

Saint Amico

in

San Pietro Avellana

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**LIFE**

OF

**SAINT AMICO**

HERMIT AND CASSINESE MONK

WRITTEN BY

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Monte Cassino, June 3, 1961

IMPRIMATUR

Bishop Idelfonso Rea

Abbot and Bishop of Monte Cassino

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## To the Reader [Page 5]

Without literary pretensions, and excluding any other secondary end, the only aim which has driven me to write in a simple way these few pages is that of making Saint Amico known to the many who do not know him.

Often, even pilgrims who have come from far away have asked me for information and for the Life of Saint Amico. I, with regret, had to respond that such a Life did not exist in the parish!

The pages are few and the information little, but this Life will suffice to satisfy at least in part the devout who are not too demanding.

I owe thanks to the monks of Monte Cassino for the courteous aid given to me in the updating and clarification of the information concerning Saint Amico on the basis of the most recent studies and research. This is especially as far as it concerns the honor of our saint in Pollenza nelle Marche by his namesake, Rambona, whose relics were discovered in 1924 and exposed for devotion in 1944.

The secondary aim of the present publication is that of pointing out this little angel of the Alto Molise. This is not only to the authorities because we want to enhance its value, but also to the many tourists who are not very wealthy but who are looking for salvation in honest relaxation and not for licentiousness.

The Author

Father Michele Messori

## Prelude to the Life of Saint Amico [Page 7]

Before starting the narration of the life of Saint Amico, I want to start by giving some information regarding the origin of the monastery and the land of San Pietro Avellana.

The San Pietro Avellana Monastery, which Saint Amico illustrated with splendid examples of Christian virtue while still living and left heir and jealous custodian of his precious remains after his death, was constructed in the tenth century by Saint Dominic of Sora, invited by Oderisio Count Borrello, called the Great, already lord of that land. "*Abbatia sive Monasterium tit. S. Petri de Avellana, sive Monasterium de Sangro, quod precibu Comitum Burrelli Maioris anno 995 construxit S. Dominicus Loricatus* (The Abbey, or the San Pietro Avellana Monastery, or the Monastery of Sangro, which at the request of Count Borrello the Great was constructed in the year 995 by Saint Dominic of Sora)".

A certain monk Pietro, certainly a man of great sanctity, was its first abbot, and from him the monastery took its name, as did the land which soon grew to its side.

The same Saint Dominic was then called by some gentlemen from the Abruzzi and the Campania to found a new monastery in their lands, and the Saint rushed there with readiness and joy directed from the ardent desire to promote the glory of God and to obtain good for one's neighbor.

When Saint Dominic abandoned San Pietro Avellana, he left it so many sweet memories of his sanctity that, after so many centuries, the inhabitants of this land still today go in rather large numbers to Cucullo to venerate his relics.

Already from these first heavenly splendors, the Lord gave signs of partiality for this land. In fact, no sooner had Saint Dominic left than Divine Providence was pleased to send to San Pietro Avellana another flower of solitude, Saint Amico!

This area, which had just tasted the fragrance of the first flower soon called elsewhere, could now breathe in deeply the fragrance of a fresher, more beautiful, and sweeter-smelling flower.

According to some, the territory was named Dell' Avellana from the many plants which grew and which still grow there, beautiful and luxuriant, numerous also in the occupied nearby Great Fountain. According to others, I know not if with better reason, such a name derives from *avellum* for the many old rediscovered sepulchral tombstones, known by archaeologist to belong to the imperial time and even earlier ages.

In fact, there were some Roman gentlemen who went to San Pietro Avellana and surrounding cities in the summer months to enjoy the peace of the woods, and to breathe the fresh and sweet-smelling air, so different from the spoiled air of Rome.

Many of those men wanted that their bones repose in this area which was better kept and preserved from the fortunes of destructive time.

The village pours a good part of its limpid waters into the Adriatic Sea by means of the Sangro River, which winds to the north. The rest of the water, in small quantities, enriches the Volturno by means of the Vandra, which empties into the Tyrrhenian Sea.

The Vandra rises from the foot of the Montemiglio, flows slowly between Mounts Di Mezzo and Feudozzo, hastily laps the territory of Forli del Sannio, again flows at a slow pace, then goes to reunite with the Volturno.

Even after so many years, the ruins of the villages of Chiaia, San Nicola, San Marino and Cantalupo, Santo Stefano Roviglione, and others are seen today in the rather vast territory of Avellana. It is clear from the Cassinese archives that these villages were inhabited until 1300. After then there is no more memory of them, which makes one think that from that time they were abandoned. Their inhabitants came to settle near the tomb of Saint Amico where, apart from spiritual advantages, they found protection and material well-being.

The Abbots Erasmo Gattola and Ottavio Fraia Frangipane, famous Cassinese archivists, affirm that much old and precious information about San Pietro Avellana perished in a fire that ill-fatedly struck their archives; other information was scattered afterwards in the terrible 1456 earthquake.

Nevertheless, in the Cassinese archives are kept the offer and transfer which Oderisio

Count Borrello the Great made on September 15, 1026 of the territory and monastery of San Pietro Avellana to the venerable monk and priest Pietro because, with the other servants of God, he governed it according to the Rule of Saint Benedict.

This was a fortunate occurrence for the citizens of San Pietro Avellana, who liberated themselves very soon from the hard and inhuman slavery of the barons and gentlemen of smaller dominion of the time to enjoy the sweet government of the sons of Saint Benedict, already too noted for their doctrine and sanctity of customs.

These men in fact supported San Pietro Avellana more as fathers than as gentlemen, guided by the charity of Christ well rooted in their hearts as apostles of the Gospel.

On the other hand, they did not even need to oppress and exploit these poor people because they had other enormous revenue and founts of wealth.

In those times, the San Pietro Avellana Monastery had large funds in Rocca Pizzi, Rivo Petri, San Cristofaro and in the fortunes of the field.

The monastery possessed the San Comizio Castle, 3500 acres of terrain, and half of a mill, given as donations by Count Ottone in 1053. Also, by the husband and wife Baron Nebulone and Mobilia, in 1145 it possessed the pastures of Matese. From Gualtieri, son of Count Borrello, it definitively had the monastery, all the territory of San Nicola, Vallesorda with its church, a hermitage dedicated to Saint John the Baptist, and San Biaggio Church in Agnone. By means of other donations, it had the San Manno Church and a farm of 350 acres in the Marsi, like the San Benedetto Church with a little monastery and ninety acres of land in the outskirts of Roccasicura. By a retribution made by Gentile Gradinato in 1382, it also possessed the San Luca Church, the Morro Castle, and the Sant'Angelo Church in Francolisi.

Very soon the San Pietro Avellana Monastery became famous, and became populated with monks who were holy and scrupulous in the observance of the Rule of Saint Benedict. It was transformed into an oasis of peace, prayer, and work.

Behold what I find written in the lives of the saints of the Order of Saint Benedict:  
"...totally pledged to the priesthood, (Saint Amico) withdrew to Monte Cassino, where he received



with the habit of Saint Benedict the spirit of silence, meditation, prayer, and disparagement of oneself. Who would have believed that Saint Amico was not happy with this way of life? Knowing that the Fontavellana Monastery had added some more religious constitutions to the common customs, he asked the abbot permission to withdraw to it. Therein, our anchorite led a life so pure, so removed from the senses that it appeared that his body had remained outside the monastery, and that he had led only his spirit into the cloister. The vigils he kept were continuous, his prayers assiduous. He afflicted his flesh with fasts which were superior to the ordinary forces of nature and it was easy to conceive that grace would have miraculously sustained him. In fact, these extreme rigors notwithstanding, he reached a ripe old age, and was in a decrepit state when he passed on to the rest of the saints."

The life of the monks in San Pietro Avellana in that time must have been truly holy! Those monks united the humble work of the fields to penitence, ascetic contemplation, and fervent and assiduous prayer. This proved a most effective school for the farmers.

Fighting in a thousand ways, after the example of the Divine Master, against the flattery of the senses and against the vanity and selfishness of the century, they were reputed happy to serve others in spiritual and temporal needs. Confronted with so much charity and with the altruistic spirit of the monks, many farmers rushed in safety to the Priory to escape the wickedness of the barons and gentlemen of smaller dominion. They abandoned even the most delightful areas to find its protection, well-being, and peace.

In March of 1069, our monastery was given to Monte Cassino *cum ecclesiis et colonis et cum omnibus omnino pertinentiis ac possessionibus suis* (with the churches and farms and with all its appurtenances and possessions in their entirety), on behalf of Count Borrello's first-born son, the benefactor already mentioned above, on the occasion of the founding of the same monastery. From that time, except for brief digressions, San Pietro Avellana has always gravitated spiritually around Monte Cassino.

At this point, I want to cite some acts of munificence and of partiality on behalf of the sons of Saint Benedict toward the citizens of San Pietro Avellana.

Giovanni D'Aragona, already a Cassinese abbot and just honored with the holy purple, conceded to the people of San Pietro Avellana in perpetuity all the pasture of the mountain of Monte Capraro as a compensation for the services given by them to the monastery, but the real honor finds itself in the generosity of the giver. With such a gesture, he wanted to raise the inhabitants from the state of farmers to that of landowners.

The same benefactors were then pushed by greed to possess more and more, and to have absolute independence. It was apt that, believing the times ripe and favorable, they united themselves for a rash conquest and rose in a riot (1615).

The rebels then opened their eyes and, recognizing their mistake, promised to live in calm under the protection of Saint Benedict, not so much for the newly obtained concessions as not to lose the powerful protection of the monks.

In those rather sad times of vassalage and oppression, there was no other way, which was safer for those who were subject to the Benedictines. These monks, raised in the school of Jesus, assisted humanity in all needs and in all sufferings, contrary to what the barons of the time did. The barons oppressed the dependents and were led only by caprice, gluttonous avarice, and unfettered lust.

Some of the barons, tormented by remorse of conscience for the many abuses and injustices, looked to make at least partial reparation, giving fiefs and castles to the monastery.

If on one hand such a gesture sounded like restitution, on the other it attested confidence and respect toward the sons of Saint Benedict.

In the shadow of the monastery, the fortunate people of San Pietro Avellana, unlike so many others, lived in love and concord, respected and served by their same rulers, defended and protected from any internal or external abuse.

At a not very great distance from San Pietro Avellana Monte Emilio, more commonly known under the name of Montemiglio, rises very majestic, from its appearance of an immense and fearsome crouching lion.

Rich to its peak with wonderful vegetation, for centuries it resists the axe of the robust

mountaineers who, acting without fear, clamber up its almost inaccessible sides. They continually go there to chop down the beech trees, either to temper the rigors of the long winter or to brighten the modest houses with flame and to prepare something for the poor and spare table.

The mountain does not have any path, excepting a narrow and tortuous one on the west side. The path leads to the ruins of an old castle, which once towered on its summit at 4,445 feet above sea level.

Descending from Vastogirardi, the mountain mentioned appears isolated: the peak has a base which is almost semicircular and of spherical form: you would believe it the cupola of a most majestic temple. But, when you look at it from other points, the soul grieves you more than delighting you and inviting you to prayer and meditation. Not even knowing the history, you suddenly imagine that in earlier times it would have been a comfortable asylum from the oppressive and from brigands.

In the Middle Ages, a baron was nestled with a gang of cut-throats on the peak of this mountain, truly like a sure and impregnable citadel. Jealous of the presence of anybody, he did not admit control to his licentiousness. First with threats and captures of animals, then with force and terror, he had taken peace away from the defenseless, peaceful inhabitants of San Pietro Avellana.

The people of San Pietro Avellana, faced with the oppression of the baron, knew nothing better to do than to have recourse to the Abbot of Monte Cassino. He was all heart, as if he had been expecting them.

Having called the Baron of Montemiglio into his presence, he persuaded him with spiritual and temporal arguments. As is proved from a public instrument, which is preserved in the Cassinese archive, he forced the baron not to disturb the animals or the citizens of San Pietro Avellana at Montemiglio any more. In reward to the baron, the people of San Pietro Avellana probably reciprocated with an annual pork loin for the family.

The protection of the Benedictines towards the inhabitants of San Pietro Avellana was

not only exhausted in holding back the baronial abuses, but even faced a usurping army. In fact, in 1528, when Berlingario Caldora came to invade and occupy this territory, the sons of Saint Benedict were prompt to have recourse to the then reigning Pontiff Clement VII, because with his authority he prevented such an unjust occupation. The Pontiff so benevolently welcomed their wishes and prayers that he sent to Lautrec the general in charge of the French army, which was occupying the Kingdom of Naples. The General was not ashamed to support them with his influence.

The outcome fully answered the common expectation, because the general died and the defeated army had to withdraw. From as much as has been said, everyone can get an idea of how the Benedictines ruled the land of San Pietro Avellana in the early times. San Pietro Avellana was like Nullius Priory, depending directly on the Holy See, with full rights and powers to elect the abbot from among the monks of the same monastery without interference from the other monasteries. Then, it was like Prepositura and Decania.

The old monastery having been destroyed in the earthquake of 1456, a palace with towers rose on the ruins of the old priory. It was therefore like Rettoria, depending on Monte Cassino, which was sending a dean to rule the community formed from a rather limited number of priests of tested prudence and holy habits.

Until this moment, we do not find any sign of secular clergy, but in the time of the Rettoria the monks remained few in number. They began to excuse themselves from the immediate care of souls, trusting this to the secular clergy who at that time began to fill the choir stalls once reserved to the monks. They worked in full harmony for the health of souls, up until the abolition of feudalism.

Only then, did the Cassinese forever give up the temporal government of San Pietro Avellana. They partly kept the spiritual government until the first years of the next century, in which this land sadly saw itself included now with one neighboring diocese, now with the other.

But, San Pietro Avellana could not forget Monte Cassino, nor could Monte Cassino erase from its heart so many centuries of history and old memories. Therefore, after various events,

San Pietro Avellana returned with unspeakable joy to its pastoral cares, preserving still today for the Abbot of Monte Cassino the title also of Abbot of San Pietro Avellana.

I will now take a step back to say something of the Matrix Church.

I am convinced that this proceeded, and who knows by how much, the monastery constructed in the tenth century by Saint Dominic of Sora.

This will not seem strange either if one thinks that Saint Dominic was always in the habit of constructing new monasteries near the walls of some already existing church.

Moreover, since the zone of Avellana was scattered from the castles and hamlet, it cannot be admitted on thinking about it that San Pietro Avellana did not at least have one church. It must also be admitted that, although vices abounded in those times, there were also times of great faith and singular zeal for the Christian religion.

What removes any doubt from my argument is the authoritative letter of Count Borrello offering and transferring this territory in the year 1026 to the venerable Pietro, monk and priest.

In a barbarous and broken Latin, as was the Latin in those times, but rather clear, he affirms that through his powers he could not find another place suitable for a monastery, except that in which was located the church of Saint Peter the Apostle, near the Obellana Fountain.

*"...et coepit querere intra memetipsum ubi aptum locum imbenire potuisset, et subito, Deo concedentem, imbenimus locum in Sangrum bocabulo ad ipsa fonte de Abellana inbenimus ibidem in manum Petri, venerabilis sac. et mon. et inde eum Abbas constituimus, ut ibidem Monasterium construxisset, et... (...and it began to search within me where a suitable place to locate might be, and suddenly, conceding to God, by the holy name we came upon, in addition to this Avellana Fountain, we came upon in the same place the Church of Saint Peter the Apostle, and we handed it over to Pietro, venerable priest and monk, and we constructed the abbey, that from then the monastery might be constructed, and...)"*

Since neither therein nor elsewhere does one speak of the founding of the mentioned preexisting church, one must conclude and admit that its origin dates back to a time much previous to the monastery.

Today, the above-mentioned church is no longer what it once was, neither materially nor morally. Fallen in the earthquake of 1456 and rebuilt on the ruins, all that is preserved of the old is a northern wall.

The church had much private income, and many religious ornaments rich in material and in history, but all is confused with the goods of the monastery to which it remained associated for many centuries. An inventory of the church, compiled in 1699 by the notary Giuseppe Riccardo from San Germano, is preserved. The inventory was ordered by D. Erasmo Gattola, archivist and Cassinese vicar general.

Comparing such an inventory with the present state of the church, especially after the last distribution, one almost starts crying in deploring how many things time and carelessness have allowed to perish and, how many others (and this is still sadder!) were destroyed and allowed to be taken away for shows and expositions, without much care that such precious objects be returned to their point of origin!

One would then have counted seven altars, apart from that of Saint Amico. Of the six, the oldest were those placed against the northern wall, so old as to make unknown the time and circumstance of their construction.

The six altars with time went down to four until, at the beginning of our century, Archpriest D. Liborio Di Cosmo, perhaps to gain space in the church, removed them completely, leaving only the present main altar and that of Saint Amico.

In the inventory are enumerated many pictures painted on canvas which now no longer exist: the paintings of the Most Holy Trinity, of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, of the Holy Souls in Purgatory, of Saint Maurus who saves Saint Placid from the water, of the Blessed Virgin of the Rosary, of Saint Dominic and Saint Catherine, of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, and of the Immaculate Conception.

Still missing are the frescoes of the Blessed Virgin of Grace, of Saint Amico, and of Saint Anthony Abbot.

Various churches are enumerated: the mother church, San Sebastiano, Santissima

Trinità, Santa Liberata: of those, the mother church, Sant'Amico, and Spirito Santo survive today. The others were destroyed by the last wars, which linked the destruction of the churches to the complete destruction of the village.

More regrettable than the material decline of this matrix church is the lamentable moral decline!

Nullius found itself reduced; it is not known either how or when, from a basilica to a simple and common parish church.

That this church was adorned with such dignity is attested by diverse old manuscripts, and also the text of the life of Saint Amico, in which one reads that this blessed servant of God, questioned by Raterio where he wanted to be buried: "*...in fovea, inquit, extra Basilicam, sicut dignum est* (in a grave, he responded, outside the Basilica, as is worthy)".

Nevertheless, almost as a memory to them of their old grandeur, there still remains the privilege of a plenary indulgence on the solemnities of Saints Peter and Paul (June 29th) and of Saint Amico (November 3rd) for anyone who visits the mentioned churches, having repented of his sins, confessed, and received Communion.

Finally, another sad fact. In times not very far from ours the Abbot of Monte Cassino wanted to grant the archpriest of San Pietro Avellana the dignity and office of pro-vicar general of the diocese. The archpriest of the time, perhaps not understanding the superior's high importance, and also perhaps because a stranger in this land, declined the honor, believing it granted to him due to his personal merits.

Outside the basilica, precisely on the side which faces to the north, the body of Saint Amico was given a rather modest burial: this was his wish expressed to his confrères before dying.

But the miracles which often occurred on his tomb began to multiply in such a way that God made clearly known how He had glorified his soul in heaven, and so wanted that the sepulchre be glorious on earth.

Just a few years after his death, an altar was raised on his tomb. Then, the love and faith

of his confrères and of the devout dedicated a church to him because the memory of the humble saint remained constant: friend of God, friend of his neighbor.

From that day, his residence was lonely no more. From everywhere they hurry to him to obtain courage and resignation, love and forgiveness from those venerated remains.

The church of Saint Amico can be considered a nave of the mother church; in fact it rests itself against this church. It connects with the mother church by means of a large door. The church of Saint Amico is neither very large nor very rich, but secluded and simple, capable of inspiring devotion and faith to anyone who enters it.

The Saint Amico church was originally fortified from time to time. But then it was demolished from the apse down, because the shocks from the earthquake opened it up in more places.

At the same time a board ceiling was substituted, and a cornice on which it would rain. The church walls were adorned with miracles and various episodes from the saint's life. On the ceiling, there was a large fresco depicting Saint Amico in the glory of the blessed.

A balustrade of white stone closes the apse, and almost at the top of the apse is raised a cupola decorated with stucco intaglio. The cupola is supported with four pillars, the rear ones attached to the wall and the front ones completely freestanding. Above the marble altar, in the wall between the two rear pillars thereto attached, opens a niche wherein towers the wooden statue of Saint Amico.

A void of oval form, which opens under the altar table, does not escape the eye of the devout who on entering this church looks through the bars of the artistic iron gate. Around this oval, one reads with joy: "*Corpus S. Amici Confessoris et Monachi Cassinensis* (The Body of Saint Amico, Confessor and Cassinese Monk)".

In the oval, between the cracks of the brass mesh which encloses it, is seen a part of the saint's tomb, all in bright stone.

On the right side of the altar there is this inscription:

*R. P. D. Bernardinus de Saavedra*



*Abbas Cassin.*

*Altare hoc lapide variato ante*

*Arcam lapideam in Qua*

*Corpus S. Amici Asservatur*

*faciendum Curavit*

*Ann. DNI. MDCXXIII. DIE XXII. SEPT.*

(R. P. D. Bernard de Saavedra

Cassinese Abbot

This altar of varied stone is before

the stone stronghold in which

the body of Saint Amico is observed

to be made to rest

September 22, in the year of Our Lord 1623)

This then is the tomb of Saint Amico!

It is a beautiful, edifying, and moving thing to witness the arrival of the pilgrims who, after having covered miles and miles of mule-track street on foot, come to prostrate themselves before the saint, forgetting any kind of sacrifice they encountered. Reverently dragging their knees on the ground, they go near the altar to impress a warm kiss on that fortunate marble which encloses the holy remains; they remain prostrated for a long time, the deep silence interrupted by a cry or a sob.

Because they have left their own houses early in the morning, set to their journey forgetting their families, their household tasks, and their business? An arcane and powerful voice moves them and pushes them: the sweet voice of the saint!

Satisfied, they open their hearts to the true and charitable friend, revealing to him all their needs and, trusting, with groans and tears they implore his powerful intercession or thank him for favors already received.

On Sundays, on workdays, in all months of the year, the devout pilgrims arrive, but the

climax is the third of November, the day of the saint's death.

On this day, it does not matter if there is snow, rain, or a blowing wind. From villages near and far gradually comes a large group of men and women, of young and old, of the fervent, of the indifferent and the curious. They come to San Pietro Avellana to pray to and to revere Saint Amico.

They arrive fresh, without signs of tiredness. The girls, often dressed in white, holding bouquets of country flowers tight in their pure hands, stay for a long time on their knees, speaking with the saint. Then, they insistently ask for a priest to hear their confessions. They want to return home transformed and happy!

Oh, how many graces, how many dried eyes, how many sorrows relieved, how many natures transformed by this saint in so many centuries! Now having to speak of Saint Amico, I want to try to determine the time in which the saint lived in this land and the year of his glorious death. Although in San Pietro Avellana we are in possession of his venerated remains, this is not where he was born.

There are many biographies of Saint Amico, but unfortunately all omit the day of his birth. They are, however, in agreement on the day and the month of his passage to eternal rest, and of the years of his long pilgrimage on earth.

The precise year in which the saint came to San Pietro Avellana is also not known, although it is certain that he dwelled there at the time of the venerable Abbot Pietro in the first half of the eleventh century and, therefore, in the very first years of the founding of the monastery.

Mabillon confirms this, maintaining that after other events, Saint Amico secluded himself in the San Pietro Avellana Monastery under the Abbot Pietro and there, by divine revelation, knew about the death of Ugone, Abbot of Farfa. "*Demum as Monasterium S. Petri de Avellana sub Petro Abbate se recepit, ubi Ugonenis Farfensis Abbatis obitum divinitus rescivit* (At last he was received under the Abbot Pietro into the San Pietro Avellana Monastery where he divinely ascertained the death of Abbot Ugone of Farfa)". Mabillon gets the above-mentioned information about the brief life of Saint Amico from a work attributed to the Cassinese monk Bernard. This

work speaks of the supernatural revelation, moreover adding that the saint quickly ran to his confrères to report the recent death of Abbot Ugone in order that prayers and Holy Masses might be sent as intercession for his soul.

The same monk Bernard, speaking of miracles and of extraordinary facts of the time, makes one believe that Saint Amico dwelt in the San Pietro Avellana Monastery, under the sage rule of Abbot Pietro.

What is more, he also speaks of a lime kiln which the Abbot Pietro had constructed for the use of the monastery and affirms that, through the prayers and the presence of Saint Amico, the workers escaped certain death from a boulder which was falling toward them.

So if Saint Amico was actually living at midnight of Holy Christmas in 1039, the year when Ugone of Farfa died, we might think that not long after that our saint flew from there to heaven to receive the reward for his strong virtue.

The third of November was always for the people of San Pietro Avellana the day dedicated to their protector. Also, the Cassinese celebrated the feast of Saint Amico on the same day as a feast of the first class with an octave, as is revealed by their old breviaries.

The constant movement of the pilgrims from the nearby villages confirms such truth. Always on the third of November, they came and they still come in large numbers to fulfill their vows on the tomb of the miraculous saint.

We also faithfully unite there in the centuries-old tradition! It is not for us, born today, to erase or even to put into doubt the profound faith, the pious and well-rooted belief of so many who have gone there before!

## **Introduction to the Life of Saint Amico [Page 29]**

The life of the saint is found in the Cassinese Codex xxxiv (pp. 156-192), transcribed around the year 1370 but owing to an author from the second half of the eleventh century. This author lived in San Pietro Avellana, and was able to approach people who had directly known Saint Amico.

His narration, therefore, even according to the Bollandists, is of great authority.

This life was published in the *Bibliotheca Casinensis* (I, Monte Cassino, 1873, pp. 244-254 of the Florilegium) and in the *Acta Sanctorum* (Nov. 2, p. I., Brussels, 1894, pp. 92-99).

Another life of our saint, a shorter one written in the seventeenth century, deals with an old lectionary of the Cathedral of Spoleto and, at least in the first part, derived from the preceding, was published in the *Acta Sanctorum* as well (op. cit, pp. 100-102) and, earlier, by Mabillon in the *Acta Sanctorum Ordinis S. Benedicti* (17<sup>th</sup> century, Volume VIII, Venice, s.a., pp. 652-656).

From the author of either life comes the name of the Cassinese monk Bernard (11<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> century), based on the testimony of his near contemporary Deacon Pietro, who in his *Viris Illustribus Cassinensis Coenobii* (P. T., G. L. XXIII, c. XXXVII, col. 1043) remembers and praises Bernardo, recently departed, as the author of a script on the miracles of Saint Amico.

Nevertheless, given their adaptation to the choral reading in the office in honor of the saint, both of the lives of Saint Amico omit indication of the name of the author.

More frequently, the brief life is attributed to Bernardo.

## Life of Saint Amico [Page 31]

It is neither an easy nor a simple thing to describe the life of a saint.

While sanctity forms a part, great they it may be, of the attributes of God and of a creature, it is found confronted with a field so vast and demanding that one does not know where to begin.

The one aim I set for myself is that of making Saint Amico known, his virtues and his miracles, pointing him out as an example of sanctity and encouraging all to have recourse to his powerful patronage.

Towards the middle of the tenth century, a young man of honest and noble birth lived in Marte, in the Camerino County Castle. Almost predicting the future, his parents named him Amico ('friend') at his baptism.

His family having many worldly goods, as was typical of the noblemen of the time; the young man was entrusted to teachers or excellent doctrine and signal virtue. The boy was thirsty

for truth, and made great progress in his studies and in piety. They could even apply to him the words of the Gospel: he grew in age, in wisdom, and in grace.

He wanted in a very particular way to go more deeply into the study of the Holy Scriptures. He never forgot the words of the Psalm: "Then shall I not be confounded, when I shall look into all Thy commandments, and I shall always have Thee before my eyes" (Psalms 118:6).

With his unusual doctrine, the material goods of which the family abounded, rather than pushing him to vainglory and pride, spurred him to purer and holier aims, as could be verified by the other monks.

The marvelous beauties of the created being, the stars, the flowers, the mountains covered with green, the snows: all spoke to him about God.

His love toward God was so great as to transform him into an angel descended from heaven. Like the circle's rays converging at the center, so his every heartbeat tended to God.

But if the meekness of his heart, the sweetness of his character, the complete dominion over his passions, the majesty of his behavior, and the keenness of his intellect made of him an extraordinary man, it was the grace of God which embellished these natural merits with more lively colors and brought them to perfection.

His meekness bound him tenaciously to the many instructions, which were bestowed upon him in good time. The sweetness of his character gave him so much the appearance of an angel of paradise that it attracted and captured to itself even the hardest and most indisposed hearts. The pleasure of true good was so natural to him as to remove all suspicion that any fault had ever stained this flower, which grew and bathed by the divine grace.

The greatness of his soul, then, was such that as a boy he had the steadfastness of an adult, and the experience of the old. Modesty was so rooted in him as not to permit any stain of sensuality to nestle in the sanctuary of his heart. Nature and grace competed to enrich Amico in his gifts.

Nevertheless, the virtuous youth never believed himself sufficiently secure from the

hidden dangers of the deceptive and traitorous world. Very soon, the intention of withdrawing to the solitude of the woods and the hermitages began to mature. There, with greater liberty and fewer dangers, he could use fasting and more assiduous prayer to combat and tame rebellious nature.

But, before carrying out his holy intention, what an internal and external struggle he had to sustain, so many conflicts to win!

He loved God above all things, but he strongly regretted abandoning the poor and the infirm he loved so much and for whom he did so much good. The two commandments of charity were deeply rooted in his heart: one cannot love God if one does not also love one's neighbor.

There was another obstacle to overcome: his parents! How could they accept the departure of Amico? On him they had placed the most flattering hopes, and had focused the sweetest affections.

Until this moment, they had never criticized his actions, not even when he gave excessively abundant alms to the needy. All that Amico had done, he had done well.

For some time they had noted something unusual in their son. They had understood and they were convinced that Amico wanted to leave them, and they sought by all means to make him change his intention. "And yet," they said to him, "you attend to your prayers, you mortify your flesh as well, you love your God as best you can, but there is an error in your house! You do not see how your brothers love you. They cannot do anything without you. And then, have pity on us. We are old, and it is only a matter of time before we shall have to appear in the presence of God. Who better than you can help us in our last moment? Do not abandon us; we need your presence, your example..."

With these and other words, his parents believed they had suffocated this first fervor of piety. They thought that Amico might reprise his activities, giving in to their affection and that of his brothers, but they were mistaken! Amico's will made him more and more determined to want to serve God more closely. In fact, he asked the family if he could enter into the ministry of the church.

His parents did not object, because shortly before they had assured him that if he were to remain at home they would not obstruct him in anything that had to do with the service of God and one's neighbor.

On the other hand, they feared that some day he would abandon them to withdraw into some remote solitude in search of greater mediation for his soul, which was thirsty for God.

The years passed: how did he get himself ready for his first Mass? Everyone can imagine how: in the deepest meditation, in assiduous and devout prayer, in the mortification of his flesh with hair shirts and fasts. The much-awaited day came and Amico was ordained a priest.

His parents, his brothers, and all his relatives are happy like he is, formulating the most beautiful and flattering hopes.

It is true, all of them said, that in helping so many little poor people, Amico spends a lot of money, and sooner or later the family estate will not bear it. However, they said, it is also true that the respect and love he draws from so many of the assisted will return to the glory and advantage of the entire family. All would speak of us, of our goodness and munificence.

The priest Amico thought very differently of it all. His intentions clashed completely with those of his relations.

His heart burned with love for his God and, if something benefited the little poor people, he would act only because the neighbor in need is the living image of God. So it was not ambition or the glory of the world, which pushed him to act with such zeal, but only Christian charity and the hope of an eternal reward. The words of Christ: "... Go, therefore, and teach all nations..." he hears overwhelmingly resound in his mind and in his sensitive heart. He, the new Paul, evangelizes the people, pouring into their hearts all the ardor and zeal of an apostle. He preaches in the churches and in the squares, in public and in private. His speaking has such force and sweetness, and is so moving that no one can resist it.

His mere presence put to flight intentions of vengeance. The injured knew to pardon, and the suffering bore their misery with joy and holy resignation.

Many rich people, moved to tears by the sweet, affectionate, and persuasive words of the

saint, reformed their lives, divesting themselves of their pride and wealth, giving all to the little poor people who were living images of Christ.

## Saint Amico Abandons His Family [Page 39]

The world with its attractions and flatteries does not succeed in luring Amico, but nauseates him even more. Even in the moments of fruitful work for the souls, he hopes to attend better to the contemplation of God and to the salvation of souls, created in God's image.

By now he has learned well that the ways of the Lord are infinite, and that the judgments of the God he adores are inscrutable.

He often thinks about the efficacy of divine grace, and he invokes it with fervor: "The obedient man shall speak of victory." (Proverbs 21:28). And he hopes also to induce his parents to observe the advice of the Gospel: "If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast and give to the poor. And come follow me." (St. Matthew 19:21).

To attain such a splendid victory, he has confidence only in the power of grace. Therefore, either at Holy Mass or with macerations of the body, he implores the Lord with tears and utmost fervor to be so kind as to take him away from the dangers of the world and lead him more safely to the port of salvation.

The holy and assiduous prayer of the man of God was accepted by the Lord. His parents, who in the past were so hostile and obstinate, gave in to his wishes and desires.

It is moving for a family to compete with great joy to distribute all its wealth to the poor, thereby giving a moment of happiness and relief to the needy. In a moment of enthusiasm, the whole family dedicates itself to the Lord and withdraws to a holy cloister.

Amico is happy, and enters the cloister with the firm purpose of finally satisfying his extraordinary vocation for solitude and silence, an aspiration that the Lord had sculpted in his heart when he was still a boy.

He wants to stop for sometime in this monastery, imitating the athlete who tempers and tests his strengths before engaging them thoroughly in competition, in combat.



The vigils, the macerations made to his body, the voluntary privations of even the most innocuous pleasures, and the renunciation of as much as he possessed in affection and in effect for the love of the Cross, still seemed almost nothing without complete self-abnegation.

Therefore, he again took to macerating his life more harshly with hair shirts and fasts and to spending almost entire nights without falling asleep, totally engrossed in the sweetness of heavenly contemplations. When he was compelled to concede some rest to his weary limbs, he lay on the bare ground.

He had profoundly sculpted in his heart that which the Divine Master had said: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and follow me" (St. Matthew 16:24).

To absolute detachment from all creatures and profound humility he had added a measureless love of suffering and privation. He did not see another way, apart from that of the Cross, to achieve the Kingdom of God.

By this road our saint progressed from day to day. Even though he was sprinkled with tribulations and thorns, he was compensated with the sweetest and most ineffable consolations.

Although Amico did such things in the secret of his heart or within the walls of his cell to be closer to Christ Crucified, his exceptional austerity was noted even in the monastery.

Veneration towards him grew in such a way that he was considered a saint!

The man of God, full of humility as he was, did not bear such devices, fearing always that the worm of vainglory would enter his heart and make him lose the grace of God.

In vain did he tire himself out declaring that he was the most unworthy sinner. In vain did he repeat that placating eternal justice required great penitence. However much more he humbled himself before God and before men, so much more was he exalted by his confrères.

Then, Amico was finally convinced that the time was reached to abandon the community of the monastery in order to withdraw into the solitude of the woods and the hermitages. This was as much desired by him as is the sun desired by the inhabitants of the North Pole after the interminable darkness of that region.

Nevertheless, the fall of the Apostle Peter and the temptations of Jesus in the desert by

the devil admonished him never to have too much trust in himself. Desiring to serve God with fervor and complete dedication, he only had to wait for strength, steadfastness, and grace to come from Him.

Before carrying out this decisive step, sage man that he was, he did not fail to consult with men who were prudent and filled with the spirit of God, and to manifest his conscience to them. By these men he was encouraged, that being the will of heaven.

In our times, before undertaking a long trip, people make feverish preparations. Amico, the proper permission and benediction of the superior obtained, set out without a bag and without bread but laden with grace and merit. He was happy to have trampled vanity and the attractions of the false sirens of the world. Without even being noticed, he set out for uninhabited and mountainous places, covering paths perhaps not yet found by man.

He walks, he quickens his pace. Every so often, he turns around to see if somebody has noticed his passing: nobody!

By now, the deafening noises of the city are far away. He no longer hears his confrères, full of respect for him. He only hears the rustling of the leaves, the whistle of the wind, and the song of the birds! Tired, he lies down on the bare ground, happy.

The tiredness of the exhausting journey gone, he awakes after a long, quiet, and deep sleep. He opens his eyes, and looks about himself exploring the region. He has the blue sky as a roof, the plants and rocks as walls, and the birds as friends and companions. The birds, singing and jumping more cheerfully this morning, give him a warm welcome.

He is at the summit of a mountain called Taurino, whose top is a complete cliff. A cave rises at a small distance, perhaps the sought-after residence of ferocious beasts. Here he withdraws, and cuts every bond with the world and its delights for all time.

He prostrates himself on the ground, and thanks God for having led him into this solitude. He delights in seeing satisfied his long wish to speak to God in his heart.

Unknown to the world, laden with crosses and extreme poverty, he has as support and assistance the One God, and in Him he trusts.

God alone is his world, his land, his company, his wealth, his glory, his support, his comfort, his hope. "... and, what will separate me from the charity of Christ?", he often repeated with the apostle. "Perhaps persecution, poverty, hunger, nakedness, danger, the sword? Oh, no. Over all these things, over the world and the flesh, I shall be the victor, for Him who has loved me without end and whom I love with all the strength of my soul."

So his spirit was inebriated with God, his intellect admired Him, and his will loved Him. The fire of love, which grew within him, was a true reflection of the fire of love with which Jesus burns for man.

Amico searched alone to please God. His fast was his meal, his hair shirt his clothing, the hard ground his bed, tears his delight, prayer his occupation, the angels his company, penitence his office. He chose the state of penitence for fear of falling into the state of sin. He wanted to forestall sin with sorrow. The saint averted dangerous pleasures, and always made his heart more pure to render it more worthy of divine love. Happy to be known only in heaven, he led a withdrawn and hidden life.

In the desert, Amico found grace. There, he found the peace of soul that the world cannot give. Often, in the frequent ecstasies with which God consoled him, he forgot his own body completely and how much it surrounded him. He enjoyed in anticipation the beatitude that is only found in intimate union with God.

He found in solitude the efficacious medicine against the enemy of his salvation. Removed from the world, he has followed Jesus in the silence where, living in continuous mortification, he acquires ever greater strength and courage against the enemy of man who will certainly give him no peace. There he finds God, and in God the fount of all blessings and the treasury of all virtues.

Often he rightly repeats with the psalmist: "In a desert land, and where there is no way and no water, so in the sanctuary have I come before thee, to see thy power and thy glory" (Psalms 62:3).

Three years had just passed from the time when Amico went away into isolation on the

mountaintop. The Lord wanted to put him again into contact with men, for His glory and the salvation of souls. One beautiful day, without his even having thought it, he saw a large multitude of people arrive at the door of his cave. They had rushed from the neighboring lands, pressed only by the desire to meet him and to ask him advice of conscience.

Such visits becoming more and more frequent and numerous, the Saint took advantage thereof to preach to these souls the kingdom of God and to confirm them in the Christian faith. His preaching soon became popular because it was in keeping with everyone's intelligence, and at the same time it was learned, fervent, and effective. Many, many, among the listeners abandoned vice and sin, changing their habits.

There were even some who, incited by his example, gave a farewell to the world, following him into the life of a hermit.

Thus the man of God, who had already become all to everyone, realized and became convinced in spite of himself that he had to leave that rugged mountain top. In fact, with his disciples already rather numerous, he descended into the Ascolano territory to settle in a place which at that time was still uncultivated and uninhabited.

Being no longer alone, he suddenly thought about the need for an oratory. After a brief search, he found a long cave which was very well suited for the purpose, although it was very dark because of an enormous boulder which obstructed the entrance.

He thanked the Lord with all his heart and erected an altar, and invited the bishop of Valva to consecrate it. The prelate very gladly accepted the invitation, thereby taking the opportunity to meet Amico, having already heard talk of his life and sanctity.

Right when they met, they prostrated themselves on the ground to render thanks to the Lord and as a sign of reciprocal respect and veneration. Then, they embraced with a great effusion of affection, as if they were bound by a long and close friendship.

Both Amico and the bishop tried many times to express in words the joy that they felt in their hearts, but their voices stopped and they cried from tenderness. After they had given way to tears, the altar was blessed and dedicated to the glorious Saint Michael. The rest of the day was

spent in holy reasoning. On the approach of evening, the night drawing near, the bishop decided to leave. Amico and his followers accompanied him along a long stretch of the road until the bishop, after having comforted them with sweet and paternal words to persevere in the holy life, was moved to tears. He blessed them and separated himself from them.

The bishop of Valva carried the figure of Amico sculpted in his holy Shepherd's heart, and in all the years which still remained to him, he retained that day among the most beautiful days of his life.

### The First Miracles of Saint Amico [Page 49]

With the passage of time, the followers of Amico began to lament the darkness of the oratory. The man of God realized this and, after having marked with a cane the half of the boulder, which impeded the sun's rays from penetrating into the oratory, he withdrew to pray. He had just finished, and the prayer was heard. The part of the boulder marked with the cane fell into the valley without hurting anyone, and thereby the sun was able to penetrate into the oratory.

Meanwhile, many peasants approached the oratory to find the protection of Amico.

One day, some of them were carrying some beams. Unluckily, one of the beams fell with such force that it broke a peasant's foot completely. Amico, informed of the fact, had compassion for him and had the unfortunate man brought to the oratory. Absorbed in prayer, his face radiant with joy and full of trust, he gripped into his hand the broken foot, then made the sign of the cross over it: "In the name of the One," he said, "who formed man from mud and breathed into him the breath of life, rise and return to work!" The peasant got up, and to the unspeakable joy and amazement of all, united with his companions and continued to carry the beams.

Soon the fame of this miracle spread, and from all the lands and nearby villages was a continuous coming and going of people of every age and condition. All remained in admiration of the angelic Amico, and all listened with joy to his sweet and paternal word.

The saint suspected the enjoyment of much prestige on account of the miracles that he continuously worked. Also, he had not well reciprocated the grace and most singular favors

which had been granted to him. He decided to take away from himself every danger of vainglory, and to give every merit to God.

But God knew there was much humility in his servant. In accordance with His infallible promise: "Who exalts himself shall be humbled, and who humbles himself shall be exalted", He wanted the saint to be honored not only by men, but also by the animals, restoring to him the absolute mastery over the animals which man had lost by the sin of the ancestors.

A rich and charitable gentleman of the land was in the habit of sending food every so often to Amico in his solitude. One day, he had prepared the usual ration of diverse bread loaves to send to the saint. The servant threw one of them to the dog, who gave obvious signs of being hungry. The starving animal pounced on it with great greed, and was ready to bite it when he stopped unexpectedly, completely frightened. Leaving the loaf of bread, he began to lick where the bread had fallen.

The servant marveled at the fact and went to tell his master, who also wanted to test and convince himself that the dog ate any loaf of bread as long as it was not the loaf destined to Amico.

With much devotion, he picked up that loaf of bread and jealously preserved it as a sacred object.

Amico next found himself in the San Pietro Avellana Monastery, as will soon be said. A she-mule was delivered to him, and he was sent by the abbot to a nearby forest to load her up with firewood and bring the wood to the monastery.

While the saint was preparing the firewood, a wolf of enormous size pounced on the poor animal, and killed her in the blink of an eye.

At the sight of Amico, the wolf took a precipitous flight down the ravines.

The man of God, with the greatest resignation, was worrying only about the firewood necessary for the monastery. He noticed that he no longer had a means of transporting it. Without thinking about it twice, he called the carnivorous animal, who came to his feet humble and tame. He reproached the animal for the harm he had committed, and imposed upon him the

penance of carrying the firewood to the monastery. The wolf lowered his head as a sign of acceptance and reverence. Then, forgetting his innate ferociousness, he let the packsaddle be put on him, and had himself loaded up. With the maximum indifference, as if he were accustomed to such work, he let the saint lead him.

As a memory of this miracle, from the earliest times, the saint has been portrayed with a wolf at his side, loaded with wood.

Even the birds listened to Saint Amico.

Once, when going as usual to evangelize the neighboring lands with Brother Raterio, he realized that there remained stuck on his tunic some crumbs from the bread, which he had eaten at the monastery before starting off. Showing the crumbs to Raterio, with a jesting face, he exclaimed: "May it now please God for one to come who will peck at them!". Behold, two birds alit on the tunic and pecked at the breadcrumbs.

The venerable Pietro, Abbot of the San Pietro Avellana Monastery, had had a kiln constructed. He wanted to visit the kiln with some monks while it was firing. Amico went there also. He was already seated near the kiln when he saw an enormous boulder, which was falling toward them. The boulder was uprooted by the crash of a tree trunk felled by some peasants. The harm, which threatened both the kiln and those who were nearby, was inevitable. Terrified, all of them fled, except for Amico. He remained seated, tranquil and sure, with his eyes and hands turned to heaven! By a great miracle, when the boulder arrived near the kiln it bounced without hurting anyone in the least. At such a wonder all of them ran to Amico, and thanked him for having freed them from certain death.

Taking a step back in our saint's story: after he had had the oratory in Ascolano blessed and consecrated by the Bishop of Valva, he lived with his confrères in such austerity that soon the fame of his sanctity spread throughout the land.

At all hours of the day and night, they hurried to him, with the devotion of listening to his word and with the curiosity of knowing and seeing him. When he was speaking, he gave the impression of being more an angel than a man!

The poor and the afflicted especially greeted him as the true father of all, because in all circumstances he always showed that charity was his sole ambition.

With reference to what I am saying, the following fact does not seem to me out of place.

There was a soldier living in the area who had bad habits, who had given in to all vices and ribaldry. This man had stolen from a poor peasant an ox, the only property and hope of his family. In those times, the laws were either completely lacking or had no value. Injustice, force, and greed held the place of justice. All means attempted to induce the greedy soldier to give the ox back were useless. On the contrary, the thief had arrived to threaten the poor peasant if he did not cease bothering him.

The poor man, seeing every attempt fail, thought of turning to Saint Amico, the sole defender of the oppressed and the little poor people.

Compassion and charity pushed the man of God to face the soldier's audacity with frankness. With his enlightened words and beautiful ways, he attempted to induce the man to want to give the property back to its legitimate owner. However, the evil man was not cured by the prayers or saving exhortations of the servant of God. On the contrary, he swore by severe and threatening means that neither priests, nor friars, nor bishops, nor the pope would compel him to give the animal back, which by now had become his.

This diabolical obstinacy profoundly saddened Amico, who wanted also to look after the salvation of the man's soul. Amico predicted that at the end of that very day he would be dead. In order that the unhappy soldier might believe his words, Amico also predicted other circumstances, which would come true. "Therefore," he added, "if you have acted badly until now and you are spotted with grave sins, repent and turn to good now that you still have a little time to redeem your soul from the devil's realm."

The soldier, who believed nothing and saw nothing beyond the present, laughed sarcastically and scornfully at these prophetic words and went away. Everything, which Amico had predicted to him, took place.

On that same day, in fact, just after the setting of the sun, a great tumult arose among his



fellow citizens, in which the soldier also found himself involved. He received a wound, which led to his death in less than two hours.

When calm was restored, everything was cleared up. The ox was given back to its owner, and the respect and veneration for Amico grew in such a way that whoever had been able to kiss, or at least to touch, the hem of his garment considered himself fortunate.

But Amico's profound humility did not gladly allow for such respect and honor. If he were in their shoes, he would have wanted scorn, persecutions, and death itself for the glory of God.

He therefore turned to his followers, and said: "Let us flee from here, my brothers, and go far from this place which is too courteous to us!".

All accepted the proposal, but the disease, which struck now one, now the other of the confrères, did not allow him to bring this intention and desire of his to term before their deaths occurred. This was, however, many years before his own death.

## **Saint Amico at San Pietro Avellana [Page 59]**

When Amico arrived at the San Pietro Avellana Monastery it had been founded a few years beforehand, and its founding saint, the venerable Abbot Pietro, was still alive.

In this place, there was in the air the same feeling, which circulated in Monte Cassino when Saint Benedict was living. There was a great fervor and spirit of penitence, which gave the observance of the rule a flavor of the divine and supernatural.

Everyone can imagine the greeting given to Amico on his arrival! Two saints met, with the same heart, the same soul, the same will, and the same aspirations.

Finally, Amico saw his dreams crowned. He found an environment, which was totally his, and was convinced that this was the last and definitive stop of his long pilgrimage.

Who can narrate the austere and most edifying life that Amico led in the San Pietro Avellana Monastery?

A hermit, he was in the habit of eating the smallest mushrooms and raw woodland

apples, and for forty years never even wanted to have a long sleep or to eat his fill. Therefore, he wanted to keep this same tenor of life in the San Pietro Avellana Monastery as well, especially in the time, which ran between the feast of Saint Martin and Easter Sunday. In all this period, the most humble cenobite usually remained shut up in his small cell to dedicate himself solely to prayer and works of penitence.

Every Sunday, he received three loaves of bread from his confrères, which had to last for the entire week. Even so, he only ate one of them, dispensing the other two loaves to the little poor people on the same day.

It happened that one Sunday, and the following also, the confrères forgot to bring him the usual ration. When they finally realized it, they were sorry for their negligence and believed him by this time dead from hunger. Fearful, not daring to enter his cell, they began to spy through the cracks in the door, and great was their joy and wonder on seeing this he was alive. At the same time, they were seized with incredible astonishment on seeing that the cell shone with the brightest light. Some celestial being was certainly keeping Amico company. The most merciful God had truly given an angel the task of comforting his servant, who gladly tolerated even the abandonment of his confrères for the love of the Cross.

Plucking up their courage they entered the cell, but as they were setting foot in the room the angel simultaneously disappeared.

The incident came to be known in the entire monastery. The abbot, although part of him was pleased with the miracles which resulted, deplored the fact that Amico, worthy of all veneration and honor, was so miserably forgotten. He ordered Brother Raterio to look after the penitent confrère, to assist him in all needs and to be at his complete disposal.

From what I am about to say, it will appear more clearly that God consoled his servant with special graces and favors.

It was Christmas Eve in the year 1039, and the night was rather advanced. Amico was in his cell, in full meditation as usual, and in heavenly contemplation. God deigned to reveal to him the death of Ugone, Abbot of Farfa, which was occurring at that moment. The saint, through

Raterio, informed the abbot and his other confrères of the supernatural revelation he had had, in order that they might pray together for the dying man. "Who, O God," exclaimed Brother Bernardo, "is not amazed by Thy kindness, as Thou dost not decline to show in our time the wonders of prophecy?".

Amico, although shut up in his cell, had in fact perfectly seen what had occurred many miles away.

Hardly a few days had gone by, and monks from the Farfa Monastery came to implore intercession for the late abbot by the monks of San Pietro Avellana. The visiting monks confirmed that the death of Abbot Ugone had occurred exactly on the night and at the hour predicted by Amico.

So Amico, his heart all inflamed and overflowing with charity, is unable not to think of the sanctification of his neighbor as well.

He sees with his enlightened mind that passion has thrown humanity into the deepest and most desolate moral and civil disorder. His apostolic heart cries, suffers, and prays incessantly, day and night, in order that the Lord will soon cause His kingdom to flourish again on earth. He also feels an internal force to go in penitent's clothes in the midst of men to induce them, by preaching and by example, to a better life.

Abbot Pietro consented to Amico to do all that the zeal of the glory of God and the charity for one's neighbor inspired him to do. Therefore each year, after Easter, the new apostle of charity and love left the monastery to preach penitence, peace, and love in all the lands, hamlets, and castles which encircled San Pietro Avellana. Then, he returned to the monastery in October to restore his spirit with fasting and prayer, so as to prepare himself for new and more glorious victories.

## **Apostolate of Saint Amico [Page 65]**

Amico goes out to evangelize the poor and to cure the infirm. By seeing God in men, and seeing these men in God, he felt the greatest tenderness for the sinners and unequaled

respect for all.

This same virtue, which one day had pushed him to look for solitude in the woods and hermitages to lead a hidden life with Jesus Christ, today pushes him to go out from his cell and the silence of the cloister. He holds out a charitable and friendly hand to his fellow man, relieving them from the degrading, wretched, and confused life in which they found themselves subjugated to their passions.

And behold in Amico no longer the anchorite and hermit of the woods or the penitent of the cloister, but the mirror of every virtue and the preacher of faith, love, and true liberty.

Suddenly he is greeted as father of the poor, support of widows and orphans, and enlightened advisor of the oppressed.

Although advanced in years, he shows a courage which renders him unperturbed, prompt, and tireless in procuring the health of souls. He has a heart overflowing with charity, affable and compassionate with all. He wants to reconcile everyone and lead everyone to God.

Rich in so many beautiful virtues which charity itself had brought together and placed with marvelous harmony in his mind, ardent with love like a cherub, accompanied now with one confrère, now with another, he runs from one hamlet to another, announcing the Gospel of Christ with uncommon zeal, admirable simplicity, and purity. He confirms his word with the example of his life, and with the miracles he often works in the name of the One who can do everything.

Wherever he preached, his inspired word was greeted with obvious signs of joy and with copious fruits of spiritual health. His word warms, inflames, and lights the hearts of those who listen to him in such a way that soon even the most hardened sinners abandon their vices, finding peace in penitence and sweetness and delight in fraternal charity.

One time, Amico knew that the earldom of Valva was troubled with a great famine. He requested permission from the abbot to be able to make an apostolic visit there. The abbot promised to satisfy his request on condition that he go not on foot but on horseback, using a she-mule from the monastery, as he was already old and exhausted by his fasts and his apostolic work.

The most faithful servant of God accepted the use of the animal provided that the confrère who accompanied him could use her also.

With the benediction of his superior, and inflamed with charity and zeal, he started toward the land which once before had accommodated him.

Crossing the mountain called Primocampo; he met up with two young thugs. They had been living in this area for some time, robbing whoever arrived there.

The two rogues brusquely stopped Amico, took possession of the she-mule, mounted her, and disappeared.

Amico, with holy resignation, content to suffer for the Lord, continued the route on foot. Charity gave him strength and vigor to reach the destination. He still walks for a few hours. Then, tired, he lies down at the foot of a tree and goes to sleep.

The she-mule was obedient to the new owners for some time. However, as she reached the passage of the Vera River, she unexpectedly gave a leap which was so strange as to make the two rascals fall into the water. While they were trying to save themselves, the she-mule rejoined the old Amico, at full gallop and very joyous.

The saint was so engrossed in the Lord that he hardly realized it. But the animal, lovingly touching his hands and feet with her tongue, roused him as if to say: "Here I am, free to you, as always ready at your service."

Meanwhile, the thieves had escaped death and recovered from fear. By the will of the God who knows how to obtain good even from evil, they followed the animal's tracks, trying to catch up with her.

When they saw her in that respectful pose, they were taken by the greatest surprise in finding it difficult to recognize Amico in the worshipping old man, Amico whose fame of sanctity was already well-known throughout the land.

Moved by divine grace, they recognized their error. Crying, they threw themselves at the saint's feet to ask him pardon.

Amico, completely happy with their conversion, pardoned them with all his heart and

spoke to them with such sweetness and charity that, sincerely penitent, they abandoned forever the life of thievery and dishonesty.

Amico took up the route again and, finally, reached the earldom of Valva, the destination of his journey.

He covered the city and the hamlets. Wherever he went, he corrected the people's bad habits, and dispensed words of comfort and Christian resignation to all.

With a humble attitude, he united with and mingled with the people's children to instruct them better in the Christian doctrines and the law of love.

With incredible ardor and holy daring, he preached the eternal truths to the rich in order that they might return to the way of salvation. They removed the heart from the earth's transient grandeur, loving God above all else and their neighbor as themselves.

He announced that Jesus was hungry, thirsty, and naked in the poor, suffering in the sick and the imprisoned, and in need of lodging among the pilgrims. When the Son of Man comes in great majesty and glory to judge the world, he will send into the eternal fire accursed all those who, although they could have, will not have had His mercy in seeing Him suffering in the little poor people and languishing in the infirm and needy who asked for help.

The saint confirmed the truths, which he announced with the sanctity of his example and with many wonders. No one could remain obstinate in his sin.

As if by magic, secular hates were cancelled, civil discords ceased, arms were laid down, minds were reconciled, and hearts were made kind again.

Liberty was given to the servants, bread was abundantly distributed to the hungry, the naked were clothed, the wretched were aided, widows and wards were comforted and protected, shelter was given to orphans, and the infirm were treated and given lodging.

It seemed that, in these lands, the most happy times of the first Christians had returned as a result of Amico's work.

Each land organized festivals and paid particular tribute to the saint. However, the worldly glory, rather than flattering the humble preacher of the divine word, disturbed him.

Therefore he hastened to return secretly to the San Pietro Avellana Monastery.

## Death of Saint Amico [Page 73]

Sometimes the Lord is pleased to reveal to his faithful servants the time of their death, either much in advance or little in advance. This is so that, reinforced in faith, reinvigorated in hope and charity, and separated from every earthly care; they are better prepared to appear before Him.

This most singular grace was also given to Amico.

In fact, one day when he was discussing with his confrères the happiness of the celestial homeland, he affirmed that within seven months, he would partake of such joys.

He begged and implored them to use make more liberal use of him, as far as it might apply to the attainment of eternal life, in this time left to him.

This revelation, rather than consoling his confrères, profoundly grieved their minds, which greatly regretted losing this living example of perfection.

Although he never held the office of superior, he was always the mirror of all virtue, most ready for obedience, works of charity, and the scrupulous (and, I would say, perfect) observance of the Rule.

He had had the task of transporting the firewood from the forest to the monastery and he gladly accepted it, without the least resentment, convinced that this was the will of God, expressed by means of his superiors.

He had already worked so many miracles and therefore was most well-known, and

venerated by all as a saint, but in him there was not even the shadow of pride or vainglory. Always with a smile on his lips and charity in his heart, he considered himself the last of the community, the greatest sinner!

He had reached a very advanced age, and was still working miracles for all. Although worn out by the fasts and vigils, macerated by the continuous penitential practices, and overcome by apostolic work, he could still carry on with his life.

Meanwhile, the seven months prophesied by him had passed and he, as usual, celebrated the Holy Mass on All Saints' Day.

No one thought any more about the seven months, or about Amico's supreme hour which was by now imminent, and yet this was the last time that he offered the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass to God.

It is neither for me nor for others to say with how much devotion or meditation he celebrated it, nor with what fervor he invoked the intercession of all the saints for the salvation of his soul, he who had succeeded in adding merits to merits to make the triumph of heaven more splendid to him.

The following morning, Amico did not sense any illness, which would point to the imminent dissolution of his body, apart from a light toothache. He went to the church, appeared at the foot of the altar and, with all humility asked that the Holy Sacraments be administered to him.

Then he had the relic of the Most Holy Wood of the Cross displayed. He remained in front of it for a long time to pray, while many tears streaked his face. As before, he was covered in ashes and a hair shirt, oblivious of all earthly things and absorbed only in the celestial.

That done, worn out in body but strong in spirit, he went to his cell where, because of his excessive weakness, he was forced to lie down on the miserable pallet.

His confrères suddenly came in. Seeing themselves partly driven back by the little space of the cell, they secretly begged the abbot to get him to agree to have the dying saint transported elsewhere, in order that all might assist at his edifying death.



The superior, perhaps for fear of bothering the infirm saint at such an important moment, did not grant permission, nor did he want such a question to be repeated.

But, if man was denying Amico this pious and common wish, God wanted otherwise. For His greater glory, He wanted to put before everyone's eyes the death of the just man who He was on the point of calling to His kiss.

Amico himself made the request and, as was natural, it was granted right away, He was transported into a more spacious room, where all the confrères, no one excepted, enclosed around him in a beautiful crown. As he saw them nearby, mute and in compassionate meditation, his bony hands were united. He raised his eyes to heaven and one more time begged the most merciful Jesus so that instead of his health he might receive his spirit, redeemed on the Wood of the Cross.

The short prayer ended, with great tenderness, he implored the bystanders not to cry, but to rejoice at his departure from this world. This was because he hoped that his soul, by the merits of the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ, would shortly be received in heaven, where he would better remember them.

Then, with what little strength still remained in him, he gave his last teachings and advice, which the confrères sculpted in their hearts and faithfully observed until their deaths.

Nobody moved, nobody spoke except for Raterio who, pushed by the filial affection which bound him to the saint, having lovingly looked after him for so many years, asked him where he wanted to be buried. To which Amico responded: "In a grave, outside of the basilica, like that one over there. You will bind my feet with a rope, and use the rope to drag me out of the church, and you will also leave me unburied!"

How much humility in the saints! Amico, who did not want ever to be indulgent toward his body, now despises it entirely. He will long only for heaven, and he will desire only to unite himself to his God, Who he has served and loved faithfully for so many years.

His last energy completely exhausted, in the best manner he could, he gave his benediction to everyone. Then, with the tranquility and majesty of the just man, with the smile of

the blessed on his lips, in the midst of the sweet melodies of the psalms which his sobbing confrères sang around him, he gave his beautiful soul back to God on the third of November, at the age of 120 years!

In the shortest time, the news was spread. From every nearby land and village the people came in droves to participate in the saint's funeral. With tears and profound meditation, they gave evidence of his noble virtues, and especially of the immeasurable love and the supreme solicitude which he always had for the salvation of their souls. Everyone cried over the passing of the most loving priest, but at the same time they consoled themselves with the thought that his charity would always be alive in heaven. Better still, he would be more powerful to assist, as always, whoever invoked him in faith.

To respect his last wish, which was revealed to Raterio, he was buried rather modestly outside of the same church. However, if the external pomp befitting the burial of the holy man was missing, the affection and veneration which everyone had for him certainly abounded. The tomb, even though it was very modest, enclosed the hearts and promises of so many beneficiaries.

As Amico particularly distinguished himself by charity, the mother and nurturer of all virtues and the rock-like base on which the law of the Gospel rests, his charity not only opened wide the gates of heaven to his pure soul, but also procured an honored and distinguished burial for his body, because very soon his sepulchre became glorious.

## The Glorious Sepulchre of Saint Amico [Page 81]

The omnipotent God, who had already illustrated the life of his faithful servant with miracles, also wanted Amico's sepulchre to shine with many, many well-known wonders.

With great solicitude and love, the friend of God and men helped the ones his hand and

voice of seraphic charity could reach when he was on this miserable earth, poor and fragile. Therefore, now he is with God he has become truly rich and powerful in heaven, and he applies his efficacious intercession much more gladly in favor of those who faithfully have recourse to his aid.

In Monticello, at Puglie Castle, lived a man who was of great faith, but who was so pitifully afflicted by paralysis that he could no longer move a limb of his body.

Three months had already elapsed that he had lived in this pitiful state. By now, he was resigned to give up any hope of a cure. One night, which elapsed as usual in pain and insomnia, a venerable-looking man was seen to appear. The man said to him: "Arise, and go the banks of the Sangro. There, in the San Pietro Monastery, rest the bones of the Blessed Amico, who will make you well!" The infirm man responded to him: "I would gladly go there, but how can I make myself move if I am completely paralyzed?" And again the venerable monk: "In the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ, arise, I say, and walk in peace!"

The sick man tried to move himself, and his joy was immense when he realized that he was completely cured.

Rendering thanks to the Omnipotent God, he had to recognize that he owed his cure to the intercession of the Blessed Amico. Without hesitating, he went with many gifts to the Saint's glorious sepulchre to give thanks to him.

There was a certain Giovanni of the Cinquemiglia Castle, a man who, however wealthy he was, was as much again God-fearing and devoted to the saints, especially Saint Agatha. Prompted by divine grace, he had abandoned everything to become a monk in the San Pietro Avellana Monastery.

Here, he distinguished himself by many virtues, but especially by that of obedience and complete self-deprecation. He was most content when the superior entrusted to him the humble and contemptible duties of the monastery. One day, driving a pair of oxen who were transporting two large millstones to the monastery, finding himself on a very narrow path, he made such a great effort that his intestine descended. For five years he kept the event hidden. Then, one day,

he was forced by the abbot to go on horseback to look for the flock, which had wandered from the area where they lived. Accustomed to blind obedience, and ashamed to manifest his pain, he forced himself as best he could to mount the horse. However, after just a few steps, he had to get off the horse because of the excessive discomfort. He started to lie down.

He fell asleep, and during such sleepiness Saint Agatha appeared to him, Saint Agatha to whom he was so devoted. She comforted him, and told him to be happy because Blessed Amico would soon come and would cure him.

The vision disappeared, and Giovanni woke up. He thought of the things he had seen and heard, and fell asleep again. And, behold, a venerable-looking monk appeared, who sweetly said to him: "What is the matter, brother? Why do you go about so sad and melancholy?" And Giovanni said: "I am afflicted by acute pain, and the sorrow of not being able to render obedience, to which I am bound by my vows, makes the pain increase a hundredfold." The old man assured him that he was already healed, and disappeared. When Giovanni awoke he thought he had been dreaming, but on getting up he recognized that he had been completely cured. Better still, he seemed to him that he had never had any pain in the world.

Not having revealed to anyone for sometime what had happened to him, one day the same saint appeared to him in a vision, and said to him: "And why, O brother, do you keep hidden the miracle which has been worked in you? The Scriptures say: it is good thing to hide the king's secret, but it is an honorable thing to reveal the works of God. And, to continue with the Gospel, go to your house, I tell you, and announce to all, even those outside, the many things which the Lord has done for you."

At this, Giovanni was completely seized with amazement. He did not waste any time in telling as many as he could the grace, which he had received from God by means of Saint Amico.

Another confrère, named Racco, was assigned by holy obedience to the care of the pigs at the San Pietro Avellana Monastery. One day, having lost them, after a long search, finally heard them grunting at the end of the forest.

At the joy of having found them, and for fear of losing them from sight in this almost

impassible area, quickly, almost pell-mell, he crossed the ravines which appeared before him. Unfortunately, he fell and suffered a broken groin, and in the shortest time something terrible happened to him.

To live in such a shameful condition seemed more difficult to the poor man than even death.

He comforted himself by staying willingly in the monastery, where he was not destitute. He faithfully had recourse to the intercession of Saint Amico.

One day, the monk and priest Anzone went to him, and took him to the tomb of Blessed Amico. Racco was miraculously cured.

Almost at the same time, another four men, afflicted with the same malady, came to the tomb of Saint Amico with great faith and devotion. These men were also cured, thanks to the Saint's most powerful mediation.

From what happened to Ataone, the Bishop of Chieti, it clearly appears that the Lord wanted to glorify the sepulchre of Saint Amico, and to transform it into a sanctuary and place of marvels.

The prelate, finding himself in the zone of the Sangro River, wanted to visit the San Pietro Avellana Monastery. There, he found among the priests the most cordial and respectful greeting, which is totally and only Benedictine.

As he was taking his leave, he inadvertently trod on the ground where the body of Saint Amico lay buried. He was struck by paralysis in his foot. If they had been there to support him, he would have collapsed to the ground.

Amazed by the event, the bishop insistently asked the monks who could ever have been buried in that place such that the Lord wanted it to be respected and glorified. They responded that the bones of Blessed Amico lay there.

The bishop, astonished and frightened, fell to his knees praying. With many tears and sobs, he kissed and kissed again the ground where the Good God had worked these wonders in him. Because such a light did not long remain hidden under a bushel, he made a public vow that,

if he obtained from God the cure of the paralysis in his foot, he would send a shipment of oil for Saint Amico's lamp every year for as long as he lived.

At that very instant, with the greatest joy and the admiration of all, he arose completely cured.

A certain Giovanni Francone, most faithful servant of Count Borrello, was returning to San Pietro Avellana from San Vincenzo al Volturno with the freshest trout, which he had purchased for this master when he was there. Then, all of a sudden, he pitifully found himself deprived of the light of his eyes, and he had to be accompanied to be able to reach his master's house. The count was fond of his faithful servant. After trying all the means which love, piety, and the medical art suggested to him, and finding all these means completely useless, he implored some of the monks of the San Pietro Avellana Monastery to know what remained left to be done for the unfortunate man.

The monks did not hesitate to advise him to lead the poor man to the tomb of Saint Amico. At once he was taken there and, while the blind man was lying on the ground, the monks raised fervent prayers to God invoking the powerful intercession of Amico.

The blind man was seized by the deepest sleep. After an hour he awoke announcing, to the joy and satisfaction of everyone, that he caught sight of the little flame from the faint light of the lamp, almost distinctly. Then, he distinguished other things exactly, and he gave a cry of joy. He thanked God and the Blessed Amico of whose favor he had been made worthy.

The fame of so many miracles spread from day to day, in places near and far. It even reached the ear of a poor blind woman who was fifteen years old, full of faith and devotion, sustained by the brightest hope. She also wanted to go to the miraculous tomb of the Saint, and she prayed in this manner: "O omnipotent God, Thou hast assured me that by means of Amico Thou workest great miracles. If he is truly Thy faithful servant, and if what is said of him everywhere is true, I ask Thee by his merits and powerful intercession to open my eyes, as Thou once opened the eyes of so many blind people during Thy earthly life."

This simple but fervent prayer just ended, the little poor woman had her sight once more.

For the whole of her life, she did not cease to thank God for the wonderful things, which he had worked by means of Saint Amico.

During the same time, another twelve people recovered their sight near the miraculous tomb of the Saint.

In the valley of the Sangro River, there was a father who had two sons. His sons were so tormented by epilepsy that they suffered the most atrocious pain, continuously emitting foam and slime from their mouths. Their bodies had really lost any human form. For them, living was worse than dying.

The poor father, after having tried every test and experiment, was losing confidence since all his efforts had been found useless. He decided to take his two sons to the glorious sepulchre of Saint Amico to ask him for a cure, or else for death. Impelled by the greatest confidence because of the many miracles which continuously happened, he went there. The two youths had just arrived: as if the almighty hand of God had remade and recompose their limbs, in a moment they straightened up. They felt completely cured, so that they had the impression of not ever having suffered any ill.

I can still continue to narrate the many other miracles, which happened during the last war to soldiers and civilians. These miracles are evidenced by the continuous coming and going of the faithful who come to the Saint to give him thanks. They give him their grateful affection, and the most dearest and most precious objects. However, I believe the stories already narrated are sufficient to attest to the great merits, glory, and power of the one who was the true friend of God and of men on earth, and who continues to be so with greater efficacy in heaven.

In our times, years of skepticism and materialism, there would be those, even some called Christian and Catholic, who do not generally feel disposed to believe in miracles. Therefore, they would shrug their shoulders, and would raise doubts about the extraordinary works performed by God by means of Saint Amico. Nevertheless, if these people still have a small amount of faith in the omnipotence of God and believe in Him and in His Son Jesus Christ, they would be unable to deny neither the existence of supernatural acts and the reality of

miracles, and would be unable to remove the character and authority of the divine word from the Gospel.

The purpose and nature of this little book absolutely forbid me to extend myself to enlighten these tepid and equivocal Christians. I limit myself therefore to cite to these people the authoritative and infallible words of the Gospel: "Amen, Amen I say to you, he that believeth in me, the works that I do, he also shall do: and greater than these shall he do. Because I go to the Father: and whatsoever you shall ask the Father in my name, that will I do. Those who have believed will follow these signs: they will cast out devils in my name, they will speak new tongues, and, if they drink any poisonous thing, it will not harm them. They will lay hands on the sick, and they will be cured" (Saint John, Chapter XIV).

If this is the Gospel, and therefore the truth, no one will be able to say that Saint Amico did not believe. Furthermore, no one will be amazed if the Lord, to crown his faith, charity, and other numerous merits, had given him the power to work miracles!

I close with the words of the Psalmist: "But to me Thy friends, O God, are made exceedingly honorable: their principality is exceedingly strengthened!" (Psalms 138:17).

## Triduum in Honor of Saint Amico [Page 93]

### I

O most glorious thaumaturge Saint Amico, true prodigy of miracles and sanctity, behold me at your most holy feet, beseeching your beneficial patronage. You, who did so much for the salvation of your soul and the health of the souls of others, pray for me that the Lord will grant me pardon for my sins, and the grace to keep myself always faithful to His most holy law. You, who worked so many miracles also for the health of bodies, assist me in all my corporal necessities. If it please the Lord, send from me all afflictions and adversity, and obtain for me a full and perfect resignation to His divine will in order that, living always in His love, I might come to heaven to sing eternally with you of his divine mercy.



Pater, Ave, Gloria.

## II

O most beloved Saint Amico, sweet-smelling flower of true humility, scorner of the fleeting goods of the world, purest lily of chastity, example of patience, model of suffering and love of God, make me in fighting pride recognize my nothingness. Make me know how to despise the transience of earthly goods; preserve undefiled the flower of innocence; suffer the injuries, scorn, and calumnies of the wicked with serenity; know how to imitate your hiddenness; and conquer every temptation. Fill at last my heart with the flames of a holy charity so that, loving God above all things; I might love my neighbor as myself.

Pater, Ave, Gloria.

## III

O most glorious Saint Amico, principal patron and benefactor of San Pietro Avellana, you, who abandoned the walls of Monte Cassino, and, through divine inspiration, came into this world to sanctify it with prayer and penitence, look with respectful eyes upon this people devoted to you. Be near to them in the numerous difficulties of life. Make a smile shine on the lips of the peasants and strangers who faithfully come to call on you at your tomb, everlasting font of life and sanctity.

Pater, Ave, Gloria.

*Ora pro nobis sante Amice: ut digni efficiamur promissionibus Christi* (Pray for us, O Saint Amico: that we may be made worth of the promises of Christ).

*Oremus: Adesto Domine supplicationibus nostris quas in Beati Amici Confessoris tui solemnitate deferimus, ut qui nostrae fiduciam non habemus, eius qui tibi placuit, precibus adiuvemur. Per Christum Dominum Nostrum. Amen* (Let us pray: Heed, O Lord, our supplications which we solemnly entrust to Blessed Amico Thy Confessor, as we have not confidence in our own. Let the prayers be heard of him who has pleased Thee. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.)

## The Mule and the Wolf [Page 97]

A small church, devoted from faith to Saint Amico, looks at itself in the middle of the woods. There the Saint went almost every day, sent by the abbot of the monastery.

Taking the good mule by the lead,  
this little old man followed the street:  
exhausted by the walk and the deed,  
he throws himself on the grass to rest his feet.

He hears nearby the howling of the wolf. The mule neighs, unexpectedly seized. In a few moments, the mule is already cut at the throat, sending to heaven its last neighs.

The little old man runs, very saddened. He takes the wolf, the cruel animal, puts on him the pack saddled reserved for the mule, and has him carry the firewood to the monastery.

O wood all green,  
eternal poem,  
visited by the Saint,  
be as a paradise!  
With your green and perfume  
you make heaven dream:  
you make punishments forgotten,  
and you make us live a thousand years!

## San Pietro Avellana in the Times of Saint Amico [Page 99]

Even in the long-ago time of Saint Amico, this land of Avellana must have offered something distinctive and appealing. Being a mountainous zone, it was populated by robust, honest, and simple mountain dwellers who, also born and raised in the woods, were masters of kindness, sobriety, and simplicity.

The zone was neither fractionated nor destined to culture, but was all an expanse of virgin forests, most suited to the development of domestic and wild animals.

The inhabitants were not very demanding, but were rather frugal, with respect to clothing and food. The buildings were simple and poor. In the long winter, with household tools of wood and stone, they worked carefully by the small flame of the oil lamp.

The healthy and hard-working mountain dwellers liked the work very much.

They returned home late in the evening with the numerous and well-grazed herds. After having arranged them with great care in the well-kept folds, and after having consumed the rustic dinner in a completely patriarchal atmosphere, each man took his work. The woman spun the pure wool, made clean in the limpid, fresh water from the fountain. The more skilled young girls wove; others prepared the sober, tough, and strong trousseau; and others attended to domestic duties. The men prepared working tools. They made utensils of soft maple wood, and with great patience they transformed enormous, strong stone boulders into artistic moldings, drinking troughs, and feeding troughs for piglets and baby lambs.

The grandmother was very advanced in years and no longer being able to work in the weak light of the oil lamp. However, she brightened up the family by telling with passion the wonders of her time: the detailed story of a bandit who came to a bad end, and the bravery and arrogance of the gentleman next door.

So life was simple and, I would say, still innocent and primitive!

The parents, although old and coarse, had great ascendancy over the whole family. The children, both young and married, allowed themselves nothing in the presence of an old parent, forever majestic and wise, the object of holy fear and reverence.

These good people did not have many needs. They used natural wool, spun and woven at home, and skins tanned as best as possible by the family.

Even the table was very frugal: bread loaves and buns, potatoes usually cooked under hot ashes, vegetables, meat, and game (of which the woods were full).

The friendship and loyalty among the few families known and nearby were a sacred thing. On all the feasts and remembered days, these families assemble. In such circumstances, there were exchanges of goods and domesticated animals. They made contracts, and marriages occurred.

Dinner in these times was also consumed in a fraternal atmosphere. Usually it was game-based: the men who were, by common consent from competition, expert and skilled hunters, prepared it in the preceding days. Trout was also eaten, which at that time abounded in the limpid and undisturbed waters of the Sangro and of the Rio.

At the closing of the popular feast, there was the country and local dance, accompanied by primitive instruments and by the festive choir of those who were present.

The history of San Pietro Avellana is intimately connected with that of the monastery.

When the monk Peter came to this land for the first time, he certainly must have been amazed at the unusual and marvelous countryside. He found in this area all the requirements to carry out his other plans.

It was the solitude, the rather mild climate, the pure and perfumed air, and a fountain of potable water, which was fresh and abundant: everything seemed to him to be suited to the building of a monastery.

He had as a donation from Count Borrello the selected zone, and courageously began the construction. He found stones, timber, and the enthusiasm of the few mountain dwellers who already resided therein.

Immediately the glad news was spread in the vicinity, and many families, abandoning the old villages, wanted to see and know the monks, work with them, and live the same life of prayer and work.

After just a few years, the monks were no longer alone. This land, deserted for centuries, began to live. The fields were tilled, centuries-old plants were cut down, dwellings were constructed for the peasants who, at the monks' school, said good-bye given to an almost primitive past. They learned how to cultivate the fields, how to construct, and how to work the hard oak. They took home conveniences ranging from the primary to the unknown.

What concord reigned, then, among those fortunate families! With the hard-working sons of Saint Benedict, they had learned not only to work, but also to love, to serve the Lord, to love one another as brothers, sons of the same God, redeemed by the same Blood of Jesus Christ.

Very soon, not only the monastery, but also the farmers' houses were surrounded by strong and high walls: everything was enclosed in a rectangle. On the corners, four majestic towers of stone and brick were raised. They were fortified with strong oak gates, which at dusk forbade entrance to friend and foe.

Still today, after centuries, the ruins of the brick towers which enclosed the so-called 'Old Tower', the oldest part of the present San Pietro Avellana whose heirs, after so many years, are innumerable.

After four centuries of continuous work, the monastery had to be very beautiful and rich, greeting the village, constructed with technology and style by the hard-working and learned sons of Saint Benedict.

Whoever came to San Pietro admired the art and elegance, but, in a particular way, the harmony which reigned among the townsmen. The priests, true and holy colonizers, had made the village into an oasis of peace and prayer.

The little grain of mustard had become a gigantic tree. The tiny monastery of the Great Fountain had expanded, its property extended. Thanks to the faith of the priests, the humble farmers had at their disposal the most immense areas. Life was no longer wretched and servile,

but full of well-being and holy happiness!

## Destruction of San Pietro Avellana in 1456 [Page 107]

But, as one day long ago, the Lord wanted to test the holy Job, so he wanted to put to the hard test the good people of this village. While Job passed the test and had once more that which he had lost, the people of San Pietro lost everything . . . forever.

The earthquake of 1456, the most disastrous recorded in the history of the zone, inexorably destroyed the church, the monastery, and the houses in the blink of an eye. In a single moment, everything was reduced into a pile of stones and wreckage.

There were days of alarm and terror for everyone!

The community of the priests was decimated. Its survivors, with the courage which was wholly and solely Benedictine, dedicated themselves to recovering what was salvageable from the rubble. The farmers did the same, and they, by now bound and attached to the village, improvised shelter. In a few years, in fact, a large palace towered on the ruins of the monastery, and the houses were all standing again. The Benedictine *Ora et Labora* had pushed one and all to courage, and to faith in God.

The village, following in the footsteps of the good and holy monks, rose again more beautiful than before. However, the monastery no longer breathed a word. The priests, the few who were left, were easily absorbed into the Monte Cassino Monastery, on which they depended.

Some years passed, and here we are in the year 1623. Father Bernardino De Saivedra, abbot and ordinary of Monte Cassino solemnly goes to San Pietro Avellana, followed by four monks. In the presence of the archpriest, the mayor, and many townsmen and faithful, he officially proclaims the discovery and recognition of the body of Saint Amico.

This was a most important event in the history of the village, because from this moment the influx of the pilgrims became greater and greater. At this time, the marble altar which encloses and protects the remains of the Saint is raised again, as is the namesake church

dedicated to him.

## The Cholera of 1911 [Page 111]

Skipping other important dates and facts, I want to remember the cholera of 1911, which ended the lives of 108 persons. It threatened to transform the village into a cemetery, if the government of that time had not put an end to such a fatal disease with all the means then known.

I prefer to report the words of the archpriest of the time, Father Sabatino Frazzini, an eyewitness.

"The extraordinary mortality which has happened in this village in the attested past year, was caused by choleric infection, which almost furtively introduced itself at the beginning of August and lasted until the end of September. Not recognizing the first cases as cholera was truly a most grave error, as the cruel Asiatic disease was already raging in so many nearby villages and in the very city of Castel di Sangro. I think the cholera was imported from Castel di Sangro not so much by person-to-person contact (the link of continued commerce) as by means of the waters of the Sangro River. After having received all the garbage from the city residents, the river waters ran through San Pietro Avellana's agricultural land, named the Large Farms of the River. There, for lack of potable water, even the river waters are drunk by the populace. However, the people were not warned that river waters become a true vehicle of infectious diseases, especially in times of epidemics.

In 1866 and 1884, in fact, the first cases of cholera came from the agricultural land. Fortunately, however, the cases in the preceding times did not cause sad consequences such as are now so much lamented, because as soon as they were spotted, they were opportunely combated with all the means available to the health profession of that time.

In the present choleric epidemic, there were many and varied anticholeric remedies suggested by several doctors from the province (and even from the Government Health

Commission, which was adjacent to the province). Also, many other medicines and disinfectants were requested, obtained, and scrupulously adopted from the R. Government, which also granted as needed a complete staff of health assistance. However, they were only of use to demonstrate once more their inefficacy. Once the choleric bacillus virgula had already penetrated the individual's stomach, it would make itself invulnerable, as if in an impregnable boulder. It would proliferate undisturbed, and fatally complete its deleterious action. For the residents of San Pietro Avellana, August 23 was truly a day of terror and general alarm. It brought a lump to everyone's throat to see in a short time the death of a father, a wife, a husband, a brother, a bridegroom.

The Green Cross, which was made up of young countrymen, fulfilled the operations of watching over and disinfecting the houses, the leper hospitals, the squares, and the public streets. The Italian Red Cross was assigned to the compassionate duty of nursing and stretcher bearing. Finally, thanks to all the preventative actions which were diligently carried out, the exorbitant and cruel disease ceased to cause further and more terrible losses. So, toward the first days of September, it seemed to their minds already overcome that it was given, if not to rejoice, at least to calm down somewhat, since for several days there had not been even a trace of the epidemic. Then, all at once, on the eighth of September, with general surprise, it broke out with a great devastating threat.

With their minds afflicted and depressed, it was then a strange wonder among them about the cause of the resurgence of the disease. Finally it was learned that in the Bralli lands, situated to the southwest of the eastern slope of Montemiglio, where the mountain appears as a cone, there is a pool of almost muddy surface water. For lack of other potable water in the area, this water was drunk by the peasants who were starting their work. No differently than the most powerful poison, it had cut their lives short.

This came to be known by the revelation made by one of the very victims before dying. Some of the water was then sent for a bacteriological examination, and it was found to be a real heap of bacillus virgula. As a result, no time was wasted in disinfecting it and, as much as



possible, removing it.

The day of September 8 must therefore remain memorable for the residents of San Pietro Avellana, both for the many deaths there were, and also for the many others which would have occurred, if on that day they had not abstained from servile labor. Even though by papal decree the day was no longer a holy day of obligation, by fortunate coincidence this could not be made know on the preceding Sunday, especially in the Bralli lands.

On the following Sunday I had to publish a list of the feasts which were once days of obligation and were now abrogated, and it was already beginning to be verified that the water drunk in the Bralli lands was the cause of the recrudescence of the cholera. Reflecting, then, on how such a circumstance had saved the lives of who knows how many other people, I advised my confrères to want spontaneously to continue always to keep the eighth of September as a day of obligation, in thanksgiving to God for having spared us worse evils.

My proposal on this was then willingly accepted by all. May the most merciful God want to confirm it and keep it always alive in this small portion of his flock.

So this is the story of the choleric epidemic which unluckily afflicted us this year. Bit by bit, between pauses and recrudescences, by the grace of God it had finished by the end of September. I have assessed it the right thing that I must hand the story down here. This is not only for sad memory, for the regret of the lost, or to teach people in the country not to drink water which gathers and flows on the surface and only to drink water which flows by naturally rising. Much more, it is to recommend to posterity (which I wish always well, and the blessing of the Lord) what I said from the altar to those present, to continue always to retain spontaneously the eighth of September as a feast of obligation, on which day is celebrated the Nativity of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, by whose intercession this land was certainly spared from the great calamity which threatened it."

San Pietro Avellana , December 31, 1911

Sabatino Frazzini, Archpriest and Pastor

It seems that the people of San Pietro Avellana had had from God the specific task of reconstruction. The stones, one day long ago dug up and prepared by the monks for the factory, were destroyed and rebuilt many, many times.

To the various total and partial destructions, which occurred as a result of the hidden forces of nature is added the last, which occurred through the work of the German rage, and which was more dreadful and horrifying than all the preceding ones!

For a long time people spoke of war, but the old people were especially convinced that, as always, the war would be fought and won in the trenches. Unfortunately, however, this it not how it was, because the statistics tell us that the dead this time were more numerous among the civilians than among the military.

Who would have imagined that the war would be also be fought in our mountains?

Already, for several months, the Germans were in possession of the village. Now with persuasion and astuteness, now with force and arrogance which was completely military, they had destroyed the abundant herd of animals. In a second time they are looking for men to use as spies, guides, and precious help in the rearguard work. Finally, they force the ignorant and unarmed residents to abandon the village because the buildings will soon be destroyed.

Many appeared skeptical of such threats, but soon the threats became a harsh and cruel reality!

On the day of November 3, a day particularly dear to the people of San Pietro Avellana because it reminds them of the death of Saint Amico, they are forcefully hunted from their houses with the obligation to evacuate. It is full winter. It is cold and raining, but no matter! They are forced to leave the old nest, their own things, and to start a march with the old, the children, the sick, and pregnant women. But where?

Many direct themselves toward the Saint Amico Church in the forest. Others, carrying on their backs large and small bundles of provisions and garments, with the conviction of returning to stock up, they set out for the country in search of impromptu lodging.

Between vigils and castles in the air, the first night passes. Behold, the dawn of November 8 appears, an unhappy day, which will make any glimmer of hope vanish forever from all their hearts.

In the early morning, the first shots are heard to echo. Anxiously, they ask one another: "What are these shots? Perhaps the Allies are coming?"

The civilian refugees in the Saint Amico Forest, with heavy hearts, see the site buildings blown up. The next day, and in those which follow, other groups of houses are systematically blown up. The morning of the thirteenth, the sun with its pallid and almost faded rays illuminates the village as always. What a disaster! It is all an expanse of ruins: a suspended balcony threshold and a bulging beam top, the remains of a piece of furniture with fluttering linen, a mattress, a headboard, books, and papers helter-skelter. The rest is a heap of rubble blackened by the explosion of the dreadful mines!

The mining soldiers direct themselves toward the Saint Amico Forest to blow up the church, but they find it full of old people, women, and children in prey to despair. They have compassion! They hide the church with some branches, make the mines explode a little further away to give the military command the impression that it has fallen, but in reality it remained standing!

After scarcely ten days of continuous explosions, the Mother Church, the adjoining church of Saint Amico, and the ground floor of the A. Carlini Hotel are all that remain standing of the beautiful village. All it took was a few hours, a very few days, to destroy the sacrifices and hopes of a hundred years. The residents are prey to despair. They now have nothing other than what they are wearing. What to do? Where to go?

The Germans have left, and have taken possession of the rubble of the Canadian troops. The military command takes note that the village no longer exists, and orders a thorough search of all the civilians. Their hearts bleeding and their eyes full of tears, they pop out of the woods and the hiding places. Turning a last look at the heaps, which are still dusty, smoky, and full of sweet and sad memories, they climb onto the hard military trucks ready to leave. But where?

For a destination unknown!

The sorrowful scene reminds me of the exodus of the Israelites led by Moses. They leave the rich land of Egypt, their houses constructed with such hard work and sacrifice, and depart for the promised land, which many of them will not see, dying from the difficulties of the long and disastrous trip.

The people of the village reach Campobasso on the military trucks, and from there they go on government railroad cars until they reach Lucera and then Castellaneta.

After many hours of travel, they finally have a moment's rest, because in this is where the sorting is done.

Here another sorrowful scene is repeated. Since no one city can accommodate all of them, families and relatives are divided to be sent to various localities.

The poor, unfortunate people who had always lived in the peace, harmony, and modest comfort of the village have to separate. One group goes to Laterza, a second to Ginosa, a third to Mesagne, a fourth to Francavilla Fontana, a fifth to Oria, a sixth to Cellino San Marco!

Before the refugees arrive in the various centers, the authorities of the accommodating towns recommend to their own residents to use much courtesy and hospitality towards them. They anxiously await the famous refugees at the station, who in their imagination must be very unusual people, like scarecrows or Zulus. When they see them descend from the train, they find nothing in them strange or abnormal. Surprised and disappointed they return home exclaiming; they are Christians too, they are people like us!

They are arranged in the schools, monasteries, and the shelters.

Even as refugees, the people of San Pietro Avellana know how to keep their proper dignity wherever they are. If, on their arrival, they are watched with suspicious eyes, soon they are admired for their correctness and their know-how. They are especially respected and admired when it is seen that even their old people know how to read the newspaper, write, and sign their names.

Many found work and employment in these towns, but the rubble of the village was a

continuous object of nostalgia. They are like the Israelites in the desert who, even in the midst of miracles, look back with regret on leaving Egypt.

One of them is driven by the desire to see Saint Amico and his own house again. Unbeknownst to the others, he faces up to the long journey and explores the area. However, like Noah's dove, he does not find shelter anywhere, and comes back.

Time goes by and, not knowing how to give up, he takes up the road again. This time, he does not go to the village which no longer exists, but stops at a stable, once the unworthy residence of animals. Finding it empty, he repairs the roof as best he can and improvises a door. The residence is ready! He returns to Puglie, picks up his family, and with a great spirit of sacrifice they adapt to this haystack, preferring a hard-earned loaf of bread at home to a begged-for one in a foreign land!

The first is followed by a second family, then by a third, who follow the same arrangement. In a short time, the Cerri land, where in happy times there were stables and haystacks, accommodates a good number of families.

Having the example of their forefathers once in the same conditions due to an earthquake, they begin to set up house and family with the great spirit of adaptation and with uncommon courage. Some prepare the land for seed. Others, as true and strong mountain dwellers, remove the rubble and begin the clearing.

The Church, fortunately, remained standing and the families, which have not found stables or haystacks seek refuge there. They eat, cook, and sleep in the church! It is the common mother who, in this moment of sorrow, unites her children, spurs them, and treats them as family.

The parish priest, D. Liborio Di Cosmo, was deported by the Germans. Although old and sick, he also returns to his work post. He had guided this people for many years in happy times. So, in trial and sorrow, he gives the example of resignation and adaptation.

Not finding anything better, he makes the best of the sacristy, among the old and empty shelves and unsafe walls. He has many, large mice as regular companions.

The families grow larger and, finally, even the town council begins to function, on the first floor of the Carlini Hotel. On the rocks of a crumbled wall one can already read: "Wine sold here". The work is fervent to open passage between one underground area and another, which have become residences. Always, they have the fear of hitting a still unexploded mine.

Seeds had been gathered up in quantity by everyone, and remained buried in the residences at the time of the destruction. In the spring, nature, always generous, has in the meantime made grain, potatoes, zucchini, and tomatoes germinate and grow!

The improvised residences, more suitable for animals than men, lacked everything. They remove the rubble, and a piece of bedding, a pickax, a shovel, a tool, or a plate is recovered. At this moment, it seemed that everything had a value!

The men are forced to go into the nearby villages where the people are not always understanding and generous, as they were either little or not at all touched by the war. With some savings left over, the men acquire flour, potatoes, and salt. The little boys, already too tested by the suffering of the war, shrink at this. There are many, many difficulties and obstacles to overcome!

Meanwhile first aid begins to arrive from America. Almost all of them put on clothes and shoes, more worried about decency than fashion.

The government also sends the first technicians to the place. The first residences are raised for those without a roof. Several firms improvise and compete for the work. At the pushing of the government, private enterprise helped by distant relatives is united in a way completely particular to the **UNRA**.

City Hall, the school building, and the nursery school are constructed. Streets are opened, and a lot of the rubble disappears. After a few years, the village, which was completely destroyed by the German mines, once again acquires its ancient characteristics. Life starts, *succisa virescunt* (what was cut down becomes green)! The trees, which were chopped down, give life to new and more luxuriant baby trees.

This land, blessed by God, fertilized by the prayer and work of the monks, and fortunate

possessor of the holy remains of a saint, could not die in silence; much less could it remain abandoned!

I want to hope and wish for the good residents of San Pietro Avellana that the village continues to improve. May war, fount of misery and discord, no longer disturb our beautiful and peaceful land!

## Reconstruction and Present State of San Pietro Avellana [Page 129]

To the right of the Sangro River, where the river cuts a small part of the Sannio territory from the borders of the province of Aquila, San Pietro Avellana rises about 3,000 feet above sea level, on a gentle slope facing the east.

A vague and jagged crown of mountains clothed in beech, oak, and pines in full vegetation is characteristic of the village. From one point of view, it takes away from the village a more ample horizon. However, in compensation, it comforts and enriches the village with pure and embalmed air, which contributes so much to the development of the animal and vegetable life.

From spring until late summer the eye ranges, and rests on an immense expanse of green. The lungs always breathe fresh, pure, perfumed air.

A vast and dense pine forest dominates the village. In the early morning and at dusk, it emanates a very particular, resinous scent, which is carried by the wind into the nearby and faraway houses, inviting the residents even in full winter to open their windows.

Facing the pine forest and the village, the Saint Amico Forest majestically appears with dense plants and luxuriant oak, and with age-old beech trees, which compete to rise directly and arrogantly toward the sky to reach uncommon heights.

At the center of the forest a white spot stands out: it is the church, which the devoted townsmen and others have constructed and dedicated to their protector Saint Amico.

A panoramic highway, leaving the village and running alongside the lower slope of Montemiglio, advancing between cyclamens and fragrant rural flowers into the forest and under the dense shade of very old plants, is the old unfinished dream of the ancestors. Before very long, it will take even the old people by car to the Sanctuary. Until yesterday, they were envious of the young people esteemed to be fortunate because they could reach this enchanting place, inspirer of true poetry and sanctity!

At a few steps from the Sanctuary, protected by an arch surmounted by the statue of Saint Amico, two fountains gush with the very fresh, light, medicinal water of which each visitor or tourist makes most welcome use.

The village, although in the mountain, is rich with beautiful streets. There is not a house where one cannot go by car. The main street crosses the built-up area and proceeds to the train station, a distance of three miles away.

As a traveler goes toward the station, a panorama presents itself to his eye, one which is totally distinctive and enchanting as a whole.

At the foot of the Montedimezzo, among the pines, cypresses, and fruit trees, one catches sight of a large and well-kept block of apartments. These are the present barracks of the most worthy Forest Corps, one day long ago made holy by the silent prayer of the monks, and now the favorite residence of the unrefined.

At the back of the building, the highway proceeds until it disperses in the deepest part of the forest.

Walking along such a poetic road, one encounters a vast clearing outlined by a line of very old plants. At the center, arranged in a horseshoe, are rustic wooden seats and benches. A few yards away, along a completely original path flanked by beautiful and numerous evergreen plants, one goes to the kitchen, which is furnished with every accessory, and then to the many



continuously streaming fountains.

In the summer months, this place is enchanting. Sometimes it is selected for the mountain festival, and very frequently it is selected by various groups of campers, and by private families coming for the most part from the Naples area.

To the left, Montemiglio looks like an immense crouching lion, always cloaked in green. In the summer, and much more so in the fall, it is well-populated. In these months it is very rich with strawberries, whose carpets of red give off a fragrance detectable at a great distance.

Still on the same side, one catches sight from far away of a very high chimney. It is the factory of the indefatigable Ruggero Santilli, knighted for service to industry. He continuously gives work and bread to sixty workers, and provides the best bricks and timber to areas near and far.

To the right, a large flat expanse opens. There is the forest nursery, which provides plants for fodder and reforestation to many areas of Italy. Further on is 'The Tower' with a modern, functional farm: it has dairy cows, calves for slaughter, pigs of the best breeds, and chickens. The hundred cows are selected from the best Dutch, Swiss, and American breeds. Their abundant milk is taken to the creamery, which is equipped with ultramodern machines. This assures quality dairy products to the entire area. At the creamery is a school in full activity, which specializes in dairy sciences. There, many young people can deepen their knowledge and with time become teachers and leaders of the dairy industry.

Further down, the eye is lost in the mysterious forest of Montedimezzo and Feudozzo, which is populated by many wild boars and rare game.

Leaving the village by the side opposite the railroad station, one finds the other pine forest crossed by the road which goes to the cemetery.

This pine forest, encircled by the highway which descends down to the Sangro and crossed by the other road which leads to the cemetery, and with a source of fresh potable water at the center, is most beautiful and accessible to all. In the summer and fall months, it is well-populated by the numerous boys from the mountain camps and by students who, stretched out in

the dense and fragrant shade of the pines, know how to unite the useful to the pleasurable.

Following the road, which flanks the immense forest of the 'Great Defense', one descends to the Sangro River, rich with barbel and the tastiest trout. In the summer months, it is populated by many athletic townsmen and visitors.

Apart from the natural beauties, which are not easily found elsewhere, the village possesses all that a civilized people who are not too demanding could desire to live well in a small town.

There are two steam ovens. One of them is furnished by a bath and shower open to the public. The ovens not only provide bread, always fresh and fragrant, but also many specialties of local desserts, among which are the *ciambelle* (ring-shaped cakes) which all the visitors take with them as a souvenir and a devotion.

There are four modern slaughterhouses furnished with refrigerators, which offer meat to everyone according to his taste. There are some food stores, well-established and well-equipped, capable of satisfying even the most difficult tastes; and two very hygienic, well-furnished bars, with billiard rooms.

There is the pharmacy; the barracks of the local military police, whose jurisdiction extends on Vastogirardi and villages; the headquarters of the Forest Corps, which covers the Avellana area and the neighboring communities; the Didactic Office of the elementary schools, on which several communities depend; the State School of Professional Training; the school of cutting, weaving, and embroidery; two hotels; a dairy; an electric mill; etc. But, what distinguishes San Pietro Avellana from the other villages, even if they are more highly populated, is the courtesy, kindness, and hospitality of its residents!

San Pietro Avellana is a village which was completely destroyed by the war, and which gradually regrew. Without any propaganda, in the summer months it fills with people on vacation, mountain campers, and young campers who are predominantly Neapolitan. Often military people also come, who prefer these beautiful areas, rich with water and forests, for their summer military exercises.

Whoever comes to San Pietro Avellana and only furtively gets to know the environment, will take a liking to it and, having to leave, will return prompted by nostalgia.

The village, although small and not held in any esteem by the Ministry of Tourism, possesses all the natural requisites to become, sooner or later, a center of rest and vacation. I want to hope that the provincial president of the Ministry of Tourism will get to know this beautiful area better. It has no reason to envy the other Swiss and Alpine areas where they admire convenience and the modern comforts created by millionaire speculators, but not always the simplicity and richness of nature, which alone is capable of giving peace, rest, and happiness to anyone who is tired of life, anyone who desires to restore his shaken strengths and nerves worn out by the din of the city and the deafening factories!!!