

Reviews

Bergoglio, Giovanna. *L'opera assistenziale e sociale di San Giuseppe Benedetto Cottolengo* (Bra: Cassa di Risparmio di Bra, 1986), 166 pp.

Although not dealing specifically with confraternities, this volume may interest scholars working on the history of spirituality and charity in nineteenth-century Piedmont. It is a critical biography of St. Giuseppe Benedetto Cottolengo (1786-1842), a middle-class man born in Bra, who underwent a spiritual crisis in 1826-27 and emerged from it to enter the religious life and establish a "Piccola Casa della Divina Provvidenza" (1832), a hospice for ill or poor youths of both sexes, still extant.

The volume is divided into four chapters that provide a biography of the saint from 1786 to 1831 (pp. 29-58), discuss the founding of the Piccola Casa and its early history from 1832 to 1834 (pp. 59-92), its growth in 1834-1837 (pp. 93-128), and its development during Cottolengo's final years, 1837-1842 (pp. 129-162). Some final observations (pp. 163-166) bring the volume to a close.

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Musardo Talò, Vincenza. *Il monastero di S. Chiara a Grottaglie* (Lecce: Edizioni del Grifo, 1992), xxii, 249 pp. + ill.

This study commemorates the 400th anniversary of the founding of the Monastery of Santa Chiara at Grottaglie (1591), and

coincides with the 800th anniversary of the birth of St Claire of Assisi (1193). It is intended as an homage to an institution that has exercised considerable spiritual and cultural influence not only on the city of Grottaglie, but also on the archdiocese of Taranto.

Through an analysis of the roles and responsibilities assumed by the nuns, particularly in relation to the education of young girls and women, both secular as well as spiritual (reading, writing, mathematics, household management, etc., as well as Christian devotion and education), the author has provided an historical cross-section of the monastery that illustrates its long-term importance of its nuns and students. A broader socio-political view is drawn from archival research and the examination of unpublished documents from a variety of sources. These in turn shed light on the daily life and management of the monastery, as well as its involvement and response to changes in the Church and the secular world. To complement this analysis, the actual physical structure of the building is also examined.

After a letter to the reader from the Archbishop of Taranto (p. vii), the Presentation (xii-xiv), the Introduction (xv-xix), and the Premise (xxi-xxii), the book is divided into eight chapters spanning the monastery's four centuries of existence and activity. Chapter I (3-16) contextualizes the Franciscan order in the Puglia region. Chapter II (17-28) examines the Order of Santa Chiara at Grottaglie under two subheadings: the origins of the monastery (17-22) and life within its walls during the first ten years (22-28). Chapter III (29-45) presents the history of the monastery in the 17th century, with reference to its internal events (31-40) and its statement of assets and liabilities (41-45). Chapter IV (61-94) and Chapter V (95-132) look at the monastery in the 18th and 19th centuries respectively from the same two points of reference as the previous chapter. Chapter VI (133-146) explores its life in the early years of the 20th century, focusing on its rebirth (133-138) and the abbess who ran it (139-146). Chapter VII (147-154) examines the monastery's boarding school for girls. Chapter VIII (155-166) is dedicated to an analysis of the art and architecture of the monastery's church (with

photographs). There follows a very well-documented and helpful section devoted to the sources used (167-196), an appendix including various documents from the monastery (197-238), a bibliography (239-241), an index of names (243-248), and a separate booklet of illustrations of the monastery.

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Olivieri Baldissarri, Marina. *I "Poveri prigionieri". La confraternita della Santa Croce e della Pietà dei carcerati a Milano nei secoli XVI-XVIII* (Milano: NED, 1985), 330 pp.

Baldissarri's volume examines the establishment of the confraternity of Santa Croce in Milan, focusing on the company which was created by Archbishop Carlo Borromeo in the parish of Saint Babila. Several years after its creation the members of the Saint Babila confraternity allied themselves with the Roman Archconfraternity of La Pietà for the purpose of offering assistance to prisoners in the city's jails. In order to provide a clear context for the confraternity's activities, Baldissarri's study includes an examination of prison conditions in Milan, as well as an analysis of the activities of the members of the Milanese confraternity as they were described in the statutes of the association. Baldissarri claims that the spiritual purpose of the confraternity was not the only reason why many members joined; most members were as interested in the spiritual and material benefits that they could earn for themselves by belonging to the company as they were in providing help for prisoners. She notes that "any members of the company who gave assistance to prisoners did not look only to the spiritual benefits linked to their charitable work, but also to the advantages which could be derived from membership in the confraternity" (p. 132; my translation).

The chapters of the volume address the founding of the confraternity of Santa Croce during the plague of 1576/77, the