

PADRE CARMELO DI GIOVANNI

(His Story)

Father Carmelo di Giovanni (of the Pallottine Order), was Parish Priest of St. Peter's Italian Church- Clerkenwell for most of his 43 years spent in London. He was often known as "The Rebel Priest". But! Carmelo opened his arms to all who approached him; especially the many lost sheep; the young men and women who would in despair at all hours of the day and night ring the doorbell of the Italian Church, he never turned anyone away!.

Fr. Carmelo was born on the 3rd May 1944 in Sangineto, a small province of Cosenza in Calabria. His mamma was Rosaria and his papa' Domenico. Carmelo was from a family of five siblings two of his older brothers emigrated to Buenos Aires.

Carmelo was a rebellious child and often very troublesome. At the age of 11 he was sent to study at a College in Cetraro near Sangineto, this college was connected to the Pallottine Fathers, and here Carmelo began his studies at Rocca Priora not far from Rome.

He later attended the Liceo Classico with a focus on Philosophy at the Augustan Institute in Rome. Carmelo did not find this very easy. At this same time he was living at the Pallottine College in Grottoferrata; by his own admission he didn't spend much time on his studies, and found the rules hard to accept.

But, he managed to secure his certificate from the Liceo, and although he continued to Rebel against all the Institutions including the Church, he applied and was accepted at the Lateran University in Rome; and against all the odds but with the help of "**someone up there**" who must have liked this Little Rebel Priest to be; he was allowed to continue and finished his studies.

On the 20th of December 1970 Carmelo was ordained a priest by the Bishop of Frascati Mgr. Luigi Liverzani. Throughout his College years and many troubled times Padre Carmelo was supported by his great friend Don Tonino Lotti; who stood by him when initially Don Carmelo's request to join the Pallottine was turned down.

But! The Little Rebel Priest survived his rebelliousness, after his Ordination and in despair the Pallottine's sent him to London. In 1971 on a cold and damp September day our little Rebel Priest, (with an enormous heart for the under privileged) arrived at St. Peter's Italian Church in London. Not speaking a word of English he felt very alone and lost; but he was welcomed by the Parish Priest Don Mario Moriconi who gave him his first job with the responsibility of saying Mass and visiting the sick at the Italian Hospital in Queens Square near the British Museum.

His early years were difficult ones, but Padre Carmelo found support outside of the Church from other Italian priests, namely the Scalabrini Fathers, the Consolata Fathers and in 1975 he was joined by Don Roberto Russo who helped and guided him in the right direction and soon he lost a little of his rebellious ways turning his attention instead to the many needs expressed by his parishioners; those wanting to marry someone from another faith; Carmelo opened his arms and embraced them all; stating that they were after all "Children of God", and with the help and support of Don Russo whom Carmelo came to respect and love as a father; Padre Carmelo stretched his arms wider.

Over the many years he began helping, supporting and visiting the many Italians who were lost and incarcerated in many London Prisons, like Wormwood Scrubs, Holloway, Pentonville and Belmarsh. Here he helped and met people with Aids, inmates ravaged by drugs; terrorists such as The Red Brigade; the little Rebel Priest showed he had a gentle heart, he embraced them with his love, kindness and understandings.

On the 27th of March 2001, the Charity Commission for England and Wales awarded a charity status to a project founded by our little Rebel Priest. The Project was named St. Peter's Project, the equivalent of ONLUS in Italy.

This project focuses in particular on drug addicts or those suffering from alcohol abuse, former prisoners, men and women without a home or family, the charity helps them to rehabilitate them with the outside world.

In 2010 Padre Carmelo celebrated his 40 years of Priesthood, he remembered all those who helped him over his difficulties, remembering his beloved mother and father, remembering also and thanking San Vincenzo Pallotti and his fellow Pallottini priests, his many friends from all walks of life and from countries near and far.

In 2013 under the guidance of their now beloved Padre Carmelo the Italians and the many friends of the Church celebrated the commemoration of the foundation of St. Peter's Italian Church, during this time Padre Carmelo worked tirelessly embracing all his community, from the Ambassador to the Consulate General, the Centenary Mass was attended by all of them with the attendance of many Politicians, many Priests from the past and present and from the many deanery's in London Bishops and Cardinals came to St. Peter's to celebrate with him on this special occasion. Padre Carmelo was in his element.

But, In August 2013 whilst on holiday in Sardinia Padre Carmelo suffered a heart attack not withstanding having survived and recovered from other past illnesses, he came home and back to London and, continued with his work, caring for others.

In 2014 Don Antonio Lotti's term as Provincial finished a new Provincial was elected and after 43 years of Devotion to his Parishoner's, his many friends, priests from his church and those from the local Deaneries and his support to those many unfortunates of this world, Padre Carmelo was recalled by the new Provincial and asked to leave the work he loved and cherished for the past 43 years. Much to the dismay of all; he was ordered back to Rome. Our little Rebel Priest didn't REBEL, he accepted with quiet dignity and OBEDIENCE, what was requested from him and with a HEAVY heart on the 20th of September 2014 he returned to Rome.

Padre Carmelo when you arrived it was difficult for us to accept your difference of opinion but, throughout the years you taught us to Love One Another, your departure has left us with a SAD VOID, but with so many wonderful memories that we will FOREVER TREASURE in our HEARTS.

(Many of the enclosed details have been taken from the book written by Chiara Genesis her story of Padre Carmelo di Giovanni "Rebel Priest")

By Angela Silva to a Beloved Padre Carmelo - We will never forget you, September 2014

