

In memoriam: Brother Rodolfo Meoli (1938 - 2025)

The clock struck 10.30 am on Friday, 20 June, when Brother Rodolfo (Cosimo) Meoli passed away at the *Agostino Gemelli* Hospital in Rome., where he had been admitted due to a severe infection which had become increasingly pernicious and which had kept him bedridden for the last few weeks in his community of *Colle La Salle*. He had turned 87 years old on 16 April last.

“A Brother with a profound religious sense has left us; he was animated by a deep love for his vocation, the importance of which he appreciated and made us appreciate”, remarked Brother Gabriele Di Giovanni, Visitor of the District of Italy, evoking some of the qualities for which Brother Rodolfo was recognised during his life: “he was a gentleman in his manners and in his relations with people: always serene, polite, serious, balanced in his judgements. Reserved, but not sullen; attentive without being invasive”.

Origins and formation

Son of Antonio Meoli and Nicoletta Capasso, Brother Rodolfo was born in Cacciano di Cautano (Italy) on Holy Saturday 16 April 1938, the same day that the agreements between Italy and England on colonial affairs were signed. His town, situated on the slopes of Taburno in southern Italy, has been an important agricultural centre, famous for its aglianico grape variety.

Three days after his birth he was baptised in the church of Sant'Andrea, where he also received his First Communion.

After the war, in 1949, he entered the Aspirancy at Albano, thus beginning the formation process that would lead him to become a Brother of the Christian Schools. After completing his Postulancy at Torre del Greco (Naples), he entered the Novitiate in 1953. He professed his first vows a year later, in 1954, and completed the Scholasticate at Colle La Salle (1954 - 1955), as well as teacher training (1956). At the age of 25, he took his perpetual vows in Santa Croce al Flaminio (Rome) on 10 August 1963.

Passion for education and music

During those years, in addition to the 20- and 30-day retreats the Brothers made – in his case, in 1957 and 1962, respectively – Brother Rodolfo cultivated his passion for Gregorian chant, graduating in 1960. “He was an excellent organist and was happy to accompany the community singing, and for some years he also taught music,” says Brother Gabriele.

From a very young age, he worked as a teacher, also accompanying the Aspirants between 1957 and 1960. Between 1960 and 1969 he served at the College for Orphans of Public Security run by the Brothers, first as a mentor and then, from 1965, as assistant principal.

Subsequently, between 1969 and 1971 he lived in *Acireale*. During this period he taught music and earned a Degree in Foreign Languages and Literature with a thesis on *Michel de Saint Pierre témoin de son temps*, a French Catholic author widely recognised at the time.

At the age of 33, he took over the administration of the *San Luigi di Acireale School*. It was in 1971. Then, from 1975 to 1981, he was in charge of the secondary school of the *Collegio San Giuseppe* in Rome. Later, after a period of study and renewal at CIL programme (International Lasallian Centre), in 1983, he was appointed Director of the *Bartolo Longo School* in Pompeii, where he served for eight years, before moving to Naples and then he joined *Colle La Salle*.

His years of service and leadership in various Lasallian works in Italy did not prevent him from teaching in the field of religion as well as English and French.

Postulator and Procurator General of the Institute

Rodolfo arrived at the Generalate in Rome to take up the position of Postulator General of the Institute, conducting the canonical processes related to the cause leading to the Catholic Church declaring venerable, blessed and holy the Brothers who died with the reputation of sanctity, many of them shedding their blood in martyrdom.

He also served as Procurator General from 1999 to 2006, in charge of relations between the Institute and the Holy See.

Under his leadership and generous dedication as Postulator, which spanned 28 years – until the latest General Chapter – the Institute of the Brothers of the

Christian Schools witness the huge increase of the number of saints, blessed, venerable and servants of God.

Brother Rodolfo and Lasallian Holiness

Thanks to his charismatic dedication, on 28 October 2007 it took place the beatification of a significant group of Brothers martyred in Cartagena, Griñón, Madrid-Sagrado Corazón, Tarragona, Toledo and Valencia, during the Spanish Civil War.

Likewise, on 21 November 1999, eight Brother martyrs of Turón were canonised: Cirilo Bertrán, Marciano José, Julián Alfredo, Victoriano Pío, Benjamín Julián, Augusto Andrés, Benito de Jesús and Anicet Adolfo.

In addition to closely accompanying the *positio* of many Spanish Brothers, Brother Rodolfo's work was fundamental for the beatification of Brother Raphael Louis Rafiringa on 7 June 2019; and of Brother James Miller on 7 December of the same year; as well as the canonisation of Blessed Brother Salomón Leclercq, which took place in Rome on 16 October 2016.

Also during his time as Postulator General of the Institute, three Brothers martyred in the French Revolution ("the martyrs of the Pontoons of Rochefort") were beatified: Rogelius, Uldaric and Leo; and Brothers Gregory Bühl, Alpert Motsch, Andrés Hibernon, Adolphe Chatillon, Victorino Nymphas, Adolfo Lanzuela, and Juan Fromental Cayroche (Br Juanito), founder of the Guadalupana Sisters of La Salle, were declared venerable.

International recognition

"Brother Rodolfo saw in the Lasallian saints a way, the highest way, of giving significance to the Lasallian world," expressed Brother Gabriele.

His extensive experience and expertise in the internal processes of the Catholic Church for a person to be inscribed in the book of saints, led him to occupy the presidency of the College of Postulators in the Congregation for the Causes of Saints between 2013 and 2016, and to travel to many countries to offer advice, lectures and share his testimony on the Lasallian charism and holiness.

Among the many awards granted to him throughout his life, he received an Honorary Doctorate in Humanities from the Bethlehem University on 13 June 2014; and the "Caritatis in Veritate" Award, international category, granted by

the Venezuelan International Academy of Hagiography for Italy, on 10 March 2017.

An enduring legacy

The vast legacy left by Brother Rodolfo includes many publications, some on the history of the former District of Rome, others on the figure of Brother Gabriel Drolin, as well as various translations into Italian, among which the third volume of the Complete Works of Saint John Baptist de La Salle stands out.

All in all, in the numerous biographies he wrote on the Venerable, Blessed and Lasallian Saints, the fruit of careful research and documentary reviews, he made visible the way in which the Lasallian Saints “made the Rule of the De La Salle Brothers their own, obtaining the maximum benefit from it, because ‘doing everything in a spirit of faith’ is nothing more than seeking the perfection of the Christian’s life and, consequently, holiness, completed by the ‘ardent zeal’ which aims only to serve God in their neighbour, who in their particular case are the young people to whom they dedicated their lives”.

The Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools gives thanks to God for the fruitful vocation of Brother Rodolfo Meoli. May Saint John Baptist de La Salle and all the Lasallian Saints and Blessed, for whose glorification he generously gave his life, accompany him in the embrace of the Father to receive the deserved reward of the just who persevered in their consecration to the service of the Gospel.

The funeral of Brother Rodolfo will take place on Monday 23 June at 10:30 a.m. in the Sanctuary of Saint John Baptist de La Salle, in the Generalate, in Rome, where there is also the “Chapel of the Martyrs” which he himself devised and managed. After the celebration, his body will be buried in the *Verano* Cemetery, in the space reserved for the Generalate.