

Reformation Christian Ministries

Italy Report

~ ~ ~ March 2007 ~ ~ ~

Dear Supporters of the Gospel outreach in Italy:

I sincerely apologize for the lateness of this letter. We have waited for responses from Franco's family and others before sending this so that we could be reasonably specific about this information. I realize that this might have led some of you to think that we have nothing going on, but such could not be further from reality. Thank you for your patience.

As most of you should know by now, Franco went to be with the Lord on December 20, 2006. Our farewell newsletter has been sent out, and you all should have received it either by post or email. As a result of his passing, we have received many requests asking about the future of the Gospel and ongoing Reformation in Italy through RCM and how money formerly given to Franco should now be designated. The purpose of this letter is to answer those questions and encourage you to continue in your support of the Reformation Italy Project that was the impetus behind Franco's ministry, and is taking an exciting new direction now under new Italian oversight.

This letter is basically broken into four parts:

1. What is happening to Franco's work?
2. What is happening to Franco's family?
3. What is RCM doing in Italy now?
4. What should you or your church do with respect to giving for Italy?

1. WHAT IS HAPPENING TO FRANCO'S WORK?

Franco's work, as he personally did it, has ended. He was a unique person and no one could do things as he did them. It is for that reason that no one person was raised up as a "successor". He expected that much of the work that the Lord used him to start would be carried on through the results of his preaching and teaching at large, via the churches he started and in the writing during his life. He believed the Spirit of God would continue to use what was good from him and discard the rest.

Franco believed that the Lord would use His work through him to raise up others who would carry on the Gospel and its ripple effect of reformation. He was always talking about this professor or that theologian or a particular politician or Roman Catholic priest who had been in contact with him who was now embracing the Bible and quoting things he said or wrote. He frequently said to me, "Dear brother, that is how the reformation is going to happen in Italy."

So what is next for Franco's work? Perhaps the following quote from a letter sent to me by the Maggiotto family in response to some questions I asked will help you to understand.

Concerning Franco's theological work [his books and writings], it will have its base here among us through Fede Viva, and we will be responsible for the cataloging of and any future publication of these

writings. *We think it is important that this theological heritage remain an “Italian” expression... If our work does not remain a cultural work, the effort here will become counterproductive.*

For the indefinite future, Fede Viva will be responsible for the custodianship of Franco’s theological writings. Fede Viva will organize it, and give the opportunity to access it to whoever would like to do so for their personal studies. All of this is in the hope and anticipation of a future Italian reformer... who can continue on the road already opened by Franco. Having made this decision, we find it necessary to reconstitute the organizational board in order to reflect in the best possible way this important turning point in the history of Fede Viva. Alberto [Maggiotto] has already started to catalog the material left to us by his father, and as soon as we consider it appropriate (I and the children) we will start to make it available to those who might be interested in it.

It is clear that the work of Franco Maggiotto in Italy will continue as described above. To date, Franco’s son, Alberto, is maintaining Franco’s email address and is trying to answer the many inquiries that regularly came to Franco. He also has been asked by the church to be one of several preachers invited to handle Lord’s day responsibilities. Among the others is Andrea Modolo, whose father has had a long-term contact with us. Please keep them in prayer.

It may well be that the on-going work described below could provide a “future reformer” who will build upon Franco’s work in a more direct way. It is an exciting possibility.

2. WHAT IS HAPPENING TO FRANCO’S FAMILY?

We have received requests of concern about Aurora, Franco’s widow. However, we have been advised that she does not need any assistance and no requests have been made. Some gifts have already been committed, and we do intend to forward them to her and otherwise keep you advised. Both of the Maggiotto children are working and supporting themselves, though Alberto remains living in the family home, while Tabitha has lived elsewhere for many years.

3. WHAT IS RCM DOING AND PLANNING ON DOING IN ITALY?

Some time ago, in consultation with Franco, RCM began making arrangements to do work in areas that would compliment his work. We wanted to reach out even more aggressively with evangelism and the establishment of churches in Italy. With the recent passing of Franco, we decided to establish a committee of Italian men committed to the Gospel and Reformed theology who could guide this effort.

To spearhead this new effort, Giorgio Modolo, long-time friend of RCM (see our December 2004 and January 2005 newsletters on our website at www.reformation.ws for details) has agreed to be the interim administrator of this committee in Italy. The newsletters mentioned above will give more details of Giorgio’s former life as a communist, immigration to Canada, eventual conversion to Christ there, and then his return to Italy some years later. Giorgio and his wife have long been committed to the Reformed faith and have raised their entire family in Italy since their return on this foundation.



Giorgio and his wife own their own small company that paints and finishes furniture for Italian manufacturers, doing most of the work themselves. They live just north of Venice in the town of Vittorio Veneto. Through the marriage of his son Andrea to a girl from

Franco's church in 2004, Giorgio and Franco renewed their long-time acquaintance. They shared a mutual interest in many areas, especially that of the reformation of Italy.

Over the years, Giorgio has assisted in the translation of a number of Reformed books into the Italian language and has long been a promoter of Reformed literature in Italy. With Franco's concurrence, we were planning on putting up a website in Italy to expose the Reformed faith. This is something that is vitally needed. The website would be in both Italian and English (and possibly Albanian) to attract the many Italians who want to learn English. They can then utilize this for language learning while being simultaneously exposed to the Gospel. We may well integrate some of our seminary and colleges courses into this on-line learning resource. This website will be the means of making contact with those that already have embraced the reformed faith, as well as those who are interested in learning

more about the Bible. In fact, one of our likely Italian participants known to both Giorgio and Franco has implemented this same vision on a smaller scale and receives on average 250,000 website hits each year from within Italy. Through the network we are

building, we will reach these contacts scattered throughout Italy and gather them into groups for fellowship, preaching and teaching. Preaching would be supplied on-line and through CD's. We intend to find someone who could function as an itinerant pastor visiting them a few times a year. We know this works because several groups have spontaneously begun to do this and we have used this same approach in other countries. Over time, this should then be able to provide a way for the Italians to form their own group of like-minded churches.

RCM's Good News Bible Study is already in process of translation and should be available on-line and by booklet by the end of 2007. Another Italian minister has begun preparing courses and relishes the prospect of being able to take some of our college and seminary courses and making them available on-line. All of this would be administered directly from Italy.

What is especially exciting is that we already have received commitments from Italian sources within Italy to fund at 25% of the personnel needed. We are already in discussion with some qualified people who are interested in working on a part or full-time basis to help do webwork, translate and make contacts. Our objective would, as usual, seek to get this program to be self-supporting within the foreseeable future.

RCM's role would be primarily to assist in providing the funds for translation and implementation of these various projects, but do so under accountable Italian oversight and management. Again, Italians are those who will bring forth change in Italy.

In the past six month, Giorgio himself has taken the initial steps of gathering together a few families in his area who are committed to the Reformed faith in order to begin a Presbyterian Church in northeastern Italy. He has asked our church in Florida to be prayer partners and counselors for him because of his long-standing relationship with Rev. Poettcker and his more recent working relationship with myself. We ask you to join in prayer for this effort.

While this is not the same approach to Reformation that Franco took, it nevertheless is very complimentary and will certainly be teaching the same Scriptures and theology as the basis for all of Christian life and work. It is RCM's objective to provide the literature, study and educational materials conducive to spreading the Gospel and its ripple effect of Reformation in both printed and electronic form via a website integrated with Italians themselves taking the lead. While we may not

Picture taken just after New Years 2007 during visit of the Modolos to Florida. Top left to right: Rev. Geoffrey Donnan, **Giorgio Modolo**, Rev. Rudy Poettcker. Bottom left to right: Nancy Donnan, Sabrina Modolo, Sharilyn Poettcker.

find or raise up another Franco Maggiotto (though the Lord knows), it is our objective to assist Italian reformers committed to the same Gospel and the same Scriptures that Franco used in His work.

Franco Maggiotto's ministry was aimed at preaching the Gospel, but also at effecting cultural and structural changes in Italy and the Roman Catholic Church so as to promote reformation. He was uniquely qualified to do this. In contrast, our new effort is specifically promoting evangelism, conversions, church planting and church connectionalism. Yet, we know that the long-term effect of this will promote cultural change and thus reformation. Transformed lives transform culture. While in the past, we worked primarily with one person in one area who sought to reach the country; now we will be working with many around the country who each want to reach their area. Consequently, our effort will be a more disseminated effort and will involve more leaders and thus, more people. Perhaps one of these will also capture the same vision of Franco and will be able to move in such circles and have such influence as was possible for him. This is the Lord's work.

It would be premature at this point to give out any names of the other men with whom we are in contact regarding this on-going outreach in Italy. In the meantime, please pray for the work in Italy. Pray that God will raise up a host of converts to the Lord Jesus Christ who will build upon the foundation laid by Franco Maggiotto and others so that their beloved Italy shall be able to join the countries which have been impacted by the Gospel and its Reformation.

My trip to Italy in May is intended to firm up existing commitments, make further contacts and set forth our plans more specifically along with budgets and personnel. We will be visiting with a well respected Italian pastor in Switzerland, who has already confirmed his agreement and interest in participation in this ministry. More details will follow.

4. WHAT SHOULD YOU OR YOUR CHURCH DO WITH RESPECT TO GIVING FOR ITALY?

As to the matter of your support for Italy, here are the following proposals that I give to you:

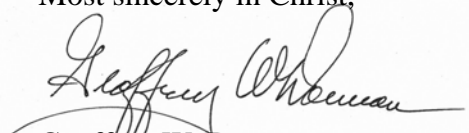
1. Support for this new work in Italy will need to be at least as significant as that which we had for Franco if it is to take place. One of Franco's greatest legacies may well be to maintain the interest you had in his work in order to spread the Gospel by supporting this new complementary work described above emphasizing evangelism and church planting in Italy. This means that we need every individual and church to continue with their past giving on into the future. The sooner we can be assured of that, the sooner we will be able to make commitments on that basis. We need your commitments now so we can make the commitments necessary to bring this ministry to pass. Therefore, we urgently ask that you let us know if you will continue your former giving to Italy into the future so we can plan accordingly. We are going to proceed on the faith that God will continue to supply in the future as He has in the past. Your confirmations would be most helpful.
2. All such donations should be designated for *Italy Project*. Any donations inadvertently designated for Franco Maggiotto will be placed in the *Italy Project* unless otherwise specified.
3. If, for any reason, you do not wish to continue your former financial assistance for Italy, RCM has other important outreaches which can use your assistance, but I do not wish to take space here to mention them since I do not wish to detract you from our primary concern of this letter to obtain your continued support for Italy. Please contact me for more information if that is your desire. We will be happy to supply you with further information on any of these fields. If you have not

already received a DVD at your church giving an overview of the work of RCM, we will be happy to provide your church with one, though at present, the DVD we have does not include any of the new plans for Italy since it was completed before Franco passed away.

Thank you for taking the time to review this letter. I apologize for the length, but I wanted to give you faithful prayer warriors and donors sufficient information so that you would know as much as possible about where we are now regarding Italy.

Again, in closing, your continued assistance is needed. We will gladly receive any former donations to support this on-going Reformational work in Italy. May God bless you for your support of this continuation of the work of reformation that was so at the heart of Franco Maggiotto. Your prayers are also requested on behalf of his family (Aurora, Tabitha and Alberto), and particularly the churches and their leaders, as they decide the future. Also please remember Giorgio & Sabrina Modolo, Andrea, and Piera Modolo, as they are a significant part in their own way of the on-going work of Franco's dream of bringing reformation to Italy through Italians.

Most sincerely in Christ,



Geoffrey W. Donnan

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