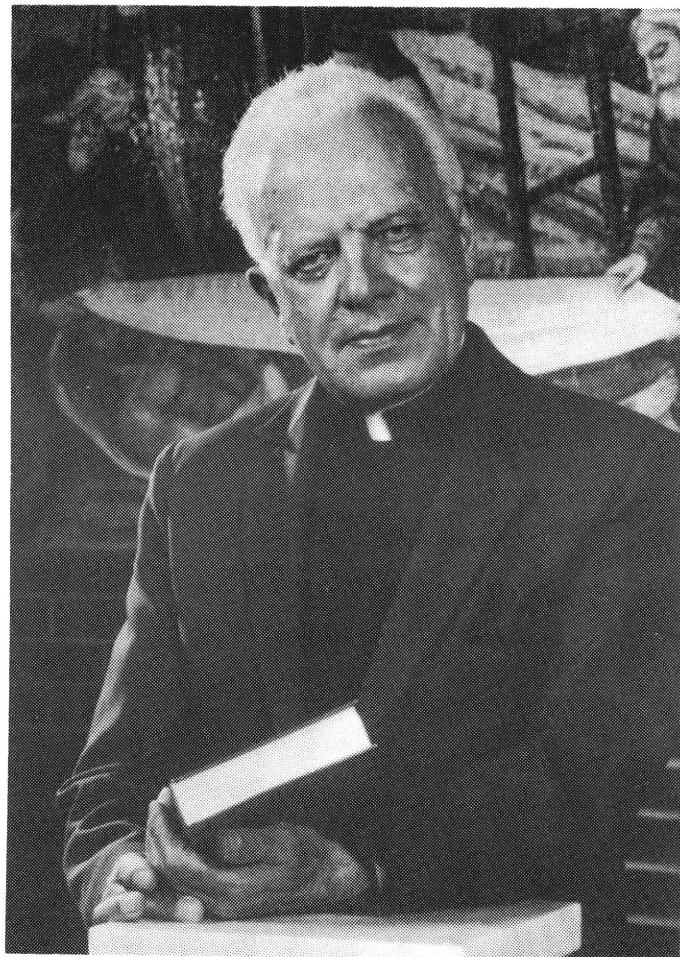


# Father Peter Rinaldi, S.D.B.

## 1910 - 1993



*Born:* June 5, 1910  
*Professed:* August 5, 1927  
*Ordained:* July 7, 1935  
*Died:* February 28, 1993

Dear Confreres,

God called Father Peter Rinaldi to eternity on February 28, 1993 at 2:45 A.M. Father had been hospitalized at the Cottolengo Hospital (*the Piccola Casa Della Divina Providenza*) in Turin for nine days, and after being in a light coma for about one week, he died of a heart attack. He was 82 years old.

This well-loved, much respected, gentle and humble shepherd of souls was born on June 5, 1910 (a twin with his brother Paul) at Lu, Monferrato, near Turin in Piedmont, Italy. Father was one of 13 children of Filippo and Ernestina Boccalatte Rinaldi. Of the eight boys, five entered the Salesian priesthood. While two of the four girls became Salesian Sisters. His grand uncle, Father Philip Rinaldi, third successor to St. John Bosco, headed the Salesian Congregation and was declared Blessed in May of 1992.

Father Peter came to the United States at the age of 15. At first his parents were reluctant to give him permission to join his two older brothers, Louis and Caesar, both Salesians in the United States. Finally with the urging and blessing of his



grand uncle Father Philip, they agreed. Father Rinaldi became a Salesian in the United States. He had studied at the Oratory in Valdocco during his high school days. Then he made his novitiate at New Rochelle, New York, in 1926. He made his first profession on September 5, 1927, also at New Rochelle and finally was perpetually professed on July 4, 1931 at Newton, New Jersey. He had graduated from Fordham University and from the Don Bosco International Theological Institute (*Pontifical Salesian Athenaeum*) in Turin, Italy.

Ordained on July 7, 1935 in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians, Turin, Father held teaching and administrative positions in our schools for several years. He had taught languages and history and served as Catechist in Newton, and Director at Goshen, New York.



In 1948, he was appointed Pastor of Corpus Christi Church, Port Chester, New York, a position he held for 29 years until September of 1977. During his pastorate Corpus Christi marked its greatest growth. The church building was renovated with mosaics and marble. The main altar was installed. The lower church added, and the school, convent, youth center and the Holy Shroud Chapel completed the complex.

Father Rinaldi was well-known not only as a zealous pastor, writer, lecturer and retreat preacher, but especially for his work with the Holy Shroud of Turin. He

first came to know about the Holy Shroud while he served as an altar boy in the

Cathedral of St. John the Baptist in Turin, Italy, where the relic is preserved in the Royal Chapel behind the Chancel. He has written extensively about the Shroud over the years. An article he wrote in a catholic magazine "The Sign" in 1934, gave impetus to Shroud research in the U.S.A.

Father has written four books and numerous articles about the Holy Shroud:

*It Is The Lord, The Man In The Shroud, When Millions Saw The Holy Shroud, and I Saw The Holy Shroud.* His other books

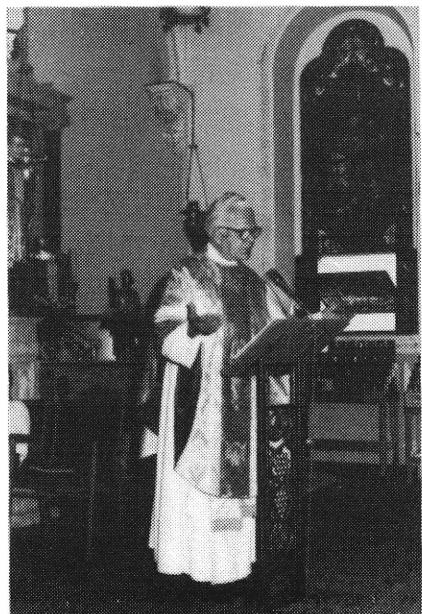
were biographies and pastoral: *Father Alfonso; By Love Compelled* about Blessed Philip Rinaldi; *Man With A Dream* about Don Bosco, and *In Verdant Pastures* about Corpus Christi Parish. Father's numerous writings and lectures on the Holy Shroud are aimed at securing the assistance of scientists in researching the Turin relic. In the mid-nineteen seventies, Fr. Rinaldi was one of those who challenged science to apply its expertise. Thus, he was instrumental both in encouraging a general atmosphere for the scientific study of the Shroud and in helping to create specific circumstances for the American scientific group known as the *Shroud of Turin Research Project, Inc. (STURP)* to become involved in the 1978 testing. His personal friendship with Umberto II, the late King of Italy, who owned the Shroud, permitted Father to act as an intermediary and to represent the king, the Vatican, Turin church officials, and the scientists.

As pastor Father took the lead in the ecumenical movement on a local level as he hosted joyous ecumenical encounters at Corpus Christi Church, and he developed a truly family spirit in the parish.



On the occasion of Father's Fiftieth Anniversary of ordination to the priesthood on November 17, 1985, President Ronald Reagan wrote, *...you have acquired an admirable reputation for your scholarship and work on the Holy Shroud. In sharing your gifted scholarship, you have also shared your love of God. You have reached out to, and touched, the minds, hearts and souls of countless numbers throughout the nation and the world.*

Fr. Rinaldi played an important role by acting as the ambassador for numerous Shroud groups in the United States and abroad to the Archbishop of Turin. His undiminished dedication to the Shroud, his keen perception and his indefatigable efforts to represent all interests fairly and judiciously has made him the recognized diplomat of the international Shroud community. Father served as Vice-President of the Holy Shroud Guild and was a member of the Association of Scientists and Scholars International for the Shroud of Turin, Ltd. He was its guiding inspiration since 1983.



One of Father Peter's greatest virtues was certainly his simplicity of life, although very cultured and learned he never put on airs, but rather tended to bring himself to the level of whomever he was with whether a person of great dignity and prestige or the smallest child. He knew how to put one at ease, always ready with an interesting story or anecdote, a word of encouragement or praise.

Father Rinaldi had a special rapport with our Salesian Sisters. One of his great delights was celebrating Mass

each morning at 6:30 A.M. with the sisters in their chapel at Corpus Christi Convent. Father Peter genuinely credited the Sisters as the Special ingredient that enabled the parish to more completely service the needs of its youth, in the truest Salesian Spirit.

Fr. Rinaldi really built a family spirit within the parish Community. For him, church was a community of faith. Concerned with people and their problems, he proved himself to be a saintly, gentle pastor. He made the important events in people's lives truly special, whether they were Baptisms, First Communions, Graduations, Weddings or Anniversaries.

What made Father Rinaldi dear to his parishioners was his ability to make them feel loved, his fatherly manner, his personal interest in everyone he met. He was present to families that needed help and often pointed them in the right direction with his comforting words and wisdom. One could feel the power of God through him. He helped people have a greater understanding of themselves, of God and of life in general.

When he visited the classrooms, the children were always attentive and quiet as they listened to his every word. He knew how to reach the youth of the parish, helping them to prepare and celebrate the major feasts of Jesus and Mary, and Don Bosco. Inspiring them and praising them at every opportunity, Father won the hearts of the young.

While Father was hospitalized and in a coma at the Cottolengo members of his family and several Salesians and Cooperators visited him and kept vigil at his bedside, especially before his death. *He left this world with a peaceful, serene and regal look on his face*, says Andy McAleer, one of our parishioners and close friends who had visited Father shortly before he died. *In life, Father's special gentle smile was always a comforting experience. In death, he seemed to regain the special dignity he had in life, almost an elegance. His bearing was princely. His chin was erect, and the posture of his head was regal. In*

*life, he was a prince among priests and the bearing of his corpse sang out this truth,* said McAleer upon viewing Father Peter's death.

A solemn funeral Mass was celebrated in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Turin on Wednesday, March 3, 1993. Another Mass was said on Thursday, the 4th of March, in the town of Lu just before his burial in the Rinaldi family mausoleum there.

On Saturday, March 6<sup>th</sup>, 1993, an awe-inspiring Memorial Mass was celebrated at his Corpus Christi Church with about 1,000 people, young and old attending. Bishop Anthony Mestice, representing Cardinal John O'Connor was the main celebrant along with Bishop Marconi of the Newark Diocese. Forty-five other priests concelebrated this truly worthy and beautiful, solemn liturgy. About thirty-five Salesian Sisters and Brothers were present as well as many cooperators.

In his funeral homily, Fr. Joseph Tyminski described Father's *special characteristic, the family spirit, as essential. This family spirit is the hallmark of Corpus Christi....with Father Rinaldi's passing, Corpus Christi has lost a loving shepherd, a loyal friend and a courageous leader. The Salesians have lost a vital link to our Salesian Heritage through so many living witnesses who knew St. John Bosco personally, like Fr. Alfonso, Blessed Philip Rinaldi, Cardinal Cagliero, Blessed Aloysius Versiglia and many others.*

Several tributes were given at the end of the Mass by both Bishops, Reverend Tim Ploch, our Provincial; by the village mayor and Fr. John Masiello, the present pastor. Several laymen and school children each voiced their acclamation in heartfelt expressions of Father's fatherliness, love, zeal, self-sacrificing spirit, his humility and great kindness.

Fr. Rinaldi will always remain in the hearts of the many people whose lives he touched through his kindness and zealous priestly ministry. His gentle spirit will long be remembered along with many fond memories of what he has done to

build a true family spirit in the parish of his beloved Corpus Christi. We shall never forget him. Father leaves two sisters, Sister Philomena Rinaldi and Filippina Rinaldi Mortara, both of Italy and numerous nephews and nieces, among them Sr. Mary Rinaldi, F.M.A. in the United States.

Yours in Don Bosco,

Rev. John Masiello, S.D.B.

*Pastor of Corpus Christi*

Port Chester, New York

