish," says Father David.

Dr. Bellomo died at 92 on Aug. 25, 2012, joining his wife, Mary, who passed away in 1993. Shortly before his death, the Marianists learned that he had given his entire estate to the Marianists. "He always wanted to work with the poor," says Father David. "This was his way of fulfilling a lifelong dream.

"I am still in awe of him — of how he lived his life and how he opened himself to the whisperings of the Holy Spirit," says Father David. "I feel privileged to have known such a sweet, generous soul." ■



Dr. Frank Bellomo and his wife, Mary, in the 1980s



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