

## Reviews and Notices

**Lindeijer, Marc. *Il segreto del confessionale. Padre Cappello: vita, grazie, consigli*. Roma: Segretariato Nazionale dell' Apostolato della Preghiera, 2013. ISBN 978-88-7357-568-9. 135 pp.**

The title of the book is eye catching - *The Secret of the Confessional. Father Cappello: Life, Grace, Counsels*. The cover picture is an old confessional taken in what is seemingly an old church in Rome. The picture of the confessional as centerpiece is not only eye-catching, it synthesizes the whole book in one glance. The book is about a Jesuit religious who spent his life teaching Canon Law who made good in the classroom, and hearing confessions after class, who made even better. Indeed, it will always remain a curious fact how reputedly 'holy' people like Padre Cappello during their terrestrial lives are able to perform 'small miracles' so to say. They do not only perform their daily duties well, they perform their daily duties extraordinarily well. The unexpected happens, the impossible emerges. We are not only surprised, we are definitely stunned. How did these 'holy' people know what they did? How did they do it? What was their role in these unusual events?

Faith will provide us the tentative answer however, but that is not easy for everybody to absorb. How was the rationally impossible made to happen? Padre Pio is a recent example. He could sense when a penitent was not truly sorry for the grave sins he was confessing. No contrition, no sacrament. He scolds them and sends them away, asking them to come back when they are ready and sincere whichever comes first. A similar situation happens in this book on Padre Felice Cappello, S.J. We read in some 65 pages the testimonies recorded by various people who experienced these 'small miracles' obtained through the intercession of Padre Cappello. Call it faith, or call it grace. Again, we will never be sure. The crowd who may never have had the fortune to compare notes regarding Padre Cappello all attest to the positive evidence of favors being granted through his intercession during his lifetime as confessor and professor.

The good Jesuit priest was not only a brilliant, and much consulted academician, and a revered professor in canon law at the Gregorian University. He was indeed more known and sought for as a confessor at the *Chiesa di Sant' Ignazio*. From the classroom at the Gregorian, he would cross and walk to his confessional where a crowd had already gathered and followed the long line.

Padre Felice is introduced in this book by a former student and penitent at the same time – Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re. The student describes the professor as rather short in height, slightly built, gifted with a penetrating intelligence and a strong will. The eyes were expressive of goodness, very discreet, of intense simplicity and humility, and with an easy smile. He taught with utter simplicity but was precise and profound. He quoted texts and sources to bolster his point, and he does them easily out of memory without missing a word. Approachable to students, he manifested a sincere affability. He was gifted with a clear vision of problems, equipped with an extraordinary erudition expressed in always the right tone and with the right words. He published a lot which underwent numerous editions outstanding of which were five (5) volumes on the Sacraments. He was never speculative and his articles revealed a consciousness of actual problems and contemporary discourse, though his words always led to a lot of reflections. In so doing, he was able to penetrate the essence of the law in an almost metaphysical acuity without being abstract. In so doing, he served the Church with unquestioning fidelity and unconditional submission. Canon law for P. Felice was meant to save souls and so he dealt with it in a practical and concrete manner.

It is to be noted that he was a cousin of John Paul I. In some of his personal notes he left behind, Padre Mondrone, a biographer, notes that he has written some of the following statements expressing his decisive spirit for penance and sorrow - “I want to be a victim for reparation for Jesus who had suffered so much injury, receiving so many offences; the Lord had suffered so many conflicts. Should I remain indifferent and insensible? No! Jesus wants that I make a reparation, that I be an instrument of comfort and consolation. I will do it willingly. I want to be a victim for expiation: Jesus wants the conversion of sinners. He died for all. He calls all sweetly and yet they do not listen at all. I want to intercede for their sake; with the sweetest heart of Jesus and obtain their conversion. I want to be a victim of love, to love Jesus this will be the mission of my life, etc.” The third portion of this 135-page book contains his spiritual counsels including thirteen pages of photos. The first of the *Consigli per la vita spirituale* reads thus: *Tutto passa, tutto dilegua, tutto finisce. L' eternita non finisce mai* (everything passes away, everything disappears, everything finishes; it is Eternity which never ends). I purposely quoted the Italian text because

the language is not only expressive, it is music to the soul. This portion is divided into – Holy thoughts (June 1939); In moments of temptations (1939); Practical methods for sanctification (1939); A short spiritual program (1939); Some norms to become always better (1936); Counsels and Notices (for a religious as victim of love); Formula of daily offering (14 May 1933, 1939); Prayer to the Lady (June 1939); The Vow to the Holy Rule (3 June 1933); Examination of Conscience; Practical Norms for a soul who aspires to religious perfection (2 Feb. 1933); Ordering of Spiritual Life (1941-45). This portion should involve more time for the reader and this seems to be the heart of sanctification of Padre Cappello.

Produced in excellent quality glossy paper and strong binding, this volume promises to withstand the rigors of use in spiritual reading exercises. Please note that the spiritual counsels he wrote possess a similar tone as the contents of *The Imitation of Christ*. Note too that persons who are in the process of being formally declared by the Church as saints for the calendar in God's own time like Padre Cappello do entertain requests for their intercession with more than equal promptitude. Enjoy the meditation and keep the faith in charity for all men of good will!

**Norberto M. Castillo, O.P.**

