



Priestly People

SERVANTS OF THE PARACLETE

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“The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, says the Lord of hosts. And in this place, I will give peace, declares the Lord of hosts.” Haggai 2:9

**Rebuild my Church!
Our Lady of the Olive
New Paraclete Foundation in Italy**



Beginnings

Our Lady of the Olive monastery, located in the Diocese of San Marino - in the province of Rimini - in Northeastern Italy, is the newest house of the Servants of the Paraclete – but also, in a way, the oldest.

It is so new that we have not moved in yet! It is so old that it needs a lot of work before we can go there, and we mean a lot of work!

The building dates to 1529 – so it is coming up on being 500 years old!

How we got to this point is a fascinating story full of wonderful signs of God’s Providence. The story begins with one of my Italian confreres - Fr. Raffaele. At the age of eighteen, Fr. Raffaele was a medical student in Ferrara and already discerning a vocation but experiencing obstacles. Feeling that the way to his vocation was blocked, he went

to London with a friend with the idea of forgetting about a possible vocation.

While in London he met a young Englishman, who at that time was a candidate for the Servants of the Paraclete Congregation. Father Raffaele became interested in the Congregation because of our charism and commitment to help priests. He came to Rome while I served as Novice Master. After that visit, I stayed in touch over the next few years and Fr. Raffaele came to visit us in England and Jemez Springs, New Mexico.

I went to his graduation from medical school in Ferrara. Soon after graduation he was drafted for national military service and stationed in Siena, working as a medical officer. He remained very interested in helping priests. As a soldier, the Archbishop of Siena and the military authorities gave him permission to live in the seminary.

Laying the Foundation

Upon leaving the military, the Archbishop of Siena sponsored him to study for the priesthood. The Archbishop let Fr. Raffaele, and another interested young man live in an unused rectory just a few miles southwest of Siena. Fr. Guido soon joined Fr. Raffaele. Eventually, both Frs. Guido and Raffaele were ordained to the priesthood.

Fr. Raffaele completed further studies to qualify in psychiatry. They began to live a life based on the Rule of St. Benedict. They were under the authority of the Archbishop, and the guidance of the Benedictine community of Valombrosa, not far from Siena. They became an Association of Lay Faithful called "The Valombrosan Benedictine Oblates," and had private vows.

Their way of life had a strong Benedictine imprint, having a full monastic choir and elements of silence and asceticism. They had the practice of daily Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. At the same time Fr. Raffaele continued to see patients.

They called the house "Eternal Life Hermitage," and from the very beginning opened the door of hospitality for priests. Fr. Raffaele and Fr. Guido were available for counseling, medical and psychiatric assistance, spiritual direction and other forms of help that they were qualified to give. Many priests came and were helped.

From quite early on, the community was open to help from those not called to the full life of prayer. Thus, there were – and still are external oblates and two valued "familiaris" who live with the community and voluntarily assist in the running of the house according to their capabilities and gifts.

The relationship of the community with the Servants of the Paraclete was never lost. When Fr. Liam sP was Servant General he came to Rome often, and when possible, added a visit to the hermitage.



Current Times

Vocations in recent years have not been plentiful in Western Europe, although Italy may be in a little better situation than some other countries. Nearly seven years ago, the Siena community had a few concerns:

- They were not growing
- There were only three members and two familiars.
- The house was too small to exercise the ministry of the servants of the Paraclete.
- For complex reasons it was not advisable to build on the property in Siena.

So the community began to expand their vision and look further afield for possible properties.

Becoming and Uniting

In 2012 Fr. Raffaele, who was “leader” or “prior” of the community, shared his queries regarding their Benedictine community and if it was being called to unite with the Servants of the Paraclete. The similarities in charism and mission were there and the sense of a real bond and common purpose between the two groups was a reality. At the same time, the Oblates felt that they wanted to preserve certain contemplative and monastic features of their way of life.

This union was presented to the Servant General, Fr. David Fitzgerald. Talks, discussions, meetings and visits followed and eventually the advice of the Holy See was sought. As Servants of the Paraclete, we consulted our own historical documents along with the memory of older members, and it was recalled that Fr. Gerald, our Founder, referred to our larger houses as monasteries, and in many ways had a strong monastic vision.

In addition, he stated that he would like our congregation to have one or more “Houses of Prayer,” which would have an even greater contemplative spirit and monastic life-style. At our General Chapter of Affairs in 2014, the Congregation voted to make this clearer in our Constitutions. Statutes for the House of Prayer, incorporating much of the Oblate Statutes, were drawn up. All this was submitted to The Congregation for Religious and approved.

Four servants of the Paraclete, Fr. Ray Gunzel, Fr. Peter Lechner, Fr. Liam Hoare and Fr. Benedict went to live at the Eremo for three months each between June 2014 and June 2015, to provide input and formation in Paraclete history and charism. In due time the three members were admitted to vows and are now fully and in every sense members of our Congregation.



Finally – House of Prayer at Maciano

In 2013, Fr. Raffaele was talking to his friend, Bishop Andrea Turrazzi. Bishop Andrea had been Spiritual Director of the seminary in Ferrara and was now Bishop of San Marino. The diocese owned a semi-ruined former Franciscan Friary called Madonna Del Olivo (Our Lady of the Olive) located in Maciano near Pennabilli in the province of Rimini.

He offered it to us with certain conditions. It is in a beautiful setting and has a wonderful view in the back of the monastery. After several visits, and much consultation, Fr. David Fitzgerald, Servant General, answered yes to the request of the community to accept the offer. The biggest concern was the ruined state of part of the building. The monastery had been vacant since 1955. Perhaps even greater than the vacancy of the building, was an incredibly heavy,

freak snow-storm – the heaviest in the recorded history of the area, and the ensuing damages. The storm brought down the roof and some of the walls of most of the monastery.

Fr. Raffaele brought to Maciano a small Albanian family business of skilled construction workers and they got to work. The community has known the head of the company, Elion, for many years. He and his coworkers are a very loyal, flexible and hard-working crew. They are not just construction workers, they are artists! The Albanian work crew has been working and living at the monastery since early 2016. They have been restoring the monastery, utilizing old materials and stones, installing new beams and tiles for the roofs. Truly heroic and faith filled work. It is a huge job, but they do their work with fervor and faith.



Building the Vision

The vision and mission for the house remains that of the Servants of the Paraclete. We want to intercede constantly for priests, especially those suffering or in difficulty, make reparation, pray for the Church, and welcome any priest who can benefit from the prayerful and contemplative atmosphere we hope to create and provide for them. The community will be able to offer psychiatric help, counseling, personalized programs and spiritual direction.

Supporting the Future

There is a strong culture in this community of supporting the house by work. Thus, Fr. Raffaele sees up to 18 patients a week, and works nightshifts 6 or 8 times a month as an on-call emergency doctor. Fr. Paolo constructs beautiful organs. Fr. Guido assists with some parish duties and receives a modest stipend. Giacinto, one of our familiars, works

outside as a nurse, and contributes much by looking after our little “cattery” of “Maine Coon” cats, which also provides some income. Salvatore is a welcome presence in our spiritual family and as an assistant in the kitchen. He is always willing to contribute to the spirit of the house by singing some of his favorite Italian and English songs as we wash and dry dishes together.

We sometimes receive support for the priests and brothers whom we welcome. While we are self-supporting for our daily life and operations, we cannot possibly finance this project in Maciano. We trust in the Providence of God which has certainly not been lacking – although at times we were scratching our heads and getting on our knees just a little more than we usually did.

We are hoping and praying that we will be able to continue this labor of love without interruption and provide a valuable and enriching service to priests and brothers.

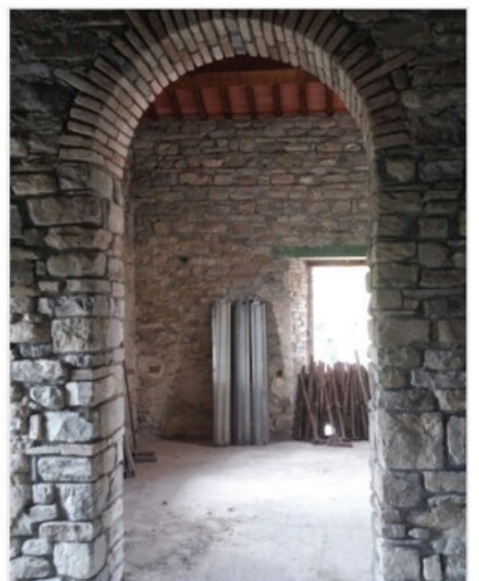
This article was written with assistance from:

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Check out the monastery on **YouTube:**
S. Maria dell' Olivo a Macinao





Celebration at the Monastery!

Father Paolo Cacciali sP made his final profession on June 28, 2019.

The first Servant of the Paraclete to celebrate at the newest Paraclete foundation – Maciano Italy.

Fr. Paolo is shown with his parents along with members of his community at final profession. Monsignor Carlo Mazza, Bishop Emeritus of the diocese of Fidenza Italy was present for the celebratory liturgy.





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