

Br. Antonino Pintabona

1947-2020



Brother Antonino Pintabona was born on 24 November 1947 in Randazzo (CT), to his parents Giuseppe and Maria Cariola, who had married at a very young age. He was baptised on 7 December 1947 and his confirmation took place on 14 August 1954 in his own parish. The town in which he was born, which had about 10,000 inhabitants, is located at the feet of Mount Etna, facing north, and formed a part of the diocese of Acireale, in which Ministers of the Sick were present and worked. The young Antonino went to school until secondary school and at a still young age was in contact with the sons of St. Camillus. He began his formation in the Order in the Province of Sicily and Naples. His school studies only enabled him to obtain the qualification of ‘general nurse’ but this was enough to allow him to provide the service that he felt was most suited to him – corporal care for the sick. After his novitiate, he was one of the first Camillians – led by Fr. Cisternino – to open the African mission of Benin, where he spent the period of his temporary profession of vows. These vows were renewed for a number of years. Evidently, those who provided him with formation must have perceived certain problematic aspects in his case if at a certain point they did not allow him to renew his vows. The intervention of a member of the General Consulta, who saw him at work while he was helping a sick confrere in Casoria and admired what he had done, meant that he was transferred to the Province of Lombardy and Veneto. However, he was obliged to do the whole of his pathway of formation all over again, something that he accepted with humility and commitment.

On 20 September 1981 he began as a postulant in the community of the St. Camillus nursing home of Cremona. On 3 September 1983 he began his novitiate at Capriate S. Gervasio (BG), under the guidance of the teacher of novices, Fr. Lucio Albertini. On 2 September 1984 he took his temporary vows of religious profession which were to be renewed year by year. He was placed in the community of Predappio (FO) which looked after people who had been discharged from psychiatric institutions. At the end of three years, because of personal scruples, he asked for a further year of temporary vows ‘in order to complete his decision’. At that time inside the Camillian Order a priority was to give to candidates who wanted to be brothers a good theological grounding. For this reason, Antonino was enrolled in the three-year diocesan course of theology as a listener. At last, on 18 December 1988, with his perpetual profession he finally entered the Order as a lay brother. On January 21st, 1996, he was transferred to the St. Camillus nursing home of Cremona, the first place where he had direct experience of providing care in North Italy.

At Cremona he was entrusted with the job which perhaps provided him with the greatest satisfaction: looking after the chapel of that nursing home and following its religious services. This was a place that had the mortal remains of the Blessed Enrico Rebuschini, a figure much loved by the citizens of that city. Because of his agreeable and spontaneous way of doing things, Br. Antonino (known more as Brother Antonio) made himself known and loved by many people.

The coronavirus pandemic spread first of all in the region of Cremona and the nursing home in which he worked was afflicted by this disease. Br. Antonino was not spared and at the beginning of March he was admitted to a ward for treatment. The unforeseen worsening of his condition led to his death in the morning of 7 April, cared for by his confreres.

A man who liked to joke, with a lively personality, the soul of convivial moments in his community, Br. Antonio did nothing to conceal his Sicilian origins, of which he was proud. This led because of his character to some comments and statements that had generated some fraternal observations during his period of formation, when, however, his generosity and practical sense in helping the sick or the elderly were always emphasised. With little formal schooling, his Achilles heel was the world of studies which made difficult: his exploration of theology (whereas in him there prevailed a devotional approach and a passion for religious little images!); personal prayer

(whereas he was loyal to communal prayer); and thought and quiet (whereas he favoured homespun and spontaneous, but pleasant, conversation). However, he was always resolute in his decisions.

Now he no longer needs to see the Saints and the Blesseds, including the Blessed Rebuschini, in his innumerable collections of little images.