

## **Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time – 06/13/21**

I don't know how many people have noticed but in the gathering space, just above the little couch, there is a picture of Blessed Bartolo Longo. He was beatified by Saint Pope John Paul II on October 26, 1980. Saint John Paul referred to him as the "Apostle of the Rosary" but he wasn't always so devoted to our Lord, our Lady and the Catholic Church.

Bartolo was born into a wealthy, very devout Roman Catholic family on February 10, 1841 in the small town of Latiano, Italy. Twenty years later Bartolo attended the University of Naples.

That was the beginning of a very tumultuous period for the future Blessed Bartolo Longo. At that time there was a great deal of hostility toward the Catholic Church in Italy and throughout all of Europe and especially toward the Pope.

Additionally, not so unlike what is happening in our own world today, various forms of occultism and spiritualism were on the rise throughout Europe. Because of this, many students at the University took part in demonstrations against the pope, dabbled in witchcraft and other occult activities.

Despite Bartolo's Catholic upbringing he was not immune. He became involved in a movement that led him into a satanic cult and after a period of study he was actually ordained a satanic priest.

In the years following, Bartolo's life became one of "depression, nervousness, and confusion". Bothered by paranoia and anxiety, he turned to his old hometown friend, Professor Vincenzo Pepe, for guidance.

Pepe, shocked at the appearance of his old friend declared, "Do you want to die in an insane asylum, and then be damned forever?" This struck Bartolo deeply and began his conversion back to Catholicism. Eventually, his friend convinced him to abandon Satanism altogether and introduced him to the Dominican Father Alberto Radente who led him to our Lady and a deep devotion to the Holy Rosary.

On October 7, 1871, Bartolo became a Dominican tertiary and took the name "Rosario". Around this time, he reportedly visited a séance and held up a rosary, declaring, "I renounce spiritualism because it is nothing but a maze of error and falsehood."

In spite of this he continued to struggle with mental illness, paranoia, depression, anxiety and despair. He even struggled with suicidal thoughts for a time, but rejected them by recalling the promise of Saint Dominic, "*he who propagates my Rosary will be saved.*" It was this promise that convinced him to encourage public devotion to the Holy Rosary where ever he went.

As a devout Catholic, he was fully aware that salvation is from Jesus Christ but he was also convinced that without our Lady's

intervention he would have appeared before the judgement seat of Christ and he would have been damned.

Like we heard in the second reading, we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ and receive recompense, according to what we did in the body, whether good or evil.

In spite of Bartolo's conversion, he was plagued throughout his entire life by attacks from within and from without but he remained courageous walking by faith and not by sight always leaning on our Lady and the Rosary in order to please her Son.

Not likely will any of us ever go down such a treacherous path but Satan, the great deceiver, never ceases trying to lead us away from our Lord Jesus Christ and His Church. And he will make the path seem delightful at first. Therefore, we must be vigilant to recognize his deceptions and courageous to avoid it.

However, our Lord never tires of pursuing us no matter how far we might stray. His love knows no bounds.

So let's use the example of Blessed Bartolo Longo and take Mary into our hearts and pray that Rosary everyday so that we won't go astray.

Blessed Bartolo Longo died on October 5, 1926, at the age of 85. His dying words were, "My only desire is to see Mary who saved me and who will save me from the clutches of Satan."