



Saints adoring Jesus Resurrected", by Fra Angelico – Detail of the Fiesole Panel, San Marco Museum, Florence (Italy)

Bl. Bartolo Longo

1841 - 1926

October 6

Bartolo Longo was the son of a doctor and a devout Catholic mother. He went through a crisis of faith in his university years as he studied to become a lawyer. He joined a sect and was ordained as a priest of Satan! He publicly ridiculed Christianity and did all in his power to subvert Catholic influence.

He particularly disliked the Dominicans. "I, too, grew to hate monks, priests and the Pope," he would later write, "and in particular [I detested] the Dominicans, the most formidable, furious opponents of those great modern professors, proclaimed by the university the sons of progress, the defenders of science, the champions of every sort of freedom." This is indicative of society today!

A good friend, Vincent Pede, eventually showed Bartolo the gentleness of Christ and arranged for him to meet a saintly Dominican priest, Alberto Radente. This Dominican had a deep, personal devotion to Mary and fostered the devotion of the Rosary. Bartolo saw Mary as a "Refuge of Sinners" and attributed his own miraculous conversion to her. Now he wanted to do penance for his past life and serve the Church that he had so viciously slandered. He made a promise to work for the poor and destitute.



In 1872 he arrived in marshy, impoverished City of Pompeii, accompanied by two armed escorts for protection against bandits. He was shocked and filled with great pity at the ignorance, poverty, and lack of religion of the inhabitants. Discouraged and full of doubts, he distinctly heard a voice speak to him on October 9.

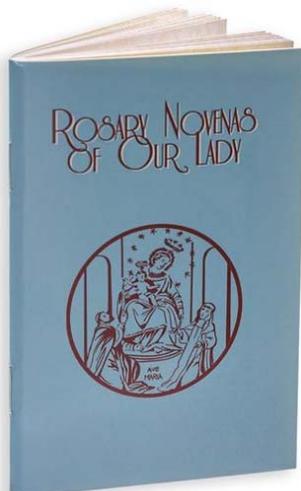
The voice said clearly that if he sought salvation, then he should promulgate the Rosary. The voice said that this was Mary's own promise. He promised Our Lady in return that he would do everything in his power to do so: "I will not leave this valley until I have propagated your Rosary." Bartolo began teaching the catechism, spreading rosary devotions, and holding Rosary Festivals with games, races, and even a lottery. From 1873 to 1875 he restored an old church, held an annual festival on the Feast of the Holy Rosary in honor of Our Lady of the Rosary, and obtained and restored a worn painting of Mary from a convent in Naples for this church.



It is this painting and the fact that it is located in Pompeii that gives the painting its name. The miraculous image of Our Lady of Pompeii is a typical rosary painting. Where Our Lady with the Child on her right leg and arm gives a rosary to Saint Catherine of Siena while the Christ Child with his right hand gives a rosary to Saint Dominic standing on the left side of the painting. The original was bought by Fr. Alberto Radente, OP, for 3.40 lira in a pawnshop in Venice, where it belonged to the convent of "S. Domenico Maggiore" (in Naples and home of St Thomas Aquinas). He gave it to a tertiary in Naples who in turn gave it to Blessed Bartola Longo (1841-1926), The original painter is not known.

This painting was tattered, torn, cracked, and "worm-eaten," arriving on its back in a wagon of manure. The image was first placed in the small, restored chapel in 1875, but plans were made to build a large church worthy of Our Lady of the Rosary. Three hundred people of the area pledged a penny a month for Our Lady's work. The cornerstone laying was held on May 8, 1876.

Fast forward, to Fortuna Agrelli, a very ill young girl suffering three incurable diseases that most doctors had given up on, was joined by her family in saying a novena of Rosaries starting on February 16, 1884. The Virgin Mary then appeared to her on March 3rd, sitting upon a high throne, profusely decorated with flowers. She held the Divine Child on her lap and a Rosary in her hand; both were clad in gold-embroidered garments. St. Dominic and St. Catherine of Siena accompanied them. Fortuna asked Mary — as "the Queen of the Rosary"—for a cure for herself.



"You have invoked me by various titles and have always obtained favors from me. Now, since you have called me by the title so pleasing to me, Queen of the Holy Rosary, I can no longer refuse the favor that you petition - for this name is most precious and dear to me. Make three novenas, and you will obtain all."

But wait there is more

Fortuna did as Mary said and was completely cured.

Mary appeared to her again and said, "Whosoever desires to obtain favors from me should make three novenas of the prayers of the Rosary in petition and three novenas in thanksgiving: And this is how the 54 day rosary novena began and continues in use today.

But wait there is even more .

The devotion of St. Carlo Acutis (1991 – 2006) (just newly canonized) to the Blessed Mother truly was extraordinary. As a young child, he was entrusted to the care of a polish nanny for four years, named Beata, a committed Catholic, with a special devotion to St. John Paul II.

She would take Carlo by train to visit the Shrine of Our Lady of Pompeii in Italy, and it was there that he made a consecration to Mary, which he followed for the rest of his life. Bartolo was long deceased but his work for Mary continued to bear fruit.