

Funeral

Vittorio Messori: The hypothesis that Jesus existed has become a certainty

ECCLESIA

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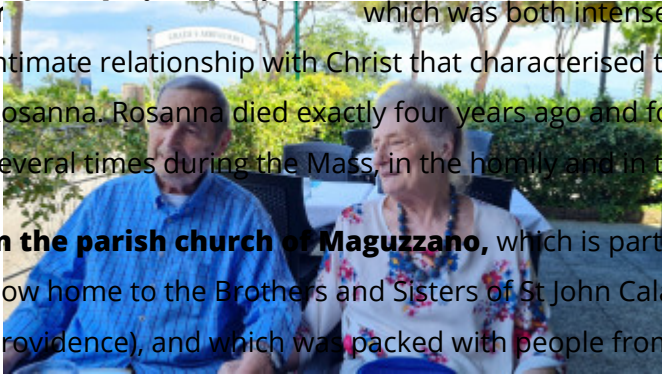
**Riccardo
Cascioli**



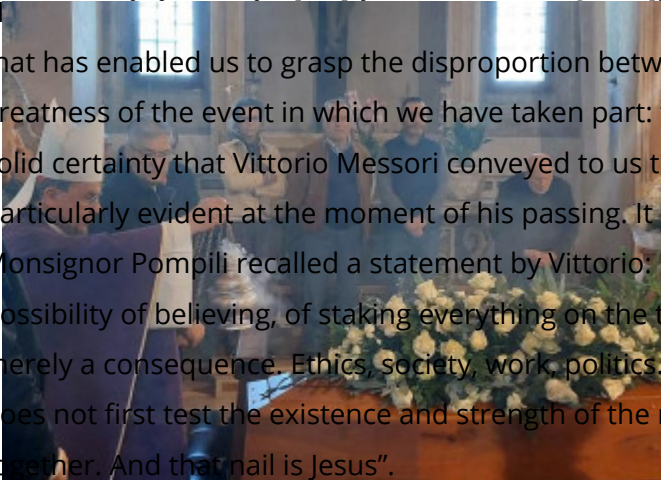
A funeral, but also a challenge to our lives. A prayer for the soul of a friend, but also a desire – and a prayer to God – to attain the certainty of Christ’s presence that he bore witness to. Against this backdrop, the funeral Mass for Messori took place on Saturday

11 April. Messori, the great Catholic journalist and writer, died at his home in Desenzano sul Garda on Good Friday, 3 April.

In which was both intense and solemn, we experienced the intimate relationship with Christ that characterised the lives of Vittorio and his wife Rosanna. Rosanna died exactly four years ago and for good reason was mentioned several times during the Mass, in the homily and in the prayers.



In the parish church of Maguzzano, which is part of 'his' Benedictine abbey and is now home to the Brothers and Sisters of St John Calabria (Poor Servants of Divine Providence), and which was packed with people from all over Italy, the Bishop of Verona, Monsignor Domenico Pompili, who celebrated the funeral, immediately recalled Messori: Messori himself had requested a simple celebration because the Eucharist, the pinnacle of Christian life, must take precedence over all else. 'Celebrating the Eucharist in memory of Vittorio Messori,' said Monsignor Pompili, 'helps us not to forget what he wrote in the closing pages of *Scommessa sulla morte (Wager on Death)*: "It is above all when it speaks to us of the Eucharist that the Gospel clashes with the avarice of our intellect and the narrowness of our hearts, constricted by the fear of believing too much".'



Humilitated intellect and narrow hearts that has enabled us to grasp the disproportion between our smallness and the greatness of the event in which we have taken part: the presence of Christ, and the rock-solid certainty that Vittorio Messori conveyed to us throughout his life, which became particularly evident at the moment of his passing. It is no coincidence that, in his homily, Monsignor Pompili recalled a statement by Vittorio: 'What interests me is faith, the very possibility of believing, of staking everything on the truth of the Gospel.' The rest is merely a consequence. Ethics, society, work, politics... All necessary, yet absurd if one does not first test the existence and strength of the nail that must hold everything together. And that nail is Jesus".

The secret of the success of Messori's apologetic work, which **we have already discussed**, lies precisely here, not in asserting arguments, principles or values, but in defending and presenting the reasons for one's own life and faith, and identifying with Christ to the point of sharing His passion for His Mother. One fruit of this is the precious **shrine of Our Lady of the Olives**, built on the extensive grounds surrounding the Abbey of Maguzzano.

Describing Vittorio Messori as a free man, Monsignor Pompili quoted the heartfelt

words of the Apostle Paul to the young Timothy: 'For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day'. Vittorio possessed this same awareness; he chose similar words as an epitaph on his tomb, words which he often repeated: 'I know in whom I believed'.

The word **Jesus** — the title of his first book as a convert, which made him famous throughout the world — has become a certainty. We can only hope and pray to grow in faith, interpreting our whole life according to God's judgement as Vittorio Messori did. In a passage from one of his final interviews, which Monsignor Pompili quoted at the end of his homily, he said: 'I asked myself why I outlived Rosanna, and it comforts me to think that this separation will only be temporary. It hasn't been easy, partly because in the meantime, I have ended my collaboration with *Corriere della Sera* and lost my ability to write. I used to have an ironclad memory, but I don't anymore. Now, in the middle of a conversation, I forget names, dates and situations. But I am grateful to the Lord and Our Lady for this, because by taking things away, they make me feel vulnerable and urge me to trust in them more. They make me want to detach myself from my ego and my certainties, and from everything that has made me live on this earth. They make me long ever more for the fulfilment that will come after death. They teach me to live each day with the same patience shown by Mary, to calmly respect God's timing, which is not our own.'

