

Three Heroes of Assisi in World War II

Among the targeted initiatives of the Minerva Press –which for some time has been gradually and thoughtfully increasing its output with a number of works by authors who are eminent members of the Academy of Subasio, we have a worthy production in this most recent work that was presented to the public on October 4th 2005 during a solemn ceremony organized by St. Bonaventure University.

The text was prepared by two authors who have a special bond with Assisi and its saints—Francis and Clare—to whom they have dedicated their studies and their widespread and somewhat complementary interests. The first author is Josef Raischl SFO, who lives in Dachau, Germany, after having completed his formation in Rome at the Historical Institute of the Friars Minor Capuchin and in England at the Franciscan International Study Centre in Canterbury. The second author, André Cirino OFM, teaches at the above-mentioned Canterbury center and for more than twenty years has been leading pilgrimages to this Franciscan city, deeply inhaling its spiritual atmosphere and historical memory. From this meeting of their interests has come this new book, whose goal is to let the whole world know about the three heroes of Assisi: Bishop Giuseppe Placido Nicolini, Colonel Valentin Müller, M.D. and Assisi Canon, Don Aldo Brunacci.

The first forty pages present, in the impeccable translation by Nancy Celaschi, OSF, some studies by Francesco Santucci taken from the significant bibliography of local history which he has dedicated for some time to the study of these three protagonists of the city's silent era that, during the terrible conflict of the Second World War, made the city a beacon of hope by saving so many human lives.

This material is followed by some of the accounts of Don Aldo Brunacci, the only survivor of the “three heroes,” who as early as 1946 wrote an account that is found on pages 98 to 101 of the book. This provides a fitting anthological key and combines with other accounts by the elderly priest taken from his letters and interviews over the years, including his most recent interview which the National Public Radio broadcast on March 31, 2004, several days after the solemn conferral of the Gaudete Medal Ward and his reception as an honored guest at the US Holocaust Museum.

It would be remiss if the authors had failed to conclude this work with that most beautiful of the prayers of Brother Francis which asks God for that most precious gift of peace. *Give us peace of mind and heart, that peace which comes from You. Grant peace to our families, to our Nation, and to the whole world.* Indeed, the world still is in great need of this gift!