

BARTOLO LONGO INSTITUTE OF POMPEI (2)

Organization

The one who gave the efficient and definitive organization to the Work was Brother Regolo Battaglini. He directed it for the first time from 1908 to 1916, the year he was called by the Superiors to direct the Province of Rome as Visitor.

He put discipline into the inner operation of the house and wisely set up rules to govern all the complex activities of the Institution. One of his first acts was to abolish any notion or atmosphere of "prison" out of honor for the principles that the educator rather than command fear, should make himself become loved if he wishes to succeed in his mission; that is, he should know how to put himself into the soul and intelligence of the young with perception that only the heart can give.

A very effective imprint on the place was made also by Brother Adriano Celentano, who was a Neopolitan by birth. Attached to Bartolo Longo by a deep and devoted admiration, he brought to the work the enthusiasm and innovative activity which his great heart suggested to him. He had new facilities built and was helped in this by Brother Costanzo Daudet, who was a talented architect and artist. He also established the Professional Training Courses in a very systematic and more complete and reasonable way. Thus, he established courses in typing, bookbinding, mechanics, metalware, carpentry, cabinetmaking, tailoring, and shoemaking. Amid all this, the boys cultivated the art of singing, and learned to play musical instruments so well that they were able to be included in the School Band which was to become one of the most admired artistic elements of the entire Institution. He, moreover, through his interest and knowledge which led him all the way to the person of Mussolini, obtained permission for the territory of Pompei to be constituted as an autonomous Commune. This earned for him quite a bit of animosity on the part of the administrative authorities of Scafati and of Torre Annunziata, because these two communes had to cede part of their territory to the nascent Commune.

The celebration of the 25th anniversary of the arrival of the Brothers in Pompei was an important moment for retrospective reflection. The Brothers and students prepared a grandiose scholastic, professional, and historical exposition which gave prominence to the work that had been done in the first 25 years of their permanency in the Institution.

Thousands of pilgrims came to visit the place, including illustrious government officials, directors of Houses of Correction, teachers, prelates, and religious of all kinds. Among the thousands who have signed the Golden Book of the Exposition we read the names of those who in themselves resound gloriously in the complex educational and rehabilitative activities of the Institution.

Among the most illustrious visitors who have come to the Institute during the course of its history, we should like to single out Prince Umberto of Savoy, The Honorable Luigi Einaudi, President of the Italian Republic (30.9.1948), The Honorable Alcide De Gasperi, Head of State (29.12.1949), the Honorable Giovanni Leone (on June 3, 1951, he gave the keynote address for the Third Centenary of the birth of St. John Baptist De La Salle; 9.10.1975, he returned here when he was President of the Republic); numerous Cardinals and other high-ranking Italian and foreign prelates.

Statistical Data

Since its foundation, the Institute has admitted 2,544 boys from the age of 5 to the age of 20. The number of those admitted annually has risen from about 10 in the first years of operation to 400 in the years following World War II. After World War II, the Institute began accepting orphans.

At present, the Institute accepts only 130 boys because in 1966, the boys of the elementary classes were transferred to another building and confided to the care of the Sisters of the Holy Rosary. At present the sons of prisoners form only a small part (20 of the 130) of the students. The others are orphans, abandoned children, children belonging to very big families which are poor, and boys who have been sent by the Courts for minor offenses.

At present the boys attend the Middle school, beginning with the first grade of that level, for three years and the Professional Institute for Industry and Arts for three to five years, with the possibility of choosing between the specializations in Electro-mechanics and mechanics. Specialization in Graphics, which for many decades was the pride of the Institute, is being phased out as an official academic course. It will remain as an apprenticeship department for some students who lack the capability of taking the two required academic courses officially offered in the Institute.

In all, 419 Brothers have served in the educational apostolate of this school. Among the first ones were 15 French Brothers, followed by 6 Germans, 3 Greeks, 3 Eritreans, and one Austrian. The scholastic courses offered and the diplomas received by the students after completing these courses, are equivalent to those of the State schools.

Conclusion

From what has been written here, it is easy to understand the great contribution made by Blessed Bartolo Longo* to the education of abandoned children. Here in Pompei, such children are found in four Institutions: an elementary school and kindergarten for boys and another one for girls. A junior high school and high school for girls, and the same for the boys. It is this school for boys which bears the name of its founder "Bartolo Longo".

This is the "New Pompei": a hundred years ago it was an inhospitable and unhealthy place. Today it is a country town pulsating with life, a majestic temple with a monumental belfry, and within, the marvelous charitable works, supported by the Christian solidarity of the faithful, flourish.

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* Bartolo Longo was beatified by His Holiness, Pope John Paul, II, on October 20, 1980.

N.B. - Frequent reference has been made to R. Esposito's "The Lawyer and the New Pompei", and to R. De Filippi's "The Bartolo Longo Hostels and the Brothers of the Christian Schools on the 25th Anniversary of Their Arrival in Pompei".