

Book Launch by Angelo Scelzo: “Bartolo Longo. Holiness that becomes history”

In the context of Bartolo Longo's canonisation on 19 October 2025, various initiatives were organised to commemorate the founder of the Marian Shrine of Pompeii, the charitable works associated with it and the New Pompeii that sprang up around the Shrine.



For the Brothers of the Christian Schools, the event took on a very special meaning because of the spiritual bonds and collaboration they had with him in his work on behalf of the children of prisoners. He is very dear to the Brothers, also because of the affiliation to the Institute conferred on him in 1919 by the then Superior General, Brother Imier-de-Jésus. Our Saint was always very proud of this, so much so that he signed the letters he sent to the Brothers as *Brother Bartolo* or *Brother Bartolomeo of the Christian Schools*.

He wanted the Brothers at all costs to run the hospice for the children of prisoners. His requests to the superiors of the Brothers to obtain them spanned a period of 15 years, and he finally succeeded because Pope St. Pius X personally intervened. The superiors could not say no to the Pope. When the first Brothers finally arrived in Pompeii in 1907, Bartolo Longo, as his first biographer recounts, felt immense joy, great peace and serenity, never missing an opportunity to declare it. He wrote: “Bartolo Longo loved the Brothers of the Christian Schools dearly, appreciated their noble mission and rested peacefully, thinking of the good hands in which he had left the hundred and hundred children of his heart”. Bartolo Longo himself declared with conviction and satisfaction that “the Brothers

have truly understood the spirit of the institution and have made themselves instruments of Our Lady".

On the occasion of his canonisation, an exhibition was set up in the main hall of the Generalate, and on 28 January 2026, in the "John Paul II" hall, the book launch by journalist Angelo Scelzo, entitled "*Bartolo Longo. La santità che si fa storia*" (Bartolo Longo. Holiness that becomes history), took place.

In addition to the official speaker Fabio Zavattaro, Vatican correspondent for RAI, the author was joined by His Excellency Monsignor Tommaso Caputo, Bishop of Pompeii and Affiliate of the Institute, our Brother Mario Chiarapini, editor of the magazine "*Lasalliani in Italia*," and Dr Rosa Musto, vice-president of the Asterion Association.

The volume, which boasts a preface by Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State to the Pope, speaks of the historical and social importance of Bartolo Longo. Scelzo's book goes beyond the classic format of a biography. Saint Bartolo was a layman who, after his radical conversion, was able to live his holiness in the ordinary: he loved the poor and took care of abandoned children, the children of prisoners, orphans, he propagated the Rosary, he witnessed to the faith, he became an instrument of charity, he sowed hope in the "peripheries" of the world. In short, to use an expression of Pope Francis, he was a model of the Church reaching out. And that Shrine, which stands among the people and their homes, at a crossroads of city streets, built as a vow to Mary for "universal peace", and with it, New Pompeii intends to be today, as it was a century ago, a place of social redemption and educational charity. A place where Mary "wants to walk with us, be close to us and help us".

* Article written by Brother Mario Chiarapini. Photos: Brother Josean Villalabeitia.