

ANTONIO ROTONDO AN ILLUSTRIOUS PRIEST OF FIUMEFREDDO BRUZIO

Antonio Rotondo was born in Fiumefreddo Bruzio, a small town in the province of Cosenza, on October the 3rd, 1883, and died, in the same town, on December the 24th, 1967.

As soon as he was ordained a priest, he devoted himself to doing the parish-priest in Fiumefreddo Bruzio for a few years, and then, the archpriest in the same town: a religious and spiritual mission which he always undertook with enthusiasm, uprightness, self-denial and paternal affection, specially on behalf of the poor and of those in need of help. During the last years of his priesthood, for disagreements arisen between him and the ecclesiastical authorities, Don Rotondo was forced to celebrate Mass behind closed doors, in the church called “La Madonnella” (see page 131). Some years later, the events and the facts proved him right and the hierarchy of the Church, in the meantime changed, did its utmost for an opportune reconciliation, but, by that time, Don Antonio was a sick man, confined to a wheelchair.

Fiumefreddo Bruzio, 1946. Don Antonio celebrates Mass in the Mother Church, assisted by Don Luigi Provenzano, St. Francis's parish Priest. (Photo by Vittorio Amendola).



The archpriest was a many-sided autodidact artist. He was a good painter, mainly of religious topics: a big painting portraying Saint Francis of Paola, kept with care until a few years ago, in the church dedicated to the Saint of Paola, isn't there anymore and nobody knows where it is. Don Antonio established in his town, a band of more than thirty musicians, and wrote several marches and various compositions (of which nothing has been found), he also set to music some Christmas carols which we find in his booklet “Il Natale”. He wrote “Memoria Storica”, an essay on Calabrian antinapoleonic revolution, based upon historical sources. Don Rotondo, at Christmas time, used to create presepi of great artistic value, using terracotta statuettes he himself moulded and refined; many of these statuettes are now in the “House of the culture” in Palmi, and some of them are considered true masterpieces. I would also like to mention the miracle plays, performed outdoors by young people of Fiumefreddo, written, produced and directed by Don Antonio. When these events occurred, local residents and people from neighbouring towns, crowded the streets and the squares of Fiumefreddo, to enjoy, to applaud and to praise the actors' performances. Of these mysteries written by the priest, unfortunately, nothing has been found among his papers. The memory of don Antonio's merits and generosity, still lives in the hearts and in the minds of elderly people of Fiumefreddo Bruzio.



A terracotta don Antonio moulded and finished for his presepi. (Private collection).

Antonio.

‘Il Natale’ a Christmas booklet by don

