

## Fr. Piero Gheddo, envoy to the peripheries, dies at 88

### *Key point from this article:*

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*On the other hand, nowadays, he wrote, “we missionaries campaign against foreign debt, against arms proliferation, against counterfeit medicines and for public water; today, there is no talk of mission to the public, but about earthly and social or ecological works. Can you tell me how many young boys and girls are enthused and become missionaries after a protest against arms proliferation? None!”*

*Fr. Perozich: This is a great problem in our church today: socialism and material world views equivocation of every belief, perversion, action, idea culture, etc. as all equal and worthy of adoption, respect and integration into the church and society. These attempts at a unity of our world, cultures, various religions but without Christ, are all doomed to fail in purpose and failure to attract young people to promote that sort of mission either ad gentes or at home, and thus muting the true mission of the Church which is to announce the gospel to all so that the Holy Spirit can convert souls to faith in the Holy and Immortal Trinity through faith in Jesus Christ.*



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By [Andrea Gagliarducci](#)

Vatican City, Jan 3, 2018 / 07:00 pm ([CNA/EWTN News](#)).- One of the Church's great media missionaries of the 20th century, Fr. Piero Gheddo, died last month at the age of 88. Gheddo died on Dec. 20, after more than half a century of work in Catholic media apostolates.

An Italian member of the Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions (PIME), Gheddo was the editor of missionary magazines, a founder of communications agencies, and a prolific author, whose books were translated into 30 languages.

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In his autobiography, “Special Envoy To the Borders of Faith,” he wrote: “I do not deny the enormous problems we are enduring. but let us try to read them through



God’s lenses... Authentic faith says that the history of humanity, as well as our little personal history and the millenary history of the Church, are in the hands of God.”

Gheddo advocated for the beatification of several missionaries, among them Clemente Vismara, a missionary to Burma, and that of Mario Vergara, a missionary to Laos. In 2006, Bishop Enrico Masseroni of Vercelli began a cause for beatification of Gheddo’s own parents, Rosetta Franzi (1902-1934) and Giovanni Gheddo (1900-1942).

It was obvious to those who knew him that Fr. Gheddo came from a family of deeply Catholic roots.

Born in 1929 in Tronzano Vercellese, in the Piedmont region of Italy, he entered the Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions in 1942, hoping to follow a vocation to foreign missionary work among non-Christians.

He was ordained a priest in 1953, and hoped to be sent as a missionary to India. Instead, his superiors gave him a post in the missionary media. In 1959, he was appointed editor-in-chief of the magazine *Le Missioni Cattoliche*.

He took part in the Second Vatican Council while working for the Vatican newspaper *L’Osservatore Romano*, and helped to draft *Ad Gentes*, the Second Vatican Council’s decree on missionary work.

He travelled the world as a journalist and media missionary. In Brazil, he became a friend to Archbishop Helder Camara, supporting his work for the poor. Though Camara was an advocate of liberation theology, Gheddo opposed that movement, and the Marxist drift he believed that some Latin American theologians had taken.

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In India, he met Mother Teresa of Calcutta in the 1970s, and his reports helped her work to be known around the world.

Despite his skill as a journalist, he stayed faithful to his first passion: proclaiming the Gospel. As he aged, he traveled as long as he could. His last missionary trip was in 2009, when Gheddo was at 80. He went to Bangladesh. It seems to be a providential coincidence that Gheddo died shortly after Pope Francis' own trip to that country.

Gheddo published stories and articles to end.

As the Church faced a dwindling number of lay and clerical foreign missionaries, Fr. Gheddo wrote that many Catholic missionary apostolates had lost their identity, and forgotten the primacy of proclaiming the Gospel.

When the Italian missionary magazine *Ad Gentes* shut down in 2014, he wrote a much-discussed analysis of the Church's missionary identity.

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Speaking with CNA, Fr. Gheddo further explained that “the Church is missionary. Everybody must keep in mind the need to go to those who are far away, to evangelize, to bear the Gospel of Christ,” but then lamented that “these topics have almost disappeared from the Church's public agenda.”

He was never sent to India, where he longed to go as a young priest. But through his work, he became a missionary to the whole world, and a prophetic voice in the heart of the Church.