

TOMMASO CAPUTO

BARTOLO LONGO

A Knight of Our Time



ORDO EQUESTRIS SANCTI SEPULCRI HIEROSOLYMITANI

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Front cover

Bartolo Longo, acrylic on panel, Gaetano Russo - Church of Santa
Maria delle Grazie in Cerignola

Commissioned by Delegate Salvatore Paolicelli, Knight
Commander with Star, in 2019

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PREFACE

This publication on Bartolo Longo, now a saint, was conceived following the celebration of his canonization by Pope Leo XIV in St. Peter's Square on October 19, 2025, an event attended by several hundred Knights and Dames of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem who had travelled from all over the world.

Bartolo Longo is an eminent member of the Order. He holds a special place among us due to the decoration of Knight Grand Cross bestowed upon him in 1925 by Pope Pius XI, Grand Master, as if to crown his exemplary life of faith; he was also animated by ardent charity and indomitable hope, always offering support to so many men, women, and children of his time who lacked a life of dignity. Even today, countless pilgrims come to the Shrine in Pompeii for their spiritual and material needs.

The Knights and Dames of the Holy Sepulchre can therefore be inspired by such an example, so beautiful and generous, witnessed in his daily activities, as well as by his lofty virtues, which help us reflect on the ideals that are part of our Order. This is the purpose of this book, conceived also with a view to the ongoing formation of the members of our Institution.

Bartolo Longo, therefore, is the first lay Knight to be proclaimed a saint. For this reason, I asked the

Archbishop-Prelate of Pompeii and Assessor of our Order, Monsignor Tommaso Caputo, to outline for the Order the life and virtues of the new saint, whom he presents in this work as a model from whom to draw inspiration.

Having emerged from a profound spiritual crisis thanks to the support of enlightened and zealous men, Bartolo Longo stands out in these rich pages for his journey of conversion to God and his total entrustment to Mary, becoming a promoter and apostle of the Rosary — the prayer that, as he said, reconnects us to the Most High and formed the foundation not only of his virtuous life but of every aspect of his subsequent existence.

By making Mary the beacon and guide of his journey of faith, the new saint appears to us as an active contemplative who, through prayer, gave rise to a series of works of charity that even today encircle and complete the “miracle” of a Shrine known throughout the world. Is this not also —considering our own personal history of faith, solidarity, and aid to the Holy Land — the path that lies before us, all the more so today? Receiving the insignia of Knight Grand Cross — and then bequeathing them in his memory to the daughters of the prisoners he had taken in at Pompeii — was one of Bartolo Longo’s final acts of generosity. In this, too, we see the sign of *a legacy* to which we all cannot help but feel irrevocably drawn.

✠ Cardinal FERNANDO FILONI
*Grand Master of the Equestrian Order
of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem*

INTRODUCTION

October 19, 2025, is a date etched in the minds and hearts of all devotees of Our Lady of the Rosary of Pompeii. It was on this historic Sunday that St. Bartolo Longo, founder of the Marian Shrine, was canonized during a ceremony presided over by Pope Leo XIV in St. Peter's Square. On closer inspection, this date is also etched into the history of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem. As noted in these pages, in 1925 Pius XI wished to confer upon Bartolo Longo the distinction of Knight Grand Cross, and the mortal remains of the newly canonized saint rest in a reliquary that reproduces his features, along with the cloak signifying his membership in the Order. Moreover, Longo was the first lay member to be beatified — as far back as October 26, 1980 — and has since been proclaimed a saint.

Holiness is never a reward bestowed upon a man or a woman. The Church elevates to the honour of the altars those who, rooted in the Gospel, have been able to live their lives in imitation of Christ. The saints are figures who can help us, pilgrims on earth, to reach Heaven. They are points of reference to whom we can turn as we examine our lives in the

light of theirs. This is the meaning of elevating to the honour of the altars a witness of faith, hope, and charity such as Bartolo Longo.

From this consideration arose the idea of the Grand Master, Cardinal Fernando Filoni, to propose a text dedicated specifically to Saint Bartolo, for the benefit of the spirituality and lives of the Knights and Dames of the Order.

We venerate the saints; we turn to them in prayer; we invoke their intercession especially during the difficult moments of our lives; we carry their images with us and keep them in our homes. All of this is an expression of sincere devotion, but the veneration of a saint — and thus, today, of Saint Bartolo Longo as well — is expressed above all through imitation.

May these pages serve as an opportunity to compare our lives with that of Longo. Let us always ask ourselves: What would Saint Bartolo do if he were in my situation? What words would he use? What choices would he make? Comparing our lives to that of a saint is a continuous comparison with the Gospel and with the life of Jesus, whom we meditate on and contemplate as we pray the Rosary. It is to the Lord — in particular, “with” and “through” Mary — that Saint Bartolo Longo, on his journey of conversion and holiness, always looked!

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I

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Bartolo Longo is one of the most popular and fascinating figures of the Catholic laity between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. His long life's journey was marked and permeated by an extraordinary Marian and charitable experience. In his homily during his pastoral visit to Pompeii on October 19, 2008, Benedict XVI spoke of him as the human protagonist of a miracle that only faith can bring about: "Impelled by love, he was able to plan a new city which then sprung up around the Marian Shrine [...] a citadel of Mary and of charity, but not one that was isolated from the world not, as people say "a cathedral in the desert" but rather integrated into the territory of this valley to redeem and advance it [...]. Wherever God arrives, the desert blooms! [...] Like St Paul, Bartolo Longo was transformed from persecutor to apostle: an apostle of Christian faith, of Marian devotion and, in particular, of the Rosary, in which he found a synthesis of the whole Gospel."¹

¹ POPE BENEDICT XVI, Pastoral Visit to the Pontifical

Longo was born in Latiano, a small town in Apulia, on February 10, 1841, to a well-to-do family. He was baptized the following day. He received an excellent home education, followed by schooling at the Piarist boarding school in Francavilla Fontana. He continued his studies first in Lecce and then in Naples, where he earned a law degree. At the University of Naples, he was swept up by secularist and atheistic doctrines that led him away from the faith, to which he returned thanks to the efforts of his friend Vincenzo Pepe and the Dominican Father Alberto Radente. His return to God was wholehearted and complete. He devoted himself, first in Latiano and then in Naples, solely to works of faith and charity, renouncing several plans to marry. Only later, in 1885, did he marry Countess Marianna Farnararo, widow of De Fusco, who donated a large part of her estate to the Pompeian cause and was his invaluable collaborator in the apostolate and in the charitable works they founded. Upon arriving in Valle di Pompei to manage the Countess's estates, Longo immediately devoted himself to instructing the local peasants in the faith, using the catechism and the recitation of the Rosary — a practice he felt called to promote in October 1872 with these words:

Shrine of Pompeii, Homily during the Eucharistic Celebration, October 19, 2008 [https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2008/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20081019_pompei.html].



*Countess
Marianna
Farnararo De
Fusco, wife of
Bartolo Longo,
in a painting by
Francesco
Pezzella.*

“If you seek salvation, spread the Rosary: it is Mary’s promise.”

Pope Francis has written on this that it “was like lightning in the night [...] That motto, well known to him, now took on within his heart, as often happens in mystical experiences, the sense of a promise and, in some way, a mandate. Indeed, from that moment he became an apostle of the Rosary.”² The arrival of the painting of the Virgin on November 13, 1875, in the dilapidated parish of Valle, marked the beginning of a new chapter.

² POPE FRANCIS, Message on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the arrival of the painting of Our Lady of the Rosary in Pompeii, October 7, 2024 [<https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/pont-messages/2024/documents/20241007-messaggio-quadro-vergine-pompei.html>].

It was a continuous outpouring of supernatural events that he embraced with extreme generosity, as he himself testifies: “[...] I went to Valle di Pompei with no intention of engaging in apostolic work; I came here to renew some leases — that was all. I thought I was coming to practice law, but instead, by God’s design, I came to be a missionary. I was still blind and a child in the ways of the Spirit, and Providence guided me almost by the hand, just as one guides the blind and children.”³ He thus became the greatest lay promoter of the Rosary between the 19th and 20th centuries, going so far as to establish one of the most famous and beloved shrines of Marian devotion worldwide. And as an apostle of the Rosary, he became an evangelizer and he defended the rights and interests of minors, carrying out a remarkable effort to promote the well-being of the marginalized children of his time, especially orphans and the sons and daughters of prisoners. His works are characterized by originality and a close alignment with the needs of the time and the local community. Alongside the *Shrine of Faith* — the splendid Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary, visited annually by millions of the faithful and regarded with devotion by men and women of every ethnicity and social background from all over the world — he felt a compelling desire to build the *Shrine of Charity*.

³ LONGO, B., in *Il Rosario e la Nuova Pompei*, op. cit. RNP [1922], p. 180. Our translation.

That wreath of charitable works, which, like a garden of roses, still surrounds the Marian Shrine today, welcoming hundreds of people in need — mostly children and young people.

A Dominican Tertiary, he was also responsible for founding the Congregation of the Dominican Sisters, Daughters of the Holy Rosary of Pompeii.

His life was not without difficulties and trials. The cross, in fact, was his constant companion through illness, slander, family sorrows, abandonment by friends, and disagreements with ecclesiastical authorities — toward whom, however, he maintained an attitude of profound respect and obedience, as a true son of the Church.

He was also a journalist — he founded the Shrine's magazine *Il Rosario e la Nuova Pompei* — and the author of numerous works through which he promoted and defended the Christian faith, also

*Bartolo Longo,
surrounded by the
children of the
prisoners he had
taken in, in a photo
from 1905.*



contributing to the proclamation of the dogma of the Assumption of Mary into heaven, body and soul.

Finally, he was a man of God, always open to the action of the Holy Spirit, by whom he allowed himself to be shaped, becoming ever more a new creature in Christ, capable of consecrating himself completely to God, to the Mother of the Lord Jesus, and to his brothers and sisters in need.

Pope Pius XI added him to the members of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, conferring upon him, by Apostolic Brief of March 5, 1925, the rank of Knight Grand Cross.

On October 5, 1926, at the age of eighty-five, he brought his active and meritorious earthly life to a close, clutching, as always, the rosary beads in his hands.

On June 2, 1934, the ordinary informative process *super fama sanctitatis vitae, virtutibus et miraculis* was initiated in Pompeii and continued until 1937. The Apostolic Process was also held in Pompeii in the years 1947–1948 and 1968. The decree “*super virtutibus*,” authorized by St. Paul VI, was promulgated on October 3, 1975. In preparation for the beatification, the case of Mrs. Carmen Rocco, married surname Camera, was presented; she had been completely and suddenly healed on April 5, 1943, from an enterocolitic syndrome accompanied by anaemia, motor disorders, and calculous cholecystitis. The relevant decree was promulgated on June 13, 1979. The rite of beatification of Bartolo

Longo, presided over by Saint John Paul II, took place in St. Peter's Square on October 26, 1980; in his homily, the Pontiff pronounced these significant words: "Bartolo Longo was an instrument of Providence for the defence and witness of the Christian faith and for the exaltation of the Most Holy Virgin Mary during a painful period of scepticism and anti-clericalism. Everyone is familiar with his long life, inspired by a simple and heroic faith and filled with evocative episodes, during which the miracle of Pompeii sprang forth and unfolded. Beginning with his humble catechesis among the farmers of the Valley of Pompeii and the recitation of the Rosary before the famous painting of the Madonna, through to the construction of the magnificent Shrine and the establishment of charitable works for the sons and daughters of prisoners, Bartolo Longo carried out with intrepid courage a magnificent work that still astounds and inspires us today. Above all, however, it is easy to see that his entire life was one of intense and constant service to the Church in the name and out of love for Mary."⁴

Since 1980 and up to the present day, his reputation for holiness and for performing miracles has

⁴ ST. JOHN PAUL II, *Beatification of Three Servants of God, Homily at the Eucharistic Celebration*, St. Peter's Square, October 26, 1980 [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/it/homilies/1980/documents/hf_jp-ii_hom_19801026_beatifications.html]. Our translation.

been constant and widespread, as attested by letters from national episcopal conferences and entire regional episcopates in Italy. There have also been numerous cultural, social, and economic initiatives centred on the figure of Bartolo Longo, which demonstrate the breadth and fruitfulness of his work.

Precisely because of the worldwide spread of his veneration, Pope Francis accepted the proposal to dispense with the requirement of a miracle for canonization. The comprehensive *Positio super canonizatione* thoroughly substantiated the grounds for this, which were evaluated favourably at a particular moment in the life of the Church, as it is engaged in the new evangelization and the promotion of the poor and universal peace.

The canonization of Bartolo Longo, decreed by Pope Leo XIV and celebrated by him on October 19, 2025, marked the culmination of a journey of holiness that began 150 years ago, in 1875, when, on November 13, the painting of the Virgin of the Rosary arrived in Pompeii, where it is venerated today by devotees from all over the world.

II

SAINT BARTOLO, THE FIRST LAY MEMBER OF THE ORDER TO BE CANONIZED

The honour bestowed by Pope Pius XI

It was on May 30, 1925, that Bartolo Longo was awarded the title of Knight Grand Cross of the Holy Sepulchre. Cardinal Pietro Gaspari,⁵ Secretary of State to His Holiness, had entrusted, in his letter of May 1, to his fellow cardinal, Cardinal Augusto Silj,⁶ Papal Delegate for the Shrine of Pompeii since 1906, the Apostolic Brief of Pope Pius XI, dated March 5, 1925, and the insignia for the Founder, who, moreover, was suffering greatly during those months due to his precarious health. It was also in light of the frailty of his body, that Gasparri wrote to Silj words of thoughtful sympathy for Longo: "I am cer-

⁵ Born in Capovallazza di Ussita on May 5, 1852; died in Rome on November 18, 1934. He served as Secretary of State from 1914 to 1930.

⁶ Born in Calcara di Visso on July 9, 1846, he died in Rome on February 27, 1926. He served as Papal Delegate for the Shrine of Pompeii from 1906 to 1926.

tain that this high distinction, which is a recognition of the great merits earned by this distinguished man, will also serve to comfort him as he continues, with the tireless and youthful vigour that distinguishes him, in his religious and humanitarian apostolate.”⁷ Despite his fatigue, Bartolo Longo remained tireless until the end of his earthly days, so much so that on May 24, he was present at the inauguration of the majestic bell tower. At the very end of the month dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary, he was awarded the insignia of Knight Grand Cross in a solemn ceremony held at 11:00 a.m. on Saturday, May 30 — the eve of the Solemnity of Pentecost — in the conference hall of the Educational Hospice for the Children of Prisoners. It was a day of great joy for the lawyer from Puglia, who, on that occasion as well, wished to have around him not only the civil and religious authorities of Pompeii, but above all his children — the boys and girls attending the schools he had founded. Specifically, the Girls’ Orphanage had been inaugurated on May 8, 1887; the Institute for the Children of Prisoners on May 29, 1892; on October 15, 1922, the cornerstone of the Institute for the Daughters of Prisoners was laid.

The words Bartolo Longo spoke on the day of the conferral of his knighthood, May 30, 1925, remain deeply moving to this day: “Today, in the presence of this distinguished gathering and my dearest

⁷ RNP [1925], pp. 93–94. Our translation.

adopted children, I wish to make my will, sensing that my final hour is drawing near. I have raised and distributed millions to found the Basilica of Pompeii, the charitable works, and the New City of Mary. I possess nothing more: I am poor. All that remains to me are the knightly insignia, a testament to the benevolence of the Supreme Pontiffs — and these, too, I wish to donate.”

St. Bartolo’s words bring to mind an essential “passage” from the *Formation Document*, which the Grand Master, Cardinal Fernando Filoni, and the Governor General, Leonardo Visconti di Modrone, presented for our reflection in 2024, following the Consulta held in November of the previous year. That text, which contains the essential guidelines for admission to the Order and for the ongoing formation of those who are already members, outlines the six specific areas of formation. The third, in particular, is “The Mystery of Charity.” Every line of paragraph⁸ dedicated to this topic seems to echo the experience lived by our Knight Bartolo Longo from the moment of his first arrival in Valle di Pompei in October 1872. His life, following his conversion from the errors of his youth, was completely immersed in charity, and his act of giving even his Knight’s insignia to the poor expresses the radical nature of the Gospel.

⁸ See *Formation Document*, Ordo Equestris Sancti Sepulcri Hierosolymitani 2024, nos. 32–37.

The Cardinal Grand Master, in the volume *The House Was Filled with the Fragrance of the Perfume: A Spirituality of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre*, has dwelt specifically on this aspect: “Jesus never speaks in defense of charity. He shows it concretely in reference to people in need: the poor, the sick, the woman accused of adultery, the possessed; and also the expert in the law who asked him: “Who is my neighbor?” Jesus gives him no explanations but tells the parable of the good Samaritan.”⁹

In his brief address on May 30, 1925, Bartolo Longo added: “To the orphan girls I leave, as a memento, the commendation of St. Gregory the Great, given to me by Pope Leo XIII. To the beloved children of prisoners, I leave the sword of the Order of St. Gregory the Great, which is a symbol of fortitude [...] To the daughters of the prisoners — the final living vow and dearest dream of my heart — I bequeath the Grand Cross of the Holy Sepulchre, bestowed upon me today by Pius XI.” There is also a verb used in the pages dedicated to this auspicious occasion in the Shrine’s periodical, *Il Rosario e la Nuova Pompei*, to convey the recognition granted by the Pontiff to Longo. The term used is “to raise”: “The Holy Father has elevated Commander Bartolo

⁹ FILONI F., *The House Was Filled with the Fragrance of the Perfume: A Spirituality of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre*, EWTN and Ordo Equestris Sancti Sepulcri Hierosolymitani 2021, pp. 69-70.



*On May 30, 1925, Bartolo Longo received the
insignia of Knight Grand Cross of the Holy
Sepulchre from Cardinal Augusto Silj, Papal
Delegate for the Shrine of Pompeii.*

Longo to Knight Grand Cross of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre.”¹⁰ Our Saint, in his absolute fidelity to the Gospel, accumulates treasures in Heaven; he does not have purses made that grow old, nor does he set aside earthly goods, which at any moment can be plundered by thieves. In God’s inverted logic — the exact opposite of human logic — the more one gives, the more one has. One is not deprived of anything; quite the contrary. And while it is essential to help our brothers and sisters who ask for our help, it is even more essential to give an ab-

¹⁰ See RNP [1925], pp. 91–96. Our translation.

solute treasure: God Himself. Saint Bartolo is truly *exalted*, but because he knew how to make himself small — poor among the poor, humble among the humble. It is likewise his face that we see in the background when we listen to the Sermon on the Mount, in which Jesus outlines “the profile” of his disciple and the paths to holiness.

Longo’s humble greatness had earned the admiration of Pope Pius XI, who had wished to welcome the lawyer to the Vatican to personally present him with the insignia of Knight Grand Cross of the Order. But Bartolo Longo was elderly and ill, unable to travel to Rome — a journey he had undertaken so many times in previous decades (an unbreakable bond unites Pompeii and the See of Peter!). That is why Cardinal Gasparri wrote two letters: one, already cited, to Cardinal Augusto Silj, and the other to Longo himself. These letters are replete with praise. In his letter of May 4, 1925, to the venerable Founder of the Shrine, the cardinal stated: “Looking back in his mind on the years that have passed since the very beginning of the Works of the Valley of Pompeii and the numerous triumphs of faith and charity celebrated there, the August Pontiff raises his hymn of gratitude to the Queen of Heaven, who chose to erect a throne of glory there and open an inexhaustible fountain of grace.”¹¹ Two aspects

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 96. Our translation.

emerge: Pope Achille Ratti admires Bartolo Longo, considering him an exemplary Christian, rooted in that faith which is translated into action and charity. The Pontiff's fatherly heart is *turned* toward the Marian City, and he does not hesitate to speak, through his Secretary of State, of "triumphs of faith and charity." Furthermore, as is well known, Pius X had, in 1907, established that the title of Grand Master of the Order would be held by the Pope himself; later, in 1940, Pius XII appointed a cardinal as Grand Master of the Order. Pope Pius XI was thus Grand Master of the Order and approved its Constitution in 1932. The decision to confer the distinction of Knight Grand Cross upon Bartolo Longo is therefore proof of the Pontiff's deep esteem for the Founder of the Shrine of Pompeii.

Admiration for the "triumphs of faith and charity" of the Pompeian Works resonated widely throughout the world, so much so that the Founder — the first layperson in the Order's history — was proclaimed first Blessed and then a Saint, as a shining example of holiness, as Pope Leo XIV recalled during the Audience on October 20 to the pilgrims who had come to Rome for the Canonizations: "This transformation, which the grace of God works in the heart, finds an example of particular intensity in Bartolo Longo. Converting from a life far from God, he devoted all his energy to works of corporal and spiritual mercy, promoting faith in Christ and affection for Mary through charity towards orphans, the poor,

the desperate. Grateful to its founder, may the Shrine of Pompeii preserve and spread the fervour of Saint Bartolo, apostle of the Rosary.”¹²

¹² POPE LEO XIV, *Address to Pilgrims Gathered for the Canonizations*, Paul VI Hall, October 20, 2025 [<https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/speeches/2025/october/documents/20251020-pellegrini-canonizzazioni.html>].

III

GETTING TO KNOW OUR LADY TO BECOME HOLY

With the Blessed Virgin Mary to Reach Jesus

The lives of the saints are a sort of “manual” to “consult” to understand which path to follow to reach Heaven. Sometimes, in the collective imagination, a saint is a sort of “superman” or “superwoman,” capable of performing who knows what miracles. In truth, upon closer inspection, the saints — as Pope Leo XIV stated in his Homily for the Canonizations of October 19, 2025 — are not “heroes, or champions of some ideal, but authentic men and women”¹³, and holiness is possible for every Christian in the ordinary course of their life and under the conditions that God has established for each person. Everyone can become a saint, and holiness is “made up” of simplicity. This truth, fundamental for

¹³ POPE LEO XIV, *Canonization of Seven Blessed, Homily at the Eucharistic Celebration*, St. Peter’s Square, October 19, 2025 [<https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/homilies/2025/documents/20251019-canonizzazioni.html>].

every baptized person, must be engraved in the heart and mind of every Knight and every Dame of the Holy Sepulchre.

We wonder what Bartolo Longo's "secret" was for living a holy life and being raised to the honour of the altars. The answer has a name: Mary! Yes, there is a sure path to becoming a saint: entrusting oneself to Our Lady, allowing her to guide us, and imitating her. The holy French priest, Saint Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort (Montfort-la-Cane, January 31, 1673 – Saint-Laurent-sur-Sèvre, April 28, 1716), coined a motto: "*Ad Jesum per Mariam*" (to Jesus through Mary). This is what happened to Bartolo Longo: without Mary, there would have been no light along his path. That is why we invoke her, even calling her "Queen of Victories," "Sovereign of Heaven and Earth" in the famous *Supplication*, composed by Longo in 1883 and solemnly recited in Pompeii and in many parts of the world on May 8 and the first Sunday of October. Through Mary, the Lord bends down to us and to our poverty, transforming it into riches.

When, on May 8, 1876, the cornerstone of the Shrine was laid, Bartolo Longo certainly did not intend to build the Marian shrine we see today, but rather a small chapel for the thousand or so peasants who lived in the valley, which was then "desolate." We might say that God's plan revealed itself to him over the course of days, months, and years. And it filled his heart with such wonder that, despite the

grandeur of the work, he constantly felt himself to be an “unworthy servant” and always believed that the author of everything was Our Lady of the Rosary, whom he also invokes in the *Supplication* as “almighty by grace.” It is Mary who can guide us safely along the path that leads to the Lord, the world’s only salvation. “*Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life*” (Jn 6:68), Peter replied to Jesus when He asked the Twelve if they, too, wanted to leave along with the others, who had found His word too hard and His way too narrow.

Also, in the Gospel according to John (2:1–11), we read the well-known episode of the wedding at Cana. We are at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry. His mission begins with a wedding in a village not far from Nazareth, where he is invited along with his Mother and his disciples. In the midst of the celebration “*the mother of Jesus said to him, ‘They have no wine’*” (Jn 2:3). It was certainly a problem. In a meditation¹⁴ on this Gospel passage, St. Bartolo Longo comments that the lack of wine “was a disgrace for the bride and groom, a source of sadness for their friends, and a disruption during the most joyful moment of the wedding feast.”

And then, turning to the servants, Mary added: “*Do whatever he tells you.*” (Jn 2:5). The Virgin Mary does not look the other way but allows herself to be drawn into the couple’s distress; she comes to

¹⁴ See RNP [1896], pp. 309–310.

their aid, preventing anyone from saying that the wedding was poorly organized due to the lack of wine.

And Jesus considers an event — we might say an ordinary one — so important that he performs his *first* miracle. And he does so in an overflowing way, a sign of that abundance of love and total self-giving, *even to the end*, which he would later offer on the cross. The evangelist John emphasizes that “*Jesus did this as the beginning of his signs in Cana in Galilee and so revealed his glory, and his disciples began to believe in him.*” (Jn 2:11).

But under what condition can we, too, *believe in Jesus*?

Our Lady points this out through her words to the servants: “*Whatever (Jesus) tells you, do it.*” These are words that Mary speaks to each of us, presenting herself as the One who holds the keys to her Son’s heart. We cannot separate the Son from the Mother.

These beautiful words are the essence of true devotion to Mary: “*Whatever (Jesus) tells you, do it.*” Mary invites us to turn to Jesus, to listen to His voice, and to *act* upon — to put into practice — the Word of the Lord. These words are also the Christian’s program for life. “*Whatever (Jesus) tells you, do it*” — these are Mary’s final words recorded in the Gospels, words that define her mission. It is her legacy to each of us. She desires to lead us to Jesus.

How often does it seem that the wine is run-

ning out even at the wedding feast of our lives. Yet the Father urges us not to be afraid, to trust in Him. He has given us a Mother! The Knights and Dames of the Holy Sepulchre, too, are called to live like Saint Bartolo, who, listening to Mary's words just like the servants at Cana, did whatever Jesus told him in his life of faith.

The Rosary and Charity

In October 1872, Bartolo Longo arrived for the first time in the “desolate” Valley of Pompeii, inhabited by peasants plagued, on the one hand, by malaria and, on the other, by raids by bandits. As is well known, Countess Marianna Farnararo De Fusco owned several farms in that area and had asked the young lawyer from Puglia to manage them. Back in 1872, it was not even conceivable what would happen later, beginning with the construction of the Shrine. For fifty years, the noblewoman — working alongside the man who became her husband in 1885 — carried out an intense apostolate in New Pompeii, which had sprung up around the Shrine, dedicated to spreading the Rosary, and performed extraordinary work on behalf of the poor and marginalized, always remaining faithful to the Magisterium of the Church, of which she was an exemplary daughter. Providence would lead both of them down unexpected and unknown paths, making her, too,

the founder of the Shrine, the Charitable Works, the New City, and the Congregation of the Dominican Sisters, Daughters of the Holy Rosary of Pompeii, as well as a mother to hundreds of orphaned girls.

In the month of his first arrival, while walking one day along the dirt roads and dangerous paths of the Valley, Bartolo Longo felt an inner inspiration: “If you seek salvation, spread the Rosary. It is Mary’s promise. Whoever spreads the Rosary is saved!”¹⁵ The primary reason for founding the Shrine is the spreading of that wonderful prayer, which must be in the heart and in the hands of every Knight and Dame of the Holy Sepulchre. It is true: in the complete Rosary, as we meditate on the Joyful, Luminous (introduced by St. John Paul II in 2002 with the Apostolic Letter *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*), Sorrowful, and Glorious Mysteries, we recite the *Hail Mary* two hundred times.

But the Rosary, a Marian prayer, has a Christological heart: Jesus — his life and his words — is its absolute centre. The Rosary is a wonderful synthesis of the Gospel,¹⁶ and thus of the life of Christ, whose contemplation in prayer was the foundation of every work of Saint Bartolo, who was accompanied, as it

¹⁵ LONGO, B., *Pompei. Storia del Santuario*, Edizioni Santuario di Pompei 2020, p. 56. Our translation.

¹⁶ Cf. Pius XII, Letter *Philippinas Insulas* to the Archbishop of Manila: AAS 38 (1946), p. 419, and St. Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Marialis Cultus*, February 2, 1974, no. 42.

were, by the Virgin Mary. St. John Paul II explained to us that through the prayer of the Rosary we contemplate the face of Christ the Savior through the eyes of His Mother.¹⁷ “If it is true,” I cried out, “that You promised St. Dominic that whoever spreads the Rosary will be saved, then I will be saved, for I will not leave this land of Pompeii without having spread Your Rosary here,”¹⁸ Bartolo Longo recounted, recalling the inner inspiration he felt on that day in October 1872. In numerous publications, Longo explores the themes of the individual Mysteries of the Rosary. Commenting, for example, on the fifth Glorious Mystery — the Coronation of Mary, Queen of Heaven and Earth — he wrote: “Lady, convert me from a sinner into a saint: perform this miracle, which will bring You greater honour than if You were to restore sight to a thousand blind people and raise a thousand dead. You are powerful before God: it is enough to say that you are his Mother, full of his grace. What could he deny you?”¹⁹ This is the prayer we address to Mary: intercede for us, so that we may be transformed from sin-

¹⁷ Cf. ST. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Letter *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, October 16, 2002, nos. 10–11 [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/2002/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_20021016_rosarium-virginis-mariae.html].

¹⁸ See note 15.

¹⁹ LONGO, B., *I Venti Sabati* [The Twenty Saturdays], Edizioni Santuario di Pompei, 2019, p. 326. Our translation.

ners into saints like Bartolo Longo! Prayer is closely linked to action, especially to works on behalf of our brothers and sisters in need.

In Pompeii, Bartolo Longo not only responded to the Virgin's call to spread the Rosary, but at the same time felt that he had to complement the "Temple of Faith" with the "Temple of Charity," creating and supporting facilities to welcome the least among us and the marginalized — from orphans to the poor to the children of prisoners. He conceived of charity not so much as a duty for a good Christian, but rather as a natural extension of the life of faith. He wrote: "A triumph of Faith and Charity: this is Valle di Pompei. It is the light that bursts forth from the Heart of God; it is the warmth of love that sets the human heart ablaze. Charity without Faith would be the supreme of all lies. Faith without Charity would be the supreme of all inconsistencies; Valle di Pompei has united them in a magnificent balance; two wings joined in a single flight."²⁰

Mary, the First Guide on Our Journey

Reading his writings helps us understand how St. Bartolo Longo believed that Our Lady was the architect of all the works in Pompeii, first and fore-

²⁰ LONGO B., in RNP [1925], p. 9. Our translation.

most the construction of the Shrine. In this regard, it is worthwhile to read *The History of the Shrine of Pompeii*, a book in which the Founder himself recounts the early days of this extraordinary story (up to 1879). “It is, therefore, the Rosary that draws down the blessings of Heaven in a unique way; it is the Church of the Rosary that Our Lady wishes to be built in Pompeii, as she shows through her miracles.”²¹ It is Mary who desires the Shrine; it is she who accompanies its construction. In Longo there is a total trust in Our Lady, a devotion learned from his father, the physician Bartolomeo, and his mother, Antonia, who had passed on the faith to him from childhood.

In the *Supplication*, the Mother of Jesus is described not only as the “Queen of Victories” and the “Sovereign of Heaven and Earth,” but also as the “Glorious Queen of the Rosary” and the “Queen of Peace and Forgiveness.” Mary, in the hearts of believers, is the “Mother of Sinners,” “our Advocate,” “our hope,” “Mother of Mercy,” “almighty by grace”; a mother full of care, she is the “most tender of mothers.”

From this Marian perspective, as we review the pages of our *Formation Document* — where the “journey of faith”²² is discussed as one of its specific

²¹ LONGO, B., *Pompei. Storia del Santuario*, pp. 83–84. Our translation.

²² See *Formation Document*, nos. 52–56.



The Icon of Our Lady of the Rosary, which arrived in Valle di Pompei on the initiative of St. Bartolo Longo on November 13, 1875, is venerated in the Marian Shrine.

themes — let us focus on the vocation to holiness of every Knight and Dame of the Holy Sepulchre. Upon closer reflection, this is the vocation of every believer: holiness is lived out in the ordinary.²³

Guiding us toward holiness is the One whom the Order venerates as its patroness under the title of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of Palestine, venerated at the Shrine of Deir Rafat in Israel.

Mary's role is directed toward the salvation of humanity. It is she who stands beneath the Cross while Christ entrusts her with the role of Mother for all humanity. It is around her that the apostles gather in the Upper Room as they await Pentecost. "Mary entered into a new family, formed with Christ's death and Resurrection," explains Cardinal Filoni in the volume *The House Was Filled with the Fragrance of the Perfume*, "and from then on, she will belong to the community of believers."²⁴ Shortly before his death, Jesus entrusted John — and us along with him — to Mary's care.

On the one hand, according to Semitic tradition,

²³ In the Apostolic Exhortation *Gaudete et exsultate*, promulgated on March 19, 2018, Pope Francis wrote: "The Lord [...] wants us to be saints and not to settle for a bland and mediocre existence" (GE 1) [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20180319_gaudete-et-exsultate.html].

²⁴ FILONI, F., *The House Was Filled with the Fragrance of the Perfume*, pp. 95-96.

it was not proper for a woman to live alone — how would she support herself financially? — and on the other hand, that final concern of the crucified Lord defines “Mary’s new motherhood in an ecclesiological sense.”²⁵ Amid the immense suffering of witnessing her Son’s Passion and Death, “Mary’s faith was rising at all times, to reappear in the context of the apostolic community in prayer, awaiting the Holy Spirit. Paul VI glimpsed in all this, with clarity, the maternal role of Mary, proclaiming her “Mother of the Church” at the end of the third session of the Second Vatican Council.”²⁶

Every member of the Order should keep the name of Mary engraved on his or her heart.²⁷

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 97-98.

²⁷ As a testament to the widespread veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary of the Holy Rosary, which unites the members of the Order, visitors to Nazareth cannot fail to notice, within the Basilica, a stained-glass window dedicated to Our Lady of Pompeii, donated by the Lieutenancy for Southern Italy on the Tyrrhenian Coast.

IV
FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT. POMPEII,
A LAND WHERE TOMBS OPEN

*Jacob's Well in a Time of Unbelief (and Longing
for God)*

We are living in a time of spiritual poverty and unbelief in which, at least in appearance, God the Father Himself is cast to the margins of the human community. This reality, however, is counterbalanced by a realization: having forgotten God to such an extent that we can no longer even ask Him for “forgiveness” — does not mean we do not at least long for Him. To forget God is to live in darkness, in the gloom of a tomb.

We contemplate and guard the Holy Sepulchre not only because it received the holy Body of Christ, but even more so because it was the site of his Resurrection. By venerating and guarding the Holy Sepulchre, we contemplate the love of the Lord who, taking our sins, died on the Cross out of the infinite love He has for each one of us. Jesus is always and in every way capable of infinite love! And the Holy Sepulchre is a symbol of this, and

Jesus comes to seek us out even in the closed tombs of our sin.

To quench our longing, our thirst for God, we must go to the Sepulchre, which Cardinal Filoni, in his book on the spirituality of the Order, compared to Jacob's well, recalling the Gospel episode of the encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman. Christ's water is the kind that quenches our thirst for eternity. "A Dame and a Knight, through their commitment to the Order," reflected the Grand Master, "know that, with their promise, they ideally approach that well. From that deep source, that is, from that "sepulchre," the new life, the Risen Christ, gushed forth. From Him comes all truth and spiritual knowledge [...] A Dame and a Knight also know that they must continually draw spiritual energy and enthusiasm from the empty tomb of Christ whenever they need it, because it is from that "well," from that open "rock," from that "spring," that love for one's faith and commitment to the Land of Jesus flows."²⁸

Bartolo Longo, too — a brother and an example of rising from the ashes of his own sin — experienced the cold and darkness of his own personal tomb. While studying law in Naples, the young student from Apulia became fascinated by spiritualism, which was quite in vogue at the time in certain cir-

²⁸ FILONI F., *The whole house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume*," pp. 54–55.

cles. It was a negative experience that lasted about two years. Though he endured inner suffering, however — for freedom, far from God, creates only illusions of happiness — combined with the example and sound counsel of Saint Caterina Volpicelli, Saint Ludovico da Casoria, Countess Marianna Farnararo De Fusco, Professor Vincenzo Pepe, and the Dominican friar Alberto Radente, would remove the heavy stone that sealed his inner tomb. Longo's experience is a new coming to light, a rebirth in God, which transforms his life. One cannot help but think of the thousands of people who, every year, approach the sacrament of Reconciliation in the Chapel of Confessions at the Shrine of Pompeii. They emerge reborn and then rush to pray before the painting of Our Lady of the Rosary, Mother of Sinners. That painting, which represents Mary's living presence in the Valley of Pompeii, is itself a symbol of rebirth. Longo wanted to evangelize the poor, illiterate local farmers by founding a Confraternity of the Rosary, and he needed a painting so that they could come to know the "summary" of the Gospel through the power of an image. Father Radente, his confessor, suggested that he visit Sister Maria Concetta De Litala at the Rosariello convent in Porta Medina, Naples. The young lawyer did so, but when he saw the worn canvas for the first time, he was disheartened. And yet — as he himself would recount — in the days that followed, that image would become increasingly beautiful and reveal itself to be

miraculous²⁹ transforming a desolate valley into a veritable garden, today a global centre of faith, peace, and hope. This is what happens when one emerges from a tomb.

And to think that, on November 13, 1875, the painting arrived in Valle di Pompei on a humble manure cart! But, as Pope Leo XIV wrote in his letter to Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Papal Legate on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the arrival of the Icon of the Virgin of the Rosary, “thanks to the loving work of the newly canonized Saint Bartolo Longo, those beginnings, seemingly so humble, held within them the seeds of great works of charity, which are before everyone’s eyes.”³⁰ In this Marian city, everything has the flavour of Easter and rebirth: here the doors of the tombs open.

²⁹ See Longo, B., *Pompei. Storia del Santuario*, pp. 86–87.

³⁰ POPE LEO XIV, *Letter to the Papal Legate at the celebrations at the Shrine of Pompeii on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the arrival of the Icon of Our Lady of the Rosary*, October 7, 2025 [<https://www.vatican.va/content/leoxiv/la/letters/2025/documents/20251007-letter-shrine-pompeii.html>]. Our translation.

Like Longinus, the centurion who was converted at the foot of the Cross

In the Gospel according to John we read: “*But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs; but one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and immediately blood and water flowed out. The one who saw this has testified, and his testimony is true; he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you too may believe*” (Jn 19:33–35). That soldier, likely a centurion, at the foot of the Cross, pierced Jesus’ side with a spear — a gesture that, while seemingly cruel, holds profound theological significance for us believers. With that gesture, Longinus — the name tradition attributes to the centurion — simply verified that Jesus was indeed dead. From that wound, however, blood and water flowed, symbols that in Christian tradition represent the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist, and thus the source of life for humanity.

“This Roman army officer, having witnessed the execution of one of countless condemned prisoners, was able to recognize in this crucified man the Son of God, who had perished in the most humiliating abandonment. His shameful end ought to have marked the definitive triumph of hatred and death over love and life. But it was not so! Hanging from the Cross on Golgotha was a man who was already dead, but that man was acknowledged to be the “Son of God” by the centurion, “*on seeing that he*

thus breathed his last", as the Evangelist specifies."³¹

"*Truly this man was the Son of God!*" (Mk 15:39). We could also attribute those words to St. Bartolo Longo, who, reflecting on the fifth Sorrowful Mystery and on the death of Jesus on the cross, wrote: "O my Jesus, you wished to accomplish my redemption by allowing a spear to pierce your side and reveal your heart, as a place of refuge and loving shelter for souls."³² Saint Bartolo, who knew sin and all the inner suffering hidden behind the apparent exercise of freedom, is in some ways a new Longinus.

If Bartolo Longo had not recognized the Lord — the God who became man by sharing our nature even unto death on the cross — he would not have been able to build the Shrine, the Works, and the New City. At every step, in his heart, he was in fact repeating, along with the centurion: "*Truly this man was the Son of God!*" (Mk 15:39).

In the eyes of Longinus and the Founder of the Shrine of Pompeii, God reveals Himself as the source of that Mercy which is lavished in the sacrament of Reconciliation, a sacrament that must be central to the Christian experience of every Knight

³¹ POPE BENEDICT XVI, *Remarks at the conclusion of the Way of the Cross at the Colosseum*, Good Friday, April 10, 2009 [https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2009/april/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20090410_via-crucis-colosseo.html].

³² LONGO B., *I Venti Sabati*, pp. 235–236. Our translation.

and Dame of the Holy Sepulchre, as well as, on closer inspection, of every believer.

Bartolo Longo and the Holy Sepulchre

In 1877, Bartolo Longo published the book *The Devotion of the Fifteen Saturdays in Honor of the Most Holy Rosary* [*La devozione dei Quindici Sabati in onore del Santissimo Rosario*], reviving and expanding upon an ancient and pious practice that, originating in seventeenth-century France and which had spread to southern Italy, encouraged the faithful to receive Holy Communion on fifteen consecutive Saturdays and to recite at least one-third of the Rosary, pausing to meditate on the mysteries in order to model their daily lives after them. As is well known, in 2002 St. John Paul II revised the structure of the Rosary by adding the Five Luminous Mysteries, in which one meditates on episodes from the public life of Jesus, from his Baptism to the institution of the Eucharist.

Those texts by Longo, recently republished by the Shrine of Pompeii in the edition *I Venti Sabati*, offer a passionate and engaging reading of the Mysteries of Christ's life, and many pages are dedicated specifically to the Holy Sepulchre. Commenting, for example, on the fifth Sorrowful Mystery — Jesus dying on the cross — the Founder of the Shrine of Pompeii addresses the Mother of the Son of God



*View of the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre in
Jerusalem, the site of the Lord's Resurrection.*

with these words: “You laid him in the Sepulchre with your own hands; lay him now in my heart, which wishes to be the tomb, the cell, the home of love. It is cold, it is true, colder than that stone that enclosed your Son; but it is up to you, O mighty Virgin, to make it burn with the fire of charity. Bring peace between me and your Son and bind us with a bond of love so strong that not even death can ever break it.”³³ Mary Most Holy lays Jesus in the tomb just as she did, when he was a newborn, in the manger at Bethlehem. In the same way, she must lay

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 234. Our translation.

him in our hearts, which are often as cold as a tomb. She is the Mother of God and our Mother.

In the first Mystery of Glory, then, we contemplate Jesus rising from the Tomb. Death and darkness do not have the final word. It is worth reiterating: the Order of the Holy Sepulchre venerates, safeguards, and defends the Holy Sepulchre because it received the holy Body of Christ, but also because it was the site of the Resurrection of Christ the Lord in His true Body, which still bears the wounds of the stigmata — an eternal testimony to His love for humanity. “The most sacred Body of Jesus,” Bartolo Longo emphasizes, “rested for three days in the Holy Sepulchre, because by suffering and dying, He had freed from eternal death the people of the three ages of the world: those who lived fully under the law of nature, those under the Mosaic Law, and those who are about to live under the law of Grace. Dawn was just breaking on the third day, and in an instant Jesus rose from the dead and emerged from the sealed tomb, just as He had emerged from the immaculate womb of His Mother and just as He would shortly enter the Upper Room behind closed doors.”³⁴

May the Knights and Dames of the Holy Sepulchre proclaim the Resurrection with their whole being and with the power of consistent witness! May they be men and women of hope, heralds of the

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 241. Our translation.

good news and of the dawn of the new day. Mary Magdalene, as described by Bartolo Longo, “suffers from having to part from the tomb of her beloved Master. On Friday evening, she bathes that tomb with her tears.”³⁵ But when, early on the first day of the week, at sunrise, she returns to the Tomb, she no longer finds the Body of Jesus and suffers because of this: she goes to look for him, she runs to tell the others. She will be the first to see the Risen Jesus: *“Mary, however, was standing outside, near the tomb, weeping. As she wept, she bent over toward the tomb and saw two angels in white robes, seated one at the head and the other at the feet, where Jesus’ body had been laid. And they said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She replied, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.” Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?” She, thinking he was the gardener, said to him, “Sir, if you have taken him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him.” Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabboni!”— which means “Teacher!””* (Jn 20:11–16). Bartolo Longo wrote deeply spiritual passages specifically about Mary Magdalene, whom he considers a model of radical and total conversion to Christ. In her mind, in her

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 243–244. Our translation.

heart, in her eyes, there is truly no room for anything else. “Consider, my soul,” commented St. Bartolo, “that another quality of a heart converted to God is indifference toward everything that is not Jesus. God alone, none other than God: this is its motto, this its daily practice, its longing, the source of every desire. No other affection, no other interest must occupy the heart, and Jesus will soon come to establish his kingdom there.”³⁶ Longo writes of Mary Magdalene, but he is also referring to himself. When a person is converted, there is no longer room for anything else.

The exhortation to those who belong to the Order of the Holy Sepulchre is to “cultivate” conversion every day. Every day we must convert to God, since we unfortunately live in a human community that offers entirely different enticements. Let us invoke for ourselves one of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit: fortitude, which springs from love for God the Father and for his Son Jesus.

So often we encounter brothers and sisters who have lingered at the empty tomb, in the sorrow of Good Friday, in the silence thick with fear of Holy Saturday. For those who believe, death never has the last word. Jesus will not remain nailed to the wood of the cross. It is a “temporary placement,” as the Venerable Servant of God Don Tonino Bello used to say. After three days in the Tomb, that Body will

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 247–248. Our translation.

come back to life, those eyes will see again, that mouth will speak again. The silence of abandonment and anguish will once more be filled with a symphony of joy, love, and life.

We, children of the Heavenly Mother, to whom Jesus entrusted us from the Cross together with the Apostle John — know that it cannot all end here, on Calvary, in a senseless void. Those who have faith and live in charity will fear neither the night nor the silence, for they know that these are not final. Let us consider the life of Bartolo Longo. He experienced his Good Friday when he turned away from God, but he experienced his resurrection when he arrived in Valle di Pompei. He found the Risen One along the paths of time, right there in that desolate land. How many, even today, encounter the Risen One right in Pompeii, now the City of Mary and, thanks to her, a garden watered by a lively fountain of hope!

May the Knights and Dames of the Holy Sepulchre be men and women of faith, joyful heralds of the Resurrection!

Stories of Resurrection

There are many lives reborn from the tomb of sin right here in Pompeii. One story is particularly emblematic, not least because it inspired Bartolo Longo to establish institutions for the sons and, later, the daughters of prisoners.

It was August 4, 1885, when a man of Calabrian origin arrived in Valle di Pompei seeking to meet the Founder, who had begun construction of the Shrine and whose name had already become known beyond the valley's borders. That man, Rosario Pullano, confessed to him that, about ten days earlier, he had murdered a cousin. He felt remorse for that criminal act, but at the same time he feared for the future of his loved ones: his mother, his young wife, and above all, his two young children. What would become of them? The next day, Attorney Longo, who had taken the murderer in for the night, made him a promise: "If you turn yourself in to the authorities," he told him, "I will take care of your children."³⁷ That man turned himself in and, sentenced to several years of imprisonment, was incarcerated in the Catanzaro prison. And it was precisely from that place that, on January 26, 1886, he wrote to the future saint: "Here I am; I am here for you," he reminded him, "if it weren't for you, I wouldn't be here. My mother will surely die of grief, my wife weeps inconsolably, and my two children are in dire straits. I turned myself in here on your advice; now keep your word and take in my children, at least my last kid, the youngest. Do not say no to me, or else you will drive me to despair."³⁸

³⁷ LONGO B., *Vie meravigliose della Provvidenza*, Scuola Tipografica Pontificia per i Figli dei carcerati, 1920, p. 43. Our translation.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 80–81. Our translation.

As Longo himself recounted in the book *Vie meravigliose della Provvidenza* (1920), he simply could not figure out how to help the children of Pullano, who continued to write him many letters even from the Avellino prison, where he had been transferred. Yet six years later, in fulfilment of a providential plan, he succeeded in founding the Institute for the Children of Prisoners. It was May 29, 1892.³⁹

For all abandoned children and adolescents — whether orphans or those born into misfortune due to their parents' misdeeds — Saint Bartolo was a caring and attentive father who educated them in the good life of the Gospel, through his words, but even more so through his example. And he formed not just one young person, but thousands, rolling away the stones from countless tombs. It was thanks to the fatherly guidance of Bartolo Longo that the first person admitted to the Institute for the Children of Prisoners became a priest and celebrated his first Mass right there in the Shrine: he was Domenico Pullano, the son of Rosario, who had so insistently asked him for help. His story, like that of so many others, is one of redemption — not only spiritual, but also social and civic.

It is precisely from this perspective that Pope Leo XIV, during the General Audience of October 8, 2025, spoke words that can become a guiding principle for every Knight and Dame of our Order, which

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 81–82.

draws its inspiration from the site of the Resurrection, the Holy Sepulchre: “Christ’s resurrection teaches us that no history is so marked by disappointment or sin that it cannot be visited by hope. No fall is definitive, no night is eternal, no wound is destined to remain open forever. However distant, lost or unworthy we may feel, there is no distance that can extinguish the unfailing power of God’s love [...] he Risen One is close to us precisely in the darkest places: in our failures, in our frayed relationships, in the daily struggles that weigh on our shoulders, in the doubts that discourage us. Nothing that we are, no fragment of our existence, is foreign to him. Today, the risen Lord walks alongside each of us, as we travel our paths – those of work and commitment, but also those of suffering and loneliness – and with infinite delicacy asks us to let him warm our hearts [...] He waits patiently for the moment when our eyes will open to see his friendly face, capable of transforming disappointment into hopeful expectation, sadness into gratitude, resignation into hope. The Risen One desires only to manifest his presence, to become our companion on the road and to kindle in us the certainty that his life is stronger than any death.”⁴⁰

⁴⁰ POPE LEO XIV, *Catechesis at the General Audience*, October 8, 2025 [<https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/audiences/2025/documents/20251008-udienza-generale.html>].

V
KNIGHTS AND DAMES OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE,
MEN AND WOMEN OF PEACE FOLLOWING
THE TEACHINGS OF ST. BARTOLO LONGO

Pax!

On May 8, 2025, the Feast of the Supplication to Our Lady of Pompeii, Pope Leo XIV, newly elected as the Successor of Peter, pronounced — in his first greeting from the Loggia of Blessings at the Vatican Basilica — the very words of the Risen Jesus: “*Peace be with you all*” (cf. *Jn* 20:19). “It is the peace of the risen Christ. A peace that is unarmed and disarming, humble and persevering. A peace that comes from God, the God who loves us all, unconditionally.”⁴¹

As we reflect on these words, our thoughts turn with concern toward the Holy Land, to which one of the paragraphs⁴² of *the Formation Document* of the

⁴¹ POPE LEO XIV, *First “Urbi et Orbi” Apostolic Blessing*, Central Loggia of St. Peter’s Basilica, May 8, 2025 [<https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/messages/urbi/documents/20250508-prima-benedizione-urbietorbi.html>].

⁴² See *Formation Document*, nos. 38–47.

Order of the Holy Sepulchre is dedicated; there we read that “biblically, the earth [...] created in its original beauty and harmony, through the sin of men [...] became a place of toil [...] It is the holiness of God that [...] makes the land again sanctified; in that geographic patch, known in Roman times as Palestine, the land received the Word of God and saw Him walk, preach, work, die and rise again. For such reasons, that land became a region that even today remains dear to the hearts of its visitors and pilgrims, as Psalm 87 sings: on the holy mountains of God are said wonderful and glorious things, there the city of the Most High is founded, and in it the Lord registers the peoples; there we are all born”⁴³ Among the commitments that Knights and Dames undertake, a fundamental one is “to support the *Body of Christ*, now composed of *living stones*, in the Holy Land the small Christian Community that lives and works there.”⁴⁴

There can be no Knight or Dame of the Holy Sepulchre who is not a man or woman of peace. Throughout our lives, we must be witnesses of brotherhood, builders of dialogue, and healers of wounds. Our only weapons must be, according to the Gospel, prayer and fasting, and doing everything within our power to build peace around us and to alleviate the suffering of peoples experiencing the im-

⁴³ *Ibid.*, no. 38.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, no. 43.

mense tragedy of war — or even the conflicts within our civil communities, in interpersonal relationships, and within families! Once again, we are called to look to the saints and to that special brother of ours in Heaven, Saint Bartolo Longo.

At the top of the facade of the Shrine of Pompeii stands a statue of Our Lady of the Rosary, sculpted by Gaetano Chiaromonte and placed on a pedestal. The inscription “*Pax*” is engraved on its surface. Referring precisely to this sculpture of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Bartolo Longo — who wished to dedicate the monumental facade to universal peace — wrote: “With her left hand, she offers you the weapon of peace that subdues the world: the Rosary, a weapon of brotherhood, union of hearts, and love that conquers the world.”⁴⁵ In his speech — delivered on May 5, 1901, the day of the inauguration, Saint Bartolo effectively pronounced his last will and testament. Four words sufficed: “I leave you peace.”

In the Shrine he founded, peace is invoked during the celebration of the Eucharist, in the daily recitation of the Holy Rosary, and also through the sound of the eight bells housed in the bell tower. To obtain the material needed for the casting, one hundred quintals of bronze war cannons were used, so that the sound of their tolling would serve as a constant reminder of Pompeii’s and Longo’s commitment to peace. A symbol of death and destruction

⁴⁵ See RNP (1901), p. 138. Our translation.

became an emblem of hope, brotherhood, and harmony.

Furthermore, peace is not built solely on good feelings; it is not merely a virtuous intention, nor a vague goal to strive for. Peace, on the contrary, is very concrete and is built, day after day, by achieving social justice: there is “no peace without justice, no justice without forgiveness.”⁴⁶ But justice must begin with transcending our own boundaries — the fences that surround our personal “properties,” the private “barriers” that shut us away in our homes. It was this stepping outside of oneself that enabled Saint Bartolo Longo to care for others. In this spirit of generous selflessness, on the day of the inauguration of the Sanctuary’s façade, the Founder entrusted to the devotees of Our Lady of the Rosary not only the Sanctuary itself, but also the orphaned girls and sons of prisoners: “Under the gaze of Our Lady of Pompeii, and in the beneficial light of your charity, may they be educated in goodness, honesty, and work; and may, through your charity, increase the number of those who benefit, while saving many other abandoned and destitute children.”⁴⁷ It is es-

⁴⁶ ST. JOHN PAUL II, *Message for the Celebration of the 35th World Day of Peace, January 1, 2002*, December 8, 2001, no. 15 [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/peace/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_20011211_xxxv-world-day-for-peace.html].

⁴⁷ St. Bartolo Longo’s address is found in RNP (1901), pp. 125–138 and pp. 186–208. Our translation.

sential to educate for peace, to help children and adolescents understand from an early age that dialogue always succeeds in softening the rigidity of our “self.” There is always a common ground where the good of one and the other can come together. But it is charity itself — caring for others — that is the instrument of peace. “We need to change course, we need to educate our hearts for peace.”⁴⁸

⁴⁸ POPE LEO XIV, *Apostolic Journey to Lebanon, Appeal at the Conclusion of Holy Mass*, Beirut, December 2, 2025 [<https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/homilies/2025/documents/20251202-messa-beirut.html>].



October 17, 1923: Founders Bartolo Longo and Countess Marianna Farnararo De Fusco at the dedication of the Sanctuary's great bell.

VI

BARTOLO LONGO, A LAYPERSON IN THE CHURCH

Each According to Their Own Ministries and Charisms

On November 21, 1964, Saint Paul VI, together with the Council Fathers, promulgated *Lumen Gentium*, one of the four Constitutions of the Second Vatican Council. Christ is *the light of the nations*, a light that shines on the face of the Church and, through her, illuminates humanity (cf. *LG* 1). Chapter IV, in particular, is expressly dedicated to the laity: “their pastors know how much the laity contribute to the welfare of the entire Church. They also know that they were not ordained by Christ to take upon themselves alone the entire salvific mission of the Church toward the world. On the contrary they understand that it is their noble duty to shepherd the faithful and to recognize their ministries and charisms, so that all according to their proper roles may cooperate in this common undertaking with one mind” (*LG* 30).

In fact, the laity participate in the common priesthood of Christ through Baptism; they are active members of the People of God in their specific voca-

tion; they bear witness to the faith in daily life (in the family, at work, in political engagement, and in cultural activities). The laity must live out their mission in the world: bringing the Gospel and Christian values into society and seeking to positively influence civil, economic, and cultural life; their lives must be “leaven of Christianity” in temporal realities; they are called to be consistent witnesses by promoting justice, peace, and charity. The mission of the laity is so demanding that it cannot be carried out without formation in the faith, in Christian culture, and in social skills. They are also called to live the life of the Church, collaborating with bishops and priests — not by replacing them, but by cooperating in the common mission. Finally, the laity must respond to the universal call to holiness, which can be attained in daily life. While prayer and the sacraments are indispensable for reaching this goal, it is equally true that a layperson must carry out concrete actions that transform the world according to the Gospel.

Every line of Chapter IV of *Lumen Gentium*, which must serve as a constant reference for the members of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, brings to mind the life of the layperson Bartolo Longo — a Christian who was free and creative in his work, yet also in constant dialogue with popes, bishops, priests, and religious. He sought their counsel, listened to them, and, when necessary, sought to reconcile differing positions. The goal of it all was never self-serving — the assertion of his own personal-

ity — but rather the good of the Church. In particular, it is important to remember that in founding and administering the Shrine and the charitable works, trusting in God's Providence, he was always obedient to the Pope and the Church, even when — as at the beginning of the pontificate of Saint Pius X — he was not understood, or when his personal intentions might have led him down different paths. To support this point, one could cite several episodes from the life of Saint Bartolo. One in particular comes to mind because it occurred at the dawn of the history of the New City, even before the cornerstone of the Shrine was laid. In the book *Pompei: Storia del Santuario* [Pompeii: History of the Shrine], Longo himself recounts what happened on November 14, 1875, when, in the then-*desolate* Valley, Monsignor Giuseppe Formisano, Bishop of Nola, arrived to administer the sacrament of Confirmation to the farmers' children. It was to him that our Saint revealed his desire to build an altar where the local inhabitants could pray to Our Lady of the Rosary. Longo did not know that the most zealous pastor had a very different intention: not to erect a simple altar, but a new church. When Monsignor Formisano revealed that intention to him, Bartolo Longo was, to say the least, taken aback. In fact, he writes: "This proposal made to me — who, after three years of effort, had not managed to erect even a simple altar or establish a confraternity among these very poor people — seemed so strange and so

far beyond my capabilities that at first I did not take it well.” “I fear,” he told Canon Don Giuseppe Rossi, “that this is a cunning ruse of the devil, who, to deter us from doing *good*, proposes *something excellent*; and under the pretext of building a church — a project that would take who knows how many years — he seeks to prevent the establishment of *the Confraternity of the Rosary*, which is already almost fully organized and in order.”⁴⁹ What happened next, we know well. Longo would not build an altar, nor even a country church. He would erect a majestic Shrine, where millions of pilgrims from all over the world still come today. It is as if the divine will had slowly freed itself from the soot that clouded the vision of a man on his journey. The closer Longo drew to God — through his ceaseless quest to imitate Christ, through prayer, and even through suffering — the more the Father revealed His plan. And, in the beginning, that plan was in some ways “fore-shadowed” by a bishop, who gave Saint Bartolo Longo his wise, prophetic, and providential counsel. The Work, however, was not the work of Monsignor Formisano. It was Bartolo Longo and Countess Marianna, his wife — a layman and a laywoman — who planned and worked for the construction of the Shrine. Here are the fruits of a Church that, in that diversity of roles and charisms that also characterizes

⁴⁹ LONGO, B., *Pompei: Storia del Santuario*, p. 64. Our translation.

the Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, remains firm in its unity.

“Each individual layman,” wrote the Council Fathers in *Lumen Gentium* (no. 38), “must stand before the world as a witness to the resurrection and life of the Lord Jesus and a symbol of the living God. All the laity as a community and each one according to his ability must nourish the world with spiritual fruits (cf. *Gal* 5:22). They must diffuse in the world that spirit which animates the poor, the meek, the peace makers—whom the Lord in the Gospel proclaimed as blessed (cf. *Mt* 5:3–9). In a word, ‘Christians must be to the world what the soul is to the body.’ (*Epistle to Diognetus*, 6).”

A Layman Who Did Not Do It All Alone

The facade of the Shrine of Pompeii is made of two hundred enormous blocks of travertine and marble, with eight columns of Gravellona granite and two of red Finnish granite. So many materials for a truly extraordinary *masterpiece*. If even one of these elements were missing, the facade would not possess the beauty it has. This image offers an opportunity to reflect on an aspect of the work of St. Bartolo Longo, who never shut himself off within his own walls but always had the courage to be open to others, to share, and to foster brotherhood. Only in this way can we live well and truly become co-build-

ers of enduring and fruitful works. Could Saint Bartolo ever have accomplished his entire work on his own? Certainly, he had Heaven's favour, and his work was fully in line with God's plan and, as such, blessed by the intercession of Our Lady of the Rosary. But he could not have accomplished much if he had closed himself off without finding the providential help of an exceptional number of benefactors, collaborators, and people he met along the way — beginning with his wife, Countess Marianna, who supported him with her financial resources and sound advice. Thus, our saint lived and worked well: together with others and never alone. Among the many who collaborated with him are also those who will remain unknown, but whose names are well known to God — the only “limelight” we should always seek. In keeping with this spirit of mutual collaboration, the *Formation Document*, in Chapter VI — dedicated to “certain distinctive aspects of the life of the Order” — also addresses the “fraternal dimension”⁵⁰, which underlies the ecclesial commitment of every member within the context of the spiritual and charitable dimensions. The aspect of fraternity is central for every member of the Order, who is called to act with *a right conscience* that is capable of forgiveness and understanding those who have strayed. “The invitation,” the *Formation Document* continues, “is to live the fraternal dimension

⁵⁰ *Formation Document*, nos. 90–92.

at all levels: not only through the conviviality in meetings to get to know each other better, but also through the willingness to come to the aid of Knights and Dames who are going through more difficult times.”⁵¹

It is fraternity that makes our work creative; it is fraternity that gave Bartolo Longo his strength. The examples, drawn from his biography, are countless. Men and women of God, in some way, are drawn to one another and support one another. During the Founder’s lifetime and ministry, Pompeii became a sort of crossroads of saints: Caterina Volpicelli, Ludovico da Casoria, Giuseppe Moscati, Giovanni Bosco, Filippo Smaldone, Luigi Guanella, Francesca Saverio Cabrini, Annibale di Francia, Massimiliano Kolbe, Giustino Russolillo, Luigi Orione, and Pio da Pietrelcina. Some exchanged letters with Bartolo Longo, while others made pilgrimages to Pompeii. But to help understand the meaning of friendship among the saints, it is particularly important to recall the relationship between Saint Bartolo and Saint Giuseppe Moscati, the saintly physician born in Benevento, who lived and practiced in Naples, where he died on April 12, 1927. He was considered the doctor of the poor and was also the personal physician of Attorney Longo, whom he cared for until his death.

He supported the Pompeian Works with fre-

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, no. 91.

quent and generous donations and treated, free of charge, the orphans and the sick whom Longo took in; among them was Emma Picchillo, an orphan who spent almost her entire life in the shadow of the Shrine of Pompeii and also served as the Founder's secretary.

In turn, Longo would often thank Professor Moscati by sending him rosary beads or publications with his autographed dedications. In a letter dated May 7, 1926, Moscati wrote to Longo: "You have been the Herald of the Most Holy Virgin, and you must — remaining for a long time yet in the shadow of the Shrine — bear witness to so many graces and to the triumphs of the Rosary. I have you in my thoughts, and even amidst the sea of bonds in which I lie, I think of you and... as the great sinner that I am, I pray to God for you. But my prayers, though they are like heavy gases that sink to the earth and do not reach Heaven, are nonetheless inspired by good will. Live, therefore, well and long."⁵² Bartolo Longo replied immediately: "On the morning of May 8, I received your affectionate letter. Your words are a great comfort in my sufferings, and, filled with gratitude, I invoked — during the Hour of Supplication — and continue to invoke daily upon you the blessing and protection of our Virgin of Pompeii."⁵³ In another letter dated July 20, 1922,

⁵² Quoted in RNP [2025], p. 24. Our translation.

⁵³ Quoted in *Ibid.* Our translation.

Moscato had written to his friend: “Whenever I can, I make a quick trip to Pompeii — something that has now been denied me so many times by my demanding profession. But whenever I pass by on the train, fleeing as it were, with the Shrine in sight, on my way to distant consultations — which happen very frequently — my gaze and my heart are there, where, among the trees, one can glimpse the bell tower under construction at the foot of the Ciborio, atop which stands the image of the Virgin! Forgive me if, while writing to you, my thoughts turn to so many cherished memories... Please know that I am always at your service.”⁵⁴ In recent times, when the elderly lawyer had almost completely stopped eating, Moscato encouraged him to take care of himself: “I cannot endorse your determination to deprive yourself of food! Eat, of course, within reason; but do eat! May the Lord and the Blessed Virgin preserve you for a long time on this earth, which has truly become a den of wild beasts and a cave of thieves. “Let us sacrifice ourselves — and I first of all, for I deserve more than others to be counted among the wild beasts — so that Christian principles may triumph in the world; and for this reason alone must we ask to live.”⁵⁵ Each prayed for the other.

The holy friendship between St. Bartolo Longo and St. Giuseppe Moscato is an exemplary model for

⁵⁴ Quoted in *ibid.* Our translation.

⁵⁵ Quoted in RNP [2020], p. 85. Our translation.

every Christian and, in particular — given the nature of lay commitment — for every Knight and Dame of the Holy Sepulchre. Let us support one another, help one another, and above all, pray with one another and for one another.

The Eucharist, Bread of Life, food for the soul

There was not a single day in his new, redeemed life in which Saint Bartolo, as his health permitted, did not take part — in Holy Mass, receiving Holy Communion. The Bread of Life, the food of the soul, was indispensable to him for living and acting. But that is not all. There is a detail that helps us understand how much the Founder of the Shrine of Pompeii did not want to miss even the slightest detail of the Word of God, “broken” like bread by the priest delivering the homily. Every time he returned to his room, he would begin to jot down what he had heard in the proclamation of the Gospel and in the homily. On one hand, the Eucharist; on the other, the Word of God. Not even a crumb of the Mass could be lost. The edition of *I Venti Sabati* appropriately includes some reflections by Bartolo Longo on Jesus giving his Body and Blood in the Eucharist. In the contemplative prayer of the Holy Rosary, this is the fifth of the Luminous Mysteries, which were added by Saint John Paul II in 2002 through the Apostolic Letter *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*. Well, in

this case as well, these are enlightening texts: “The first reason Jesus Christ had for instituting the Eucharist was to leave us a sign of his love, one that could never be erased by oblivion. [...] The second reason for instituting the Eucharist was the need to make the memory of Jesus’ sufferings eternal. [...]. Eternal love has carved his sufferings not in marble, but in flesh; and in the wounds of Christ he has written the names of the elect. And the hope that our name, too, is written in those scars of Christ is given to us by the Eucharist, which assures us that our God died out of love.”⁵⁶ Later, in his characteristic style — at once concrete and poetic — St. Bartolo wrote again: “The Eucharist is God’s gift, our hymn of thanksgiving to God. The Eucharist is a mystery of sweetness and divine tenderness; it is a mystery of peace, a torrent of eternal love.”⁵⁷ These words bring to mind what would later be affirmed, many years later, by the Second Vatican Council: in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, promulgated by Saint Paul VI, together with the Council Fathers, on December 4, 1963, the Eucharist is defined as “the source and summit of Christian life” (cf. SC 10). The Eucharist plays a central role in the life of the Church as well as in the lives of the Members of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem. From the liturgy —

⁵⁶ LONGO, B., *I Venti Sabati*, pp. 137–138. Our translation.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 139. Our translation.

and, in a special way, from the Eucharist itself — flows the grace that sanctifies believers and toward which all the Church’s apostolic activity is directed.

Indeed, St. Bartolo Longo is our example in this regard as well. How can a layperson live in our world, where faith is marginalized — yet the need and longing for God remain very much alive! — without the strength of the Eucharist? Charity itself, as Pope Francis says, is the fruit of the sacrament of Holy Communion!⁵⁸ And charity — fraternal “solidarity” — is at the heart of the work of every Knight and Dame of the Holy Sepulchre.

⁵⁸ See POPE FRANCIS, *Catechesis at the General Audience*, February 5, 2014 [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2014/documents/papa-francesco_20140205_udienza-generale.html].

VII CONCLUSION

The figure of St. Bartolo Longo stands out as one of the most shining examples of lay faith in the history of the contemporary Church. In these pages, we have traced some aspects of his life, his thought, and his work. When, on February 25, 2025, the Holy See Press Office announced that, although hospitalized at Gemelli Hospital and in great pain, Pope Francis had approved, the previous day, the favourable votes of the ordinary session of the cardinals and bishops who are members of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints for the canonization of Blessed Bartolo Longo, devotees of Our Lady of the Rosary and the Knights and Dames of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre throughout the world were filled with great joy. But, on closer inspection, recognized holiness is not a badge of honour or a medal pinned to the chest of the new saint.

He certainly has no need of it: he is already in Heaven, and behold the beatific vision of the Father. What more could he have desired? The joy was — and still is — for us, who now have a new, concrete

example of holiness for the universal Church, a figure to look up to and imitate so that, one day, we too may reach Paradise.

The human and spiritual journey of Saint Bartolo embodies a message of extraordinary relevance today: holiness is possible for everyone, even for those who, like him, have known sin and darkness, yet have been able to rise again in the light of divine grace. The life of the Founder of the Shrine of Pompeii represents, in fact, a continuous journey of conversion — conversion must be a daily process and must be experienced every day! — a rebirth that takes the form of service and concrete love for the poorest and most abandoned.

The deep bond between Bartolo Longo and the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre is also rooted in a spirituality of charity and peace. The distinction of Knight Grand Cross, conferred upon him by Pius XI, was not merely an honorary recognition, but the confirmation of a life dedicated to the defence of the faith and the promotion of human dignity. He fully embodied the mission of the Knights and Dames of the Holy Sepulchre: not only to safeguard the holy sites and supporting the Christian communities of the Holy Land, but above all bearing witness, through their deeds, to the Gospel of the Resurrection. Bartolo Longo, the first lay Knight to be first beatified and then canonized, teaches all members of the Equestrian Order to measure their lives daily against the Gospel and the Paschal Mys-

tery of Christ. In light of his example as an authentic “Knight of God,” looking to Saint Bartolo Longo will help us to be faithful and credible Christians in the ordinary course of our days.

Pompei, the “New City of Mary,” has become a symbol of personal and collective resurrection. In a desolate land marked by poverty, Bartolo Longo knew how to sow the seeds of hope, founding schools, orphanages, and works of welcome and redemption for the children of prisoners. Every stone of the Shrine and its works speaks of the concrete faith of a layperson who never separated prayer from action, devotion from justice, or contemplation from service. Charity, nourished by the Eucharist and the Rosary, was for him the highest form of evangelization. At the centre of his experience stands Mary, Mother of the Church, a sure guide on the path toward Christ. To her, Bartolo Longo entrusted every initiative, finding in her intercession the strength to overcome trials, misunderstandings, and hardships. Like a new Longinus, he understood that only by gazing upon Christ’s pierced side can one be reborn to new life. It is in this Paschal perspective that his entire work must be understood: from the construction of the Shrine to the founding of the Charitable Works, right up to the total offering of himself, when, now destitute, he even gave away the knightly insignia he had received from the Pope.

Bartolo Longo’s spiritual legacy is an invitation addressed to every believer — and in a special way

to the Knights and Dames of the Holy Sepulchre — to live out their faith in daily life, to become “living stones” of God’s Temple, witnesses to the light of the Risen One in the unfolding of history. His life demonstrates that true Christian nobility is not measured by titles or privileges, but by the capacity to serve. As Knights and Dames of the Holy Sepulchre, the site of the Lord’s Resurrection, we ask for the grace to recognize the humble and discreet presence of the Risen One in our days, not to expect a life without trials, and to discover that every pain, if filled with love, can become a place of communion and life. We will experience simple joys, which will not erase the wounds, but will illuminate them. Joys that spring from the certainty that the Lord Jesus is Risen and alive, walks with us, and grants us at every moment the chance to begin anew.

The first lay Knight of our Order to be canonized, Saint Bartolo Longo, lived this deeply personal relationship with Christ. His heart was continually nourished by apostolic zeal. He taught that through the prayer of the Rosary we contemplate the face of Christ through the eyes of Mary. He was a faithful and obedient son of the Church; he built the Shrine of Pompeii and the new City of Love, beginning with the least among us: orphans and the children of prisoners. Following his example, “generosity of the Knight and Dame is an all-encompassing generosity that does not end in the Holy Land but becomes a characteristic element of their presence in the

Church [...] a *multiplied* generosity that desires to take to heart the needs of all those most in need.”⁵⁹

Thanks to him, Pompeii remains a beacon of mercy and hope, a place where the Gospel continues to flourish in the lives of those who allow themselves to be touched by God’s love. In Saint Bartolo Longo, Knight of the Holy Sepulchre and Apostle of the Rosary, the Church recognizes the face of the lay saint: a man who knew how to transform his own frailty into an instrument of grace and his own faith into a force capable of changing the world.

⁵⁹ *Formation Document*, no. 22.



The mortal remains of Saint Bartolo Longo solemnly displayed for veneration at the Shrine of Pompeii.

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“This publication on Bartolo Longo, now a saint, was conceived following the celebration of his canonization by Pope Leo XIV in St. Peter’s Square on October 19, 2025, an event attended by several hundred Knights and Dames of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem who had travelled from all over the world. [...]

Bartolo Longo, therefore, is the first lay Knight to be proclaimed a saint. For this reason, I asked the Archbishop-Prelate of Pompeii and Assessor of our Order, Monsignor Tommaso Caputo, to outline for the Order the life and virtues of the new saint, whom he presents in this work as a model from whom to draw inspiration.”

(from the Preface of Cardinal Fernando Filoni, Grand Master)

Archbishop Tommaso Caputo, born in Afragola (NA) on October 17, 1950, has served as Assessor of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem since September 12, 2019. While studying at the Archdiocesan Seminary of Naples, he earned a licentiate in Theology from the Pontifical Theological Faculty of Southern Italy. Ordained a priest on April 10, 1974, he served for two years as assistant parish priest at San Benedetto all’Arco Mirelli in Naples before being assigned to the Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy. At the same time, he pursued studies in Canon Law at the Pontifical Lateran University, where he obtained his doctorate.

Having entered the service of the Holy See on March 25, 1980, he served as Secretary at the Apostolic Nunciature in Rwanda and as Counsellor at the Nunciatures in the Philippines and Venezuela. In 1989, he was appointed to the Secretariat of State, where he served in the Secretariat of the Substitute until June 19, 1993, when Saint John Paul II appointed him Chief of Protocol.

On September 3, 2007, Pope Benedict XVI appointed him Apostolic Nuncio to Malta and Libya, elevating him to the rank of archbishop and consecrating him on September 29, 2007, in St Peter’s Basilica in the Vatican.

On November 10, 2012, Pope Benedict XVI appointed him Archbishop-Prelate of Pompeii and Pontifical Delegate for the Shrine of the Blessed Virgin Mary of the Holy Rosary.

Archbishop Tommaso Caputo is also President of the Board of Auditors of the Italian Episcopal Conference.