



**The
Samaritan
Foundation**
Building Futures Today



Elio Madonia

1929 - 2024

Founder of the Samaritan Foundation

“The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’”

Matthew 25:40–45

Elio Madonia

On April 19th, after 94 years of life, a truly unique, inspiring, and persevering dear soul stepped into the arms of his Lord. Surrounded by loving family and dear friends singing hymns and sharing stories,

Elio Madonia passed peacefully and gracefully into eternal life with his Maker. Elio's full and wide-ranging life rewrote any expectations for a 21-year-old Sicilian immigrant to Canada. He led by example, bringing along so many others to add to his optimistic and enthusiastic vision for what could and should be done to help the needy in our world. Along the way, he naturally rose to receive and humbly acknowledge multiple recognitions, whether they be from his long and notable history of business innovation, the Italian-Canadian cultural community, his 30-year dedication to serving the disenfranchised in the Dominican Republic or his faith community who formed the foundation of all who he was as a man. Truly, his Lord was his rock and his salvation.



Born in 1929, Elio was raised in Corleone, Sicily, by Salvatore and Lucia (nee Rotolo) Madonia. At 21, sparked by the message of the Gospel and the promises of Jesus, he left his home and moved to Canada, sponsored by members of his faith community to begin a new life. Despite arriving with literally nothing in his pocket, he excelled in his new land of opportunity with his own special way of connecting with others. From digging first into taxing physical jobs, to becoming an asset as a translator with the Department of Immigration Canada, helping settle an influx of Italian immigrants to Toronto, his energy, enthusiasm and positive spirit made an immediate and lasting mark. His impressive assistance to other Italian immigrants led to an offer of employment with SunLife Insurance Company.

In his position as a life insurance agent, Elio provided not only insurance to new immigrants, but used the opportunity to pay forward a debt he believed he owed to those who underwrote both his voyage to Canada and his early financial needs. Elio would often share that the sponsors who brought him to Canada never accepted repayment, but requested only that he do what they had done for others in need. Inspired by their generosity, Elio became an invaluable aid to new immigrants, assisting, equipping, and empowering them to meet the challenges in adapting to a new country. This aspect of helping others as he had been helped became possibly the most central aspect of who he was, imbuing all he did in his marvellously full life. This debt of service to others came to be the essence of Elio's existence as he developed a “divine passion” to help others.

With the support, understanding and dedicated partnership of his beloved wife of nearly 70 years, Lena, with whom Elio raised a family of eight children, he pursued a full, impactful life. He became a successful entrepreneur, with both National Dry soft drink company (known for Brio Chinotto) and Nelson's Dairy. He was a fixture in the Italian-Canadian cultural community and his church. Elio's evenings and weekends were devoted to the promotion of Italian culture in Canada, through his work as President of the Federation of Italian Clubs and Associations and as founding president of Villa Columbo, and to his foundational Christian faith through involvement in his church as a deacon and lay pastor. He was even able to make time to host a weekly Chin Radio segment titled “Religion and Christian Morals”! Never forgetting his homeland, Elio was instrumental in raising funds for the earthquake of 1968 that left over 100,000 people homeless across several small towns near Gibellina, Sicily. Always a builder and realizer of worthy ambitions, he also coordinated a successful campaign to raise funds when his Italian Pentecostal congregation required a new building. Along the way, he ran for provincial parliament, brought Italian soccer legends to Toronto and hosted dignitaries from Italy on many occasions to share his love for his new home in Canada.



After retiring at 57, Elio embarked on an unexpected journey that led him to his central philanthropical passion. While visiting the Dominican Republic, Elio and Lena were impacted by the heart-wrenching needs of the poor and disadvantaged there; thus a week-long vacation transformed into a 32-year labour of love.

Their service to the poor of the Dominican in their retirement years could be considered their crowning achievement, and one that sparked the involvement of thousands of volunteers and galvanized the efforts of local political and social change agents. Without knowing the language of the country or having a single contact,

Elio managed to navigate his way in this new, unfamiliar and sometimes perilous place, forming bonds with so many around the world who would ultimately partner with him to manifest this lifelong calling of giving back.

Emboldened with an initial successful effort of providing 25 homes, Elio launched a much more ambitious effort where he began to galvanize partners, donors and countless international and local volunteer groups from churches and all walks of life. To date, what is now called The Samaritan Foundation, has realized over 2,000 homes in more than 14 communities that feature schools, churches, medical clinics, community centres, and a modern paediatric hospital that is currently under construction.



Elio will be sorely and profoundly missed by all who knew him far and wide.

“His Lord said unto him, Well done good and faithful servant.”

Elio is survived by his beloved brother **Ciro (Audrey) Madonia**, his sister-in-law **Maria Agnese Madonia** and by his children **David (Lydia) Madonia**, **Paul (Clara) Madonia**, **Danny (Laurie) Madonia**, **Andy (Pina) Madonia**, **Lucy (Phil) Donne**, **Philip (Colleen) Madonia**, **Bessie (Anthony) Mistretta**, and **John (Carolyn) Madonia**; his grandchildren **Kristina (Antonio)**, **Luca (Charlotte)**, **Adele (Mark)**, **Andrea (Mike)**, **Jessica (Graham)**, **Justin (Marie)**, **Spencer (April)**, **Chloe**, **Jodi**, **Elijah**, **Matthew (Alex)**, **Michele (Charlie)**, **Dylan**, **Erin (Ryan)**, **Joel**, **Katie**, **Michael (Vanessa)**, **Olivia (Josh)**, **Carmen**, **Nicola**, **Nathan**, and **Evelyn**; and great-grandchildren **Diego**, **Matteo**, **Luca**, **Mika**, **Owen**, **Oliver**, **Emery**, **Jamie**, **Summer**, **Hollis**, **Callum**, **Ethan**, **Devon**, **Cicily**, **Oakley**, **Jace**, **Azariah** and **Hananiah**.

He was predeceased by his loving wife **Lena**, parents **Salvatore** and **Lucia Madonia** and siblings **Rino** and **Enza (Antonino)**.

The family gratefully acknowledges the attentive care over the years of **Maria Vasquez** and **Nisyl Manaog**.

In honour of Elio, please consider a donation to the Samaritan Foundation DR.

Funeral Details

Visitation

Bayview Glen Alliance Church
300 Steeles Ave. East, Thornhill, ON,
CANADA, L3T 1A7
Friday, 26 Apr 2024 9:00 AM - 10:30 AM
Thursday, 25 Apr 2024 3:00 PM - 9:00 PM

Funeral

Bayview Glen Alliance Church
300 Steeles Ave. East, Thornhill, ON,
CANADA, L3T 1A7
Friday, 26 Apr 2024 10:30 AM - 12:00 PM

Information

Please join us for a light lunch immediately following the service until 2:00 PM. Funeral will be LIVE STREAMED, the link to appear on this page just prior to service.

Reception

Bayview Glen Alliance Church
300 Steeles Ave. East, Thornhill,
ON, CANADA, L3T 1A7 [Get Directions](#)
Friday, 26 Apr 2024 12:00 PM - 2:00 PM
Info: Please join us for a light lunch.

Interment

Mount Pleasant Cemetery
375 Mt. Pleasant Road, Toronto,
ON, CANADA, M4T 2V8
Friday, 26 Apr 2024 3:00 PM - 4:00 PM