

**Fr. John Baptist Tomasi**



**The 5th Superior General**

**1911 – 1911**

**[Chapters 18 – 22]**

**[V – VIII]**



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### Schematic Outline of His Life<sup>1</sup>



GIOVANNI BATTISTA TOMASI (Priest)

BORN:

*Bassano, VI – Jan. 24, 1866*

ENTERED:

*Verona, 1879*

PRIESTLY ORDINATION:

*Trento, 1890*

DIED:

*Rome (S. Agata) – Jan. 2, 1954*

AGE:

*88*

SUPERIOR GENERAL:

*1911 - 1922*

After his ordination he went to Rome where he obtained a degree in Theology at the Apollinare University. He taught Philosophy and Theology to our students for many years. He was superior of the Mother House until 1909. After his election as rector of the Seminary of Belluno, he was chosen as Superior General in 1911.

During the First World war he was confirmed Superior General by the Holy See until 1922, when it was possible to call a General Chapter.

From that time he was Procurator General until 1952.

He was nominated Consulter of the Congregation of Religious. He was also Apostolic Visitor of several Institutes, which received new thrust and development from him.

He was an expert in Manzoni's literature and an outstanding orator and preacher of Retreats. He was very helpful to the *Focolare* Movement in its difficult beginning. He remained clear in his mind until he was struck by cerebral thrombosis on the end of 1953, that brought him to a serene death on the beginning of 1954.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Confrades.com – by Fr. Silvano Zanella, CSS.

**A Compendium of Fr. Tomasi's Life and the Early Times of the  
Stigmatine Congregation:<sup>2</sup>**

**1866**

Jan. 24: John Baptist Tomasi is born in Bassano, VI.

**1879**

Nov. 05: In a letter of this date from Fr. Joseph Sembianti to his Superior (possibly the Superior General, Fr. Peter Vignola, at that time), he mentions 'I, therefore, will be at the Stimate on next Wednesday, the 12<sup>th</sup> of this month, bringing with me the young Tommasi<sup>3</sup>...' – who would be John Baptist Tomasi, at that time a 13 years old boy.

----- John Baptist Tomasi enters the Stigmatine Congregation in Verona.

**1890**

----- John Baptist Tomasi is ordained a Stigmatine Priest in Trento.

**1891**

Jun. 30: At the end of June, Fr. John Baptist Tomasi joined the Community of the Congregation in Rome to prepare himself for the Doctorate in Theology.

**1901**

Sep. 23: Fr. John Baptist Tomasi is elected Secretary of the 16<sup>th</sup> General Chapter.

Sep. 25: The 16<sup>th</sup> General Chapter elected: Superior General: Fr. Pio Gurisatti; 1<sup>st</sup> Councilor, Vicar and Monitor: Fr. Louis Morando; 2<sup>nd</sup> Councilor and Economus General: Fr. Octavian Piccoli; **3<sup>rd</sup> Councilor: Fr. John Baptist Tomasi**; 4<sup>th</sup> Councilor: Fr. Paul Gradinati.

**1906**

Sep. 18: The 17<sup>th</sup> General Chapter convened at the Stimate.

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<sup>2</sup> Sources: The Stigmatine Calendar; the *Breve Cronaca*; The Original Constitutions; Confrades.com.

<sup>3</sup> 'Tommasi' here is written with double 'm'. However, this was not always consistent.

Sep. 20: During the 17<sup>th</sup> General Chapter, Fr. Gurisatti, already General for 15 years, withdrew his resignation, and so automatically continued the last half of his second ten year term. There were elected: 1<sup>st</sup> Councilor (with the title of Vicar) and Procurator General: Fr. Richard Tabarelli; **2<sup>nd</sup> Councilor and Monitor: Fr. John Baptist Tomasi**; 3<sup>rd</sup> Councilor and Revisor of the Economy: Fr. Julius Zambiasi; 4<sup>th</sup> Councilor: Fr. Alfred Balestrazzi. The Chapter decided that, **at the end of Fr. Gurisatti's term, Superiors General would have six year terms.**

### 1911

Sep. 20: The **18<sup>th</sup> General Chapter** convened at the Stimate. Fr. Pio Gurisatti, Superior General, declared his resolution of resigning from the Presidency of the Chapter. The Chapter directed toward him repeated requests to desist from his resolve, and even presented him the doubt that may arise on the legitimacy of the Chapter itself, since our Constitutions do not specifically contemplate such a case, but he replied that he had consulted an authoritative person in Rome, who assured him that he could do this without any prejudice to the Chapter. And despite addition entreaties, he remained firm in his determination, and **ceded the Presidency to the 1<sup>st</sup> Councilor and Vicar, Fr. John Baptist Tomasi**, and left the room.

Fr. John Baptist Tomasi immediately submitted the following Proposal to the Chapter: 'Does the Chapter believe, following the declarations of the Very Rev. Superior, and his resignation to the Presidency, and his subsequent withdrawal, that it can continue with all security, under the new Presidency?' A secret vote was taken and all the 17 capitulars voted 'Yes'.

Sep. 22: The Chapter, on its 11<sup>nd</sup> Session, voted for Superior General; **Fr. John Baptist Tomasi had 16 votes**, and Fr. Octavian Piccoli 1 vote, **out of 17**. Then, Fr. John Baptist Tomasi arose and declared that he could not accept, for general and personal reasons. The Chapter, he added, should proceed freely to a second vote: after that, if the Chapter should judge that the special circumstances in our Congregation are such, that he should sacrifice himself for the good of the same, he will accept, with resignation. Following this, he left the room, so that the Capitulars might have full

freedom to discuss the matter. Then, he was recalled, and a second ballot was taken: the voting was the same as previous.

So, **Fr. John Baptist Tomasi was elected the 5<sup>th</sup> Superior General** of the Stigmatine Congregation by the 18<sup>th</sup> General Chapter. **He was the first Superior General elected in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.** During the First World War he was confirmed Superior General by the Holy See until 1922, when it was possible to call a General Chapter.

Sep. 23: The 18<sup>th</sup> General Chapter also approved changes in the Constitutions.

### 1921

Jul. 13: **A Decree of the Holy See declares the Reputation of Holiness of the Servant of God Gaspar Bertoni.**

### 1953

Dec. 27: On the Feast of John the Evangelist, Dec. 27, 1953, Fr. John Baptist Tomasi, living his retirement in the house of St. Agata of the Goths, in Rome, when offering his customary 8:00 a.m. Mass in the Church for the *beate*, repeated the Creed four times. The Superiors were called, and he was brought upstairs to his room [where the local Superiors would live in subsequent years]. It was found he had suffered a stroke. He passed away about one week later, on January 2, 1954, at the age of almost 87.

### 1954

Jan. 02: Fr. John Baptist Tomasi dies in Rome (S. Agata). He was mourned by the American students, due to his friendliness – and even help in their studies that he offered. At that time, he was also the Spiritual Director of some of the *Folklarini*, frequent visitors to St. Agatha's in those times.

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