

AT THE ROOTS OF INTEGRAL ECOLOGY: THE PRIMEVAL EXPERIENCE OF LORENZO MILANI COMPARETTI IN THE RURAL AREAS OF THE FLO- RENTINE ARCHDIOCESE TERRITORY IN TUSCANY, ITALY

Introduction

About fifty years ago (June 1967), the Catholic priest, Lorenzo Milani Comparetti died in Firenze. Few people and priests attended his funeral at *Sant'Andrea a Barbiana* Parish, a mountain locality which is situated in the *Mugello*, a rural region in Northern Tuscany not far from Firenze. The short life of this priest (44 years old) has become very famous for the establishment of his original rural school, which is well-known today as the School of Barbiana, and his collective writings: *Lettera a una Professoressa* [Letter to a Teacher] and then, the *Lettera ai Giudici* [Letter to the Judges]. The latter is a «document», written towards the end of his life, in response to the accusation of incitement to the crime of desertion and military disobedience¹. These above-mentioned writings represented the first experiment in collective writing, and indirectly anticipated the contents of the following *Protest of 68*. For example, in France, the *Lettera a una Professoressa* was adopted by young students as a manifesto for their ideas on public school reform. The «Milani» approach to education for social justice gives importance to a number of issues, notably social class and race issues (especially in relation to his critique of North-South relations and cultural/technological transfer). Additional issues included «the collective dimension of learning and action (with emphasis placed on reading and writing the word and the world collectively), student-teacher and teacher-student interactions (a remarkable form of peer tutoring), reading and critical response to the media (newspapers), the existential basis of learning (from the occasional to the profound motive) and the fusion of academic and technical knowledge»².

Within the Catholic Church, this charismatic priest was thwarted and misunderstood for many years. Eventually, in 2017, his importance to the history of the Italian Catholic Church was recognized by Pope Francis³. «Well before the Second Vatican

¹ C. BORG, M. CARDONA, S. CARUANA, *Social Class, Language and Power. "Letter to a Teacher": Lorenzo Milani and the School of Barbiana*, The Netherlands 2013, p. IX.

² *Ivi*, p. IX.

³ We outline the recent visit on June 20th, 2017 of Pope Francis at the Barbiana Parish and his prey on the tomb of Lorenzo Milani, and the homily of Card. Giuseppe Betori, Bishop of Firenze, in occasion of Mass for fiftieth anniversary of Milani's death.

Council, Milani had been advocating a perception of the Church that was very similar to the concept of Christianity, referred to by Cornel West and Paulo Freire, as well as others – notably, Gustavo Gutiérrez, Leonardo Boff, Evaristo Arns and Frei Betto – that being the ‘prophetic church’. This stands in contrast to the ‘Constantinian Church’ or the ‘Church of Empire’. His pedagogical and social insights are, therefore, inspiring to critical pedagogy as insights into liberation theology⁴. The bibliography on this young intellectual is currently wide-spread⁵. “Rivers of words” have been spent relating aspects of his human story within the Catholic Church of Diocese in Firenze, and many others on his innovative pedagogy experimented at the Barbiana School. Instead, in this article, we are interested in highlighting other aspects of his life. Of particular interest, are the contributions that he established within the rural context of Calenzano initially, and then Barbiana, as these were the two places where he was obliged to perform his services as a catholic priest. «Milani accepted his role as a ‘mountain priest’ (*prete di montagna*), rather than simply a country priest, as part of God’s grand design⁶.

The Archdiocese territory of Firenze and its social and environmental constraints

The Archdiocese of Firenze extends over a surface area of 2,205 km², with a total of 833.624 inhabitants, as was recorded in 2016. Within this area, there are the two municipalities linked to the life of Lorenzo Milani Comparetti, namely: Calenzano (43°51’24” N; 11°09’49” E) and Vicchio (43°56’ N; 11°28’ E). In the latter, the locality named Barbiana (43°53’48,62” N; 11°27’38,08” E), is situated.

Calenzano (8,232 inhabitants in 1951) is 8 km from Firenze, and is situated along the principle road headed towards Barberino di Mugello (44°00’ N; 11°14’ E), the first small town one encounters before entering the Mugello Valley. Calenzano was reachable by train, motorbike and public transport. In the first years of the 19th Century few people owned a car. The very rich Milani Family had five cars, a rarity in Firenze. At that time, Calenzano still “maintained” the typical character of an agricultural center. In 1899, 1,000 hectares of land in Calenzano was dedicated to the cultivation of olive groves (...), whereas 3,418 and 1,800 hectares were, respectively, used for the cultivation of vineyards and soft wheat. In 1904, there were three cooperatives (...). In 1895, there were approximately twenty small industrial activities, such as workshops and factories, and ten stone quarries, employing about one hundred people. Other workers found employment in the nearest small towns situated in the plains of Firenze such as Prato (43°52’50,93” N; 11°05’47,62” E), 77,631 inhabitants in 1951, about 15 km from Calenzano, and Sesto Fiorentino (43°50’ N; 11°12’ E), 18,657 inhabitants in 1951, a satellite town of Firenze which is very famous for the pottery manufacture of Doccia which attracts many workers⁷. In the book *Esperienze Pastorali*, the author,

⁴ P. MAYO, *Lorenzo Milani in Our Times*, «Policy Futures in Education», 11, 5, 2013, p. 517.

⁵ Recently, in Italy all writings and letters (1928-1967) of Lorenzo Milani Comparetti have been collected and published (April 2017) in a unique book (two volumes) entitled *Don Milani. Tutte le opere* (curators: F. RUOZZI, A. CANFORA, V. OLDANO, S. TANZARELLA).

⁶ MAYO, *Lorenzo Milani in Our Times*, cit., p. 517.

⁷ Data cited in *Alle origini di «Esperienze Pastorali»: don Lorenzo Milani cappellano a San Donato a Calen-*

Lorenzo Milani Comparetti, tells us about the condition of the Saint Donato Parish in 1954: «Its dominion extends over an area, comprising, in part, of mountains and plains, respectively. Some *podere* (farm holdings or farm estates)⁸ are unreachable and dried, whereas others are easily reachable and well-irrigated. Hence, Saint Donato is an observatory from which it is possible to be a witness of some important phases of both the mountain and peasant rebellions, and its inexorable march towards the town». Lorenzo Milani Comparetti identified three principles and unhappy idiosyncrasies characterizing the rural exodus, namely: the escape from the mountains to the plains, the escape from the social condition of peasant to that of industry worker, and finally the escape from the rural villages to the towns. Three principle migratory steps were involved in the following order: firstly, the displacement of individuals from the top of mountains to the lands of intermediate altitudes within the dominion of the Saint Donato Parish; secondly the displacement from the latter to fertile soils, and thirdly the displacement of individuals from the agricultural sector to industrial jobs. In the dominion of the Saint Donato Parish, people were distributed either in groups of houses (7) or in isolated houses (43) making a collective total of 291 houses that, during the past three centuries, spread towards the plains. The peasants of the Saint Donato Parish owned only 12 houses (53 families), whilst landowners and wholesalers represented about 55.5% of all owners. At the basis of the rural exodus, there were not only economic reasons but also social constraints linked to the geographical and cultural origin of the respective people. Therefore, for a young peasant to marry a girl from Calenzano was very difficult.

Lorenzo Milani Comparetti arrived in Barbiana in 1954, (7th December).

About ten years later, a letter written by his students well describes how Barbiana was⁹:

Barbiana is not even a hamlet, it is a church, and houses are dispersed among woods and crop fields. Mountain sites like this one are unpopulated. Only our school [School of Barbiana] was able to hold back our parents, if not for that, Barbiana would be now a desert. As a whole, here there are only 39 persons. Our fathers are peasants or laborers. The land is very poor, because rains causes runoff soil, leaving out rocky outcrops. Water runs off towards the plain. Therefore, the peasants eat all their agricultural products, and nothing can be sold. Even the laborer's life is hard. They get up at 5 a.m. each early morning, and walk for seven kilometers just to arrive at the train station, and then, another one-hour and half is necessary to reach Firenze, where they are working as manual workers. In many houses [in Barbiana] there is no light and water. The wasn't a road [to go to Barbiana]. Hence, we adapted a little bit as to allow a car to pass.

zano (1947-1954), *Don Lorenzo Milani*, Atti del Convegno di Studi, Firenze, 18-20 aprile 1980, a cura di A. Scattigno, Comune di Firenze 1981, pp. 117-142, and found in the statistical report Camera di Commercio e Industria di Firenze, *Statistica delle industrie della Provincia di Firenze, Anno 1899*, 1899.

⁸ *Podere* is typically a part or portion of a rural estate (large estate), and it is managed by a resident land agent or farm bailiff (*fattore*), which lives at a rural home on the same estate. On a *podere* the local farm-laborers are working; they are named usually in Tuscany as *coloni* or *mezzadri*. According to the agricultural traditions in Tuscany, a *podere a mezzadria* is a farm running on the sharecropping system. In Italian, the term *podere* is the plural of the *podere*.

⁹ *Lettera dei ragazzi di Barbiana ai ragazzi di Piadena*, 1963, 1th November [Letter of the pupils of Barbiana to the pupils of Piadena].

The few buildings of Barbiana are still perched along the northern side of Monte Giovi, situated in the territory of the Vicchio municipality in the Mugello. The latter is both a “historical” and at the same time a natural region of approximately 570 km² extending towards the north of Firenze. It embraces the longitudinal part of the Sieve [river] Valley and forms an ample inter-mountainous basin of tectonic origin, confined on one side by a principal watershed of the Appennines [peninsular mountain chain in Italy], and on the other side by a parallel ridge of the Calvana – Morello and Giovi mountains, respectively¹⁰. This eastern side of Tuscany was geologically characterized by a system of Villafranchian lakes dating back to Pliocene – Pleistocene epochs. Among these ancient lakes, was the Lake of Mugello. Today, there is its hydrographic basin along the upper course of the Sieve River. This basin has been covered over time by lacustrine, fluvial-lacustrine and alluvial deposits. The southern border is represented by the massif of Giovi, a sandstone geological formation. A system of alluvial terraces, sedimentary hills and debris flows are currently characterizing the beauty of the Mugello landscape. According to Rodolfi (2014)¹¹, there are four respective levels or terraces, respectively ranging in altitude from the highest and oldest (level one) to the lowest and youngest (level four). These levels have a corresponding increasing gradient in soil fertility, and thus can be exploited to different degrees from an agricultural perspective. Therefore, cultivations are more developed at level four, particularly on the bottom plain along the Sieve River. Similarly, settlements of people follow an analogous altimetric gradient. Regarding the distribution of inhabitants in the municipality of Vicchio, the following demographical pattern was reported in 1951 in relation to the gradient in altitude: 150-200 inhabitants living on the plains, 80-100 at middle altitudes and 20-40 on the top of hills or mountains. The overall demographic density in Mugello was about 83 inhabitants per km², and in Vicchio this figure was 74 inhabitants per km²¹². Historically, from the year 1552 (22,902 inhabitants) up until 1921 (56,817 inhabitants), the population of the Mugello area increased (+148%). However, from 1921 to 1951 (coinciding with the historical period of the life of Lorenzo Milani) this population partially decreased (-8.8%). Within the Mugello region the mountainous landscape was characterized by a full woody cover (5,534 hectares), where beeches and oaks occupied about 65% of the surface area and chestnut groves, about 30%, respectively. It was here that smallholders (2-3 hectares) cultivated their impoverished lands. In general, the agricultural region of the Mugello has been always dominated by big landowners (1,000 hectares and more). Since the XV-XVI centuries, the general tenure system has not changed. During the 1950s, about 1,600 *fattorie* (big farms or rural estates) occupied about 8/10ths of all the arable land (55,079 hectares), corresponding to 25%, with all proprietries having on average an extension of 50-300 hectares. On average, each *fattoria* (big farm or rural estate) could be subdivided into 60 or more, *poderi* of 6-15 hectares, in which approximately 60-70 peasants or day laborers, could have worked and lived. Lowlands at the base of hills were usually occupied by large *poderi* where cereals were grown, whilst on the top of hills, the *poderi* were the smallest, and olives

¹⁰ G. BARBIERI, *Il Mugello. Studio di geografia umana*, «Rivista Geografica Italiana», LX, 3, settembre 1953, pp. 296-378.

¹¹ G. RODOLFI, *Il Mugello e la Sieve. Storia antica e moderna di un paesaggio che scompare*, Firenze 2014, p. 56.

¹² BARBIERI, *Il Mugello. Studio di geografia*, cit., pp. 296-378.

and grapes represented the main cultivations. On the mountains, there were the so-called *cascine* that are wide *poderi*, where agricultural exploitation of chestnuts groves often took place, owing to the scarce productivity of the latter.

In general, the agricultural system in the Mugello was governed by a poor and a rigid social-system that remained unchanged over the centuries, and was characterized by the mistreatment of peasants, mountaineers and small breeders¹³. Hence, Milani's aversion to the social injustices that were well rooted in the semi-feudal tenure system is understandable. The Mugello has always been the breadbasket of Firenze, and a great part of the arable lands was owned by rich merchants, such as the very famous Medici Family.

Lorenzo Milani Comparetti saw the extreme social and cultural injustices in the Mugello. Hence, he denounced them publically by his writings.

The author wrote:

In Italy the richness has been wasted and it still is wasted: we can not say that a policy of austerity has been performed in a country which imports soccer players at the price of one hundred million for each player, and all its small harbors are full of luxurious yachts. The poor people have been content with a strange policy of public works (it is strange because is not seriously linked to developmental issues, but it is linked to the problems of electoral clientelism) (...).

Each year and for six years, the long history of floods, deaths, devastated families, billions of money swallowed by the flooding water, is repeating itself, each year on the same date! Any fundamental problem has yet to be solved.

In brief, these words still describe the current social and environmental situation in Italy. For more than sixty years of republic democratic regime, only two things seem to have either changed or increased the price of soccer players and quantity of natural disasters, as was noted by Pecorini, on 1996¹⁴. In Italy, over the last 50 years (1950-2001), the urban sprawl has increased 500% with a concomitant reduction of five million hectares in agricultural lands. Nowadays, the rate of soil consumption corresponds to one hundred football fields per day (about 8 m²/s)¹⁵. Since the beginning of the last century, there have been approximately 12,600 deaths, and 700,000 missing and displaced persons and casualties, associated with 4,000 damaging hydro-geological events. The costs due to landslides between 1951-2009 was approximately 52 billion euros. The flooding of vulnerable areas in Italy constituted about 12,263 km² in 2013, while those lands vulnerable to landslide events encompassed 17,254 km². In Tuscany, the total surface area

¹³ In a letter to his mother, dated July 14, 1952, the priest Lorenzo Milani seems to be expecting his final destination to the «mountain» [Barbiana] but with a certain fatalism; his pastoral service at the San Donato Parish was in fact ending. He wrote that one time at Barbiana destination «(...) he would be appointed rector of a small mountain church...» where he would devoted «to the catechism and studies and I would have way to refine my spirituality in solitude because it is very urgent need!». Cfr. L. MILANI, *Lettere alla mamma 1943-1967*, Milano 1973, pp. 110-111.

¹⁴ G. PECORINI, *Don Milani! Chi era costui?*, Milano 1996, pp. 211-215.

¹⁵ These data were coming out from the Conference *Il Rischio geologico in Toscana: le strutture arginali*, hold in Firenze on 2015, March 17.

affected by damaging hydro-geological events was 2,542 km²¹⁶. Moreover, 13.3% of the Tuscan region (22,987 km²) has been classified as either high or very high hazardous landslide areas¹⁷. Public expenses aimed at preventing hydro-geological instability has amounted to about 1,120 million euros (0.14% of the 800 billion euro total of the state budget). Noteworthy, in 2017, the total budget of the “football market” in Italy is about 1,037.73 million euros.

The Milani Comparetti family and the crisis of the Mezzadria

As described above, the sensibility of Lorenzo Milani Comparetti towards the state of poverty, experienced by poor peasants, was probably attributable to the fact that his father, Albano (1885-1947), was an important landowner in Montespertoli (43°39' N; 11°05' E), a hilly locality in the Chianti share, south of Firenze. “Gigliola” is still the name of the family farm. The property was acquired on 1914 by the grandfather Luigi Milani, and for the following 30 years, it was shared among Albano Milani and his brothers¹⁸.

Over the centuries, in the rural areas of Central Italy a strict relationship linked land property and family-labour characterizing not only a specific typology of agrarian contract such as sharecropping (*mezzadria*), but also a proper rural life-style. In Tuscany, in fact, the *mezzadria* contract cannot exist without the *podere*, which cannot be lived without a rural family working on. In an extensive way, this sharecropping system was able to shape a «psychological – contractual mentality»¹⁹ based on the strong awe between the landowner and the sharecropper (*mezzadro*), and its working family. For that, the Tuscan sharecropping assumes a specific denomination such as *mezzeria* or *mezzadria* distinguishing it from the other types of sharecropping contracts existing in other rural areas of Italy. Originally, the *mezzeria* was a contract adapted for a socio-economic condition characterized by a scarce circulation of money. When there was not a money transaction between sharecropper and landowner the expenses and the gains were shared for 50%. Over the centuries, and in particular during the Nineteenth Century, the *mezzeria* contract evolved because of a full and articulated debate within the *Accademia dei Georgofili*. Here, the open mindset opinions on were represented by Cosimo Ridolfi (1794-1865), which proposed an overcoming of this type of contract finalized to introduce a capitalistic system in Tuscany. *Par contre*, a big part of landowners, represented by Raffaello Lambruschini (1788-1873), expressed conservative positions: they preferred to keep alive the mythic vision of the *mezzadria*²⁰. The positions of this stakeholder group were prevailing

¹⁶ G. STELLA, *Quei 53 miliardi persi nell'Italia che frana. E il governo al territorio dà solo 30 milioni*, «Corriere della Sera», 20 ottobre 2013.

¹⁷ ISPRA, *Disesto Idrogeologico in Italia: pericolosità e indicatori di rischio. Sintesi Rapporto 2015*, Rome 2015, p. 3.

¹⁸ F. FUSI, *Albano Milani Comparetti: un notevole a Montespertoli tra guerra e liberazione*, in V. MILANI COMPARETTI, *Don Milani e suo padre. Carezzarsi con le parole. Testimonianze inedite dagli archivi di famiglia*, Roma 2017, pp. 151-199.

¹⁹ P. PASSANITI, *Riflessioni sul senso storico della mezzadria. La versione toscana di un contratto particolare*, «Historia et Ius. Rivista di storia giuridica dell'età medioevale e moderna», 20, 9, 2016, pp. 1-22.

²⁰ On the *mezzadria* and its historical evolution, there is a wide specialist literature. In particular, we refer

during the Nineteenth Century such as to impose the *mezzadria* even after Italy was united, and in particular in the Center of the Peninsula. Some aspects and customs of the contract of *mezzadria* changed over time. During the years of the First World War it went into crisis because the social forces requested its improvement favoring the sharecropper part. However, nobody discussed about the validity of this contract and its existence. On May 1933, the Fascist Regime and the corporatist interests encouraged the *mezzadria* by the use of the *Carta della Mezzadria* [Mezzadria Charta]. Local uses and customs and some particular aspects characterizing the “*mezzadrile* life”, varying place by place, overlapped the content of this document. In any case, it was signified by a strong paternalism by the landowner towards his sharecroppers²¹. This was the state of art of the *mezzadria* contract when Albano Milani Comparetti managed the different *poderi* of the Gigliola Farm in Montespertoli.

In *Esperienze Pastorali*, Lorenzo Milani Comparetti described the aptitude of the inhabitants of Calenzano to be submissive to the willing of landowner for their marriage choices and other private choices important for their personal life. This system was thus so intrusive toward peasants and farm-laborers that it even resulting in conditioning the personal reproductive choices within family units.

This system survived up until the legal end of the Italian sharecropping in 1964. Today, the ancient contractual force of the *mezzadria* and its social relations of agrarian production are yet recognizable admiring the countryside landscape: «the beautiful of Tuscan landscape is like the dramatic beautiful of a fossil» (Salinari, *pers. comm.*, 2004)²².

The life of Milani Comparetti Family met the agrarian history of Tuscany of the XX Century. In 1946 Albano Milani Comparetti wrote a pamphlet entitled *La Riforma Agraria. La Mezzadria*, [The Agrarian Reform. The Sharecropping system] where he supported the need to preserve the sharecropping system (*mezzadria*) and the rigid hierarchal social structure existing in the Tuscan countryside. For its author, the stability of the *mezzadria* over the many centuries respect other contractual regimes represented in social and economic terms such as a form of security system valid for both

to these authors: G. BIAGIOLI, *La mezzadria poderale nell'Italia centro-settentrionale in età moderna e contemporanea (secoli XV-XX)*, «Rivista di Storia dell'Agricoltura», XLII, 2, dicembre 2002, pp. 53-102; G. GIORGETTI, *Contadini e proprietari nell'Italia moderna: rapporti di produzione e contratti agrari dal secolo XVI a oggi*, Milano 1974; G. PICCINNI, *Mezzadria e potere politico. Suggestioni dell'età moderna e contemporanea e realtà medievale*, «Studi Storici», 46, 4, ottobre-dicembre 2005, pp. 923-943; G. CONTINI, *Aristocrazia contadina. Sulla complessità della società mezzadrile. Fattorie, famiglie, individui*, Pistoia 2008.

²¹ *Mezzadria* was thus not a simple contract producing reciprocal obligations, but it was a source of unwritten obligations for the peasants and their families living on the *podere*. A document about this sharecropping contract, which is mentioned here such as a paradigmatic example, is the so-called *Libretto colonico* (1904) [Farmhouse Booklet] of the *Podere Via del Porto 2°* which was a land part of the *La Real Fattoria di Bettolle*, a big farm situated in Sinalunga Village near Siena (Tuscany). This *podere* was cropped by the sharecropper (*mezzadro*) Mr. Domenico Dringoli with his family. In the Farmhouse Booklet are reported a series of articles (rules) specifying obligations and rights of the landowner, on one side, and obligations and rights of the sharecropper and his family, on the other side. Some its articles are invasive for the private life of the sharecropper, which was obliged to make both a request of marriage to the landowner and a reporting about his newborns in his family. The sharecropper was not authorized to frequent dives and walks away with his familiars from the farmhouse, even if for a short time.

²² G. SALINARI, *Lessons of historical demography at the Department of Historical and Geographical Studies*, University of Florence, a.a. 2004-2005.

the landowners and sharecroppers. Whereas the *mezzadria* «found its natural setting and its natural and safety development, the countryside was so transformed such as a garden of incomparable beauty and fertility, where around the farmhouse, upon the *podere*, a small and natural autarchy taken its own form»²³. This small autarchic system «guarantees as to the settlers as to the landowners their basic foods, and provides in a not small part and in each circumstance, that sense of solid certainty that is perhaps an element contributing to the development of the love of the land in each farmers»²⁴. The aesthetic beauty of the Tuscan agrarian landscape is not thus extraneous to a crystallized social and environmental equilibrium created over past centuries. For Albano Milani Comparetti any risked agrarian reform promoted by the extreme political parties would have been dangerous and ruinous for all agrarian economy in Tuscany at that time. For him the *mezzadria* is that particular system of contract in «association having a type of labor remuneration *sui generis*, and it is immensely superior, both socially and economically» respect others polyculture and multi-cropping systems. In fact, «it assures to the sharecropping family accommodation and food, and incomes not only for its worker-members, but also for the other ones that are not able to make an agricultural labor»²⁵ but that are living on the same *podere*. In terms of Capital and Work relationship, the sharecropping system was considered by our Authors as a very favorable case respect to industry sector, because it was free from monetary transition between agrarian entrepreneur and agricultural workers, and it was also free from the inflation and famine. For this reason, the sharecropping keeps itself a certain degree of modernity. It is valid for big and medium size farms.

Indeed, the local agrarian history of Montespertoli shows as a series of documented nine famines occurred from 1591 until 1766²⁶, when Pietro Leopoldo Gran Duchy of Tuscany introduced the liberalization of the soft wheat market. From 1762 to 1771 in the municipal territory of Montespertoli were produced 10,312 hectoliters of soft wheat grains, and 799 hectoliters of olive oil and 4,939 of wine. One hundred years later, the same products reached respectively 26,504 hectoliters for soft wheat grains, 2,069 hectoliters for olive oil and 18,127 for wine, more other products. In 1871, 332 landowners hold 12,326 hectares, for which only 65.7 % were cultivated for the same abovementioned crops. A part of landowners (36.7 %) was represented by the smallest, while a very few part (2.4%) by the biggest. In these lands, according to the opinion of Nardi – Dei (1873), in the *mezzeria* sharecropping system, «the Capital and the Work fraternally share the products of land. The landlord makes available its land and a the big capital useful for livestock and crops, while the sharecropper (*colono*) provides its work and makes available its arms; the small annual advances in terms of fertilizers are provided from both in half parties». This *mezzeria* system changes rather in the case of the *colono* respect to the so-called *camporajolo*. The first one usually crops inside a *podere*, while the second one is a peasant who crops a small piece of land of about 2 hectares out of a *podere*. The *camporajolo* or *mazzajolo* is working on a piece of land not able to satisfy the needs of both

²³ A. MILANI COMPARETTI, *La Riforma agraria. La Mezzadria*, Firenze 1946, pp. 15-29.

²⁴ *Ivi*, pp. 15-29.

²⁵ *Ibidem*.

²⁶ M. NARDI DEI, *Monografia storica e statistica del Comune di Montespertoli*, Firenze 1873. Copia Anastatica Bologna 1981, pp. 139-159.

YEARS	WHEAT YIELDS (QUINTALS)	WINE YIELDS (QUINTALS)	OLIVE OIL YIELDS (QUINTALS)
1945	500	850	20
1946	900	840	90
1947	800	700	140
1948	740	1130	60
1949	900	930	100
1950	900	900	120
1951	980	1200	120
1952	1180	1050	130
1953	1480	1180	60
1954	980	1070	140
1955	1580	1120	25
1956	970	1400	10
1957	1410	970	120
1958	1700	1300	35
1959	1650	1480	120
1960	1180	1220	90
1961	780	730	80
1962	1180	1210	70
1963	900	1300	140
1964	880	1280	50

Table 1 *An approximate esteem of wheat, wine and olive oil yields in Gigliola Farm during the period 1945-1964*

a family and its pairs of beefs, and without a farmhouse. However, in both cases, the perfect share in half of the yields between landowner and sharecroppers is kept and respected. In 1871, on Montespertoli territory lived 2,988 *coloni*, 216 *camporajoli*, 800 farm hands and 55 landowners and tenants. The plots cropped by the *camporajoli* were 191, while there were 538 *poderi*. This last had an extension of about 19 hectares, including wood cover²⁷. In 1914, the land property of Albano Milani counted 11 *poderi*; in 1931 it was about 169 hectares extended, and it was subdivided into about 25 *poderi*²⁸. By the data recently collected (2018) in the Gigliola Farm, it has been possible to esteem the series of yields (1945 – 1964) for soft wheat, wine and olive oil, as reported in table 1.

The Fascism Regime (1922-1943) was the main period during which the father of Lorenzo Milani Comparetti managed the Gigliola Farm. On these years, an active innovation process in farming was triggered in its farm, and the diplomas and production primes²⁹, founded in the Villa of Gigliola, are today the current witness of the

²⁷ NARDI DEI, *Monografia storica e statistica*, cit.

²⁸ FUSI, *Albano Milani Comparetti: un notevole a Montespertoli*, cit., pp. 151-199.

²⁹ As a witness we cited some documents: diploma della Cattedra Ambulante di Agricoltura della Provincia di Firenze (1927); diploma di Medaglia d'oro grande dell'Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro, Provincia di Firenze (1937); diploma della Commissione Provinciale Granaria Firenze, medaglia di Argento (1927-28); diploma del Consiglio Provinciale dell'Economia di Firenze (1931).

important efforts dedicated by this intellectual and chemist to the improvement of agrarian production. The signs of Fascism on the traditional sharecropping system in Tuscany were due to new agrarian pacts (*Nuovi Patti Coloniali*), according to which «the *mezzadria* is not more that a rustic affair between a landowners and peasants, but it is completely part of the national agrarian production»³⁰. These new agrarian pacts will be oriented toward to the general increment of national agrarian yields, but agreed on regional bases. In Firenze, on December 1928 was stipulated the collective contract for sharecropping named as *Contratto Collettivo di Lavoro per la Conduzione dei Fondi Rustici a Mezzadria nella Regione Toscana*. This contract will serve as a model for the following *Carta Toscana della Mezzadria*, before the *Carta della Mezzadria* [Mezzadria Charta] on 1933. These agreements represented in reality a step back respect the rights of sharecropper, who became such as an employee of the land, and the landowner became instead like a member of Fascist Regime³¹. The general rules from the agreement on 1933, 13th May restored the ancient servile charges on sharecropper for transport activities, subordinated to the landowner decision the changes concerning the farmhouse family, but excluding the wedding, and placed against the sharecropper new costs for the cropping. Similarly, the Tuscan agreement on 1938, 31th October charged the sharecropper of 50 per cent the livestock purchase³².

Before (rural) sociology

Before the official birth of Sociology in Italy (1961)³³, the humanistic approach followed by Lorenzo Milani Comparetti during his pastoral engagement in both Calenzano and Barbiana (1947-1967), appear to have anticipated the basic methods characterizing that discipline. The newborn Rural sociology (1965)³⁴ was at that time still lacking specific studies dedicated to local rural communities, considered as a whole in their social transformation. Similarly, the same trend was evident in from research covering religious sociology that was not yet developed for the rural context, as was highlighted by Pizzuti (1966)³⁵. The on-field work carried out by Lorenzo Milani Comparetti in his parishes appears to cover – perhaps in an unsuspecting manner – these methodological gaps in social science.

According to some authors (Pecorini, 1996; Aranci, 2009)³⁶, during his years in the Catholic Seminary in Firenze, Lorenzo Milani Comparetti acquired and elaborated his original sociological approach by reading the work of French authors such as

³⁰ P. PASSANITI, *Mezzadria. Persistenza e tramonto di un archetipo contrattuale*, Torino 2017, pp. 107-144.

³¹ *Ivi*, pp 107-144.

³² C. BARBERIS, *Le Campagne italiane dall'Ottocento a oggi*, Roma-Bari 1999, p. 440.

³³ The first academic Chair in Sociology in Italy was established in 1961 at the University of Rome "La Sapienza". During the 1950s in Italy were being born first courses in Sociology of Religion at the Catholic University, but not without difficulties because of the opposition of the academic board.

³⁴ In Italy, the birth of Rural sociology as an autonomous discipline could be started with the publication of the first book of Corrado Barberis entitled *Sociologia rurale*, Bologna 1965.

³⁵ D. PIZZUTI, *Sociologia rurale in Italia*, «Aggiornamenti sociali», 151, April 1966, pp. 321-324.

³⁶ G. PECORINI, *Don Milani! Chi era costui?*, Milano 1996; G. ARANCI, *Le fonti di Esperienze Pastorali. Don Milani e la letteratura pastorale missionaria della Mission de France*, «Vivens Homo», 20, 2, 2009, pp. 313-334.

Henry Godin, Yvan Daniel and Fernand Boulard, who during 1940s were linked to the innovative pastoral experience in France, well-known as *Mission de France*. It is certain that the young Lorenzo Milani Comparetti read the book of Godin and Daniel, *La France Pays de Mission* (1943), as well as the first book of religious sociology written by Ferdinand Boulard³⁷ that was partially translated into Italian in 1948 with the title: *Nelle parrocchie di campagna* [In rural parishes]. Nonetheless, in *Esperienze Pastorali* these authors are not cited in any explicit way, but there are about five general references referring to French authors or texts, towards which Lorenzo Milani Comparetti expressed himself. Only in some notes for the reviewing of *Esperienze Pastorali*, Boulard is cited and commented on by Milani:

Require that all graphics [in *Esperienze Pastorali*] are reported on the right page, and not as in this book of Boulard (...) After reading about two chapters of the book of Boulard, all is already well learned. To check if in mine [*Esperienze Pastorali*] there are remarkable repetitions which give that same effects of Boulard's book³⁸.

Very recently³⁹, the literary genre of *Esperienze Pastorali* has been classified as *sui generis*, very original. Does it is about a diary? No, not at all, because it does not represent a sequence of events. It is perhaps a rough draft, a block note: inside there are some letters. This book is held together by its own internal order, which is determined by differing occasional events, encountered by the author during his life. All this material and documentation has been organized as a book over a period spanning ten years. For this reason, the book title is correctly summed up by the single word *Esperienze* [experiences]. It constitutes a bulk of experiences, which are surprisingly similar to the field notes of the first anthropologists in overseas lands. Hence, it is not by chance, the fact that Lorenzo Milani Comparetti defined himself as a missionary. In its recent book, the author Eraldo Affinati defined *Esperienze pastorali* as the «anthropological encyclopedia of San Donato». Looking by the young Milani's eyes, San Donato di Calenzano would has been like the Africa Continent, such as the Brazil was for Claude Levi-Strauss, or the New Guinea was for Bronislaw Malinoski⁴⁰. In the *Lettera a una professoressa*, its protagonist Gianni, the more time failed Barbiana's pupil, represents the Italian peasant world, and for this reason he becomes as a fellow citizen of the native Indian or African or South American people, as the writer Pier Paolo Pasolini not failed to highlighted commenting the pedagogical experience of Barbiana School⁴¹.

Gaetano Arfé (1925-2007), a socialist historian of Italian politics and Milani's friend, highlighted the important methodological value of *Esperienze Pastorali*. In his book, the investigative method adopted by Lorenzo Milani Comparetti for the description of the rural community of Calenzano was based on statistical data: a

³⁷ F. BOULARD, *Problèmes Missionnaires de la France Rurale*, Paris 1945.

³⁸ This passage is from the book of G. PECORINI, *Don Milani! Chi era costui?*, Milano 1996, pp. 211-215. In the chapter: *Appunti di lavoro per la revisione di Esperienze Pastorali*.

³⁹ These considerations come out from the last Conference on the text of *Esperienze Pastorali* held at the Theological Faculty of Central Italy, Firenze, 6-7 October 2017.

⁴⁰ E. AFFINATI, *L'Uomo del Futuro. Sulle strade di don Lorenzo Milani*, Milano 2016, pp. 111-112.

⁴¹ P.P. PASOLINI, *La cultura contadina della scuola di Barbiana*, «Momento», IV, gennaio 1968, pp. 62-63.

tool that had never previously been used in humanistic disciplines. «In that period no other examples existed in Italy, and from a technical point of view, this investigation was conceived in a clever way, where up until that moment no sociologists and economists had carried out similar research»⁴². «By observing the main criteria, according to that which was conducted in the investigation, it is now possible to discover extensive refinements that permitted Milani to understand ahead of his time some background tendencies internal to Italian society»⁴³. From the witness provided by the former students of the *Scuola popolare di S. Donato* [Popular School of Saint Donato] in Calenzano, it is possible today to know what fieldwork method Lorenzo Milani Comparetti used. «During the Easter blessing of the homes, in collaboration with his altar boys, he noted all things that he observed (number of persons, houses, rooms, beds, the presence of running water or not in the homes, the presence of electricity or not, bicycles or motorbikes, etcetera). Moreover, he spent much time talking to the people»⁴⁴. At the end of *Esperienze pastorali*, the author dedicated acknowledgements to about twenty collaborators for their contribution. These individuals included peasants, unemployed people, mechanics, woodworkers, housewives, construction workers, scholars of the *Scuola Serale di S. Andrea in Barbiana*, that were for the most part his parishioners. Now, these people could be considered similar to unsuspecting anthropological informers. Milani's altar boys collected useful information for measuring fields, plots, rooms, stalls, and internal spaces of habitations by counting the number of cohabitants, their degree of kinship and wealth and so forth. *Esperienze pastorali* has, thus, been the result of a collection of data and interviews, which were carried out by Milani to better understand the social and environmental reality surrounding the parish of Calenzano (the Church of Saint Donato). During the preparation of his on-field work, Lorenzo Milani Comparetti also studied the ancient parish documents (*Stati d'Anime*) and the list of baptisms (*Libro dei Battezzati*), and he updated them by introducing a system of signs-symbols for the rapid annotation of concrete conditions affecting the life of his people. These annotations or symbols appear to be the heritage attesting to his biblical education. Inside the book, *Esperienze Pastorali*, there are three topographical maps describing the urban evolution of Saint Donato in Calenzano covering three different historical landmarks, namely 1674, 1812 and 1954, respectively. Two geomorphic profiles of the hills of Saint Donato conclude the book chapter describing the local urban drift over time.

Today, we can argue that Lorenzo Milani was adopting a methodological investigation based on Participant Observation, typically used by cultural anthropologists. Perhaps, subconsciously, he used ethnomethodology in his field of research, through the use of non-structured and non-systematic interviews, noting some significant particulars each time. This qualitative approach has been integrated and enriched by quantitative data, then organized in the form of descriptive statistics, thereby rendering *Esperienze Pastorali* a very original book. Thus, today, it is not difficult to perceive Lorenzo Milani as a rural sociologist *ante-litteram*, and thus a novelty for social

⁴² *A trent'anni da "Esperienze Pastorali" di don Lorenzo Milani*, Atti del Convegno di Studi, Calenzano, 16-17 dicembre 1988, a cura di M. Sorice, Regione Toscana, Giunta Regionale, 1990 pp. 23-44.

⁴³ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*.

sciences in Italy. Moreover, his contribution constitutes a very important tool in human geography, because he reported the relationships between livelihoods of poor mountaineers living in the *Mugello* and their natural environment. During his ecclesiastic exile in Barbiana, Milani got in touch with the inhabitants of Mount Giovi, and invited their sons to attend his rural school. The book *Lettera a una Professoressa* was a strong complaint about the cultural gap existing between the young peasants of Barbiana and the sons of the bourgeois living in Firenze. Milani recognized in these mountaineers, an extensive knowledge of the natural environment in which they lived. This included a knowledge about plants or animals, and various other skills that the sons living in cities had no knowledge about it. Developing this awareness towards the inhabitants of Mount Giovi and by giving dignity to their traditional culture, Lorenzo Milani Comparetti anticipated the importance attributed today to ethno-science and ethnological knowledge for indigenous studies. To understand the contrast between urban culture and rural culture, Milani felt himself to be like a missionary living in an unknown country. In an interview with Fioretta Mazzei (1994)⁴⁵, who knew Lorenzo Milani very well, she stated that he believed that his “ignorant” pupils of Barbiana were empirically familiar with various things, such as tree species, that the students residing in town would never know. In that sense, his pupils could not be considered as deprived, in an absolute sense, of culture. Rather, they owned another type of culture, typical of their origins and very different from that of the schools in town. Therefore, in some way, they were rich. The same care invested by this priest to understand the people living in *Barbiana* could similarly be utilized today by anthropologists that are defending indigenous people overseas. In fact, some authors use the plural term of *Barbiane* in place of the singular form of *Barbiana*, to indicate the many places around the world where social injustices are still dominant in underdeveloped environments. In the impoverished areas around the globe, there are social-environmental conditions that are still similar to that found, approximately sixty years ago in the *Mugello*, by the young priest Lorenzo Milani Comparetti. Thus, the appellation of *Barbiane of the World*⁴⁶ has become as a keyword describing all social contexts in which human rights of the poor are not yet satisfied. *Barbiana* is, thus, a paradigmatic name that is able to resume the ecology of the poor. The very exacting experience of Lorenzo Milani Comparetti can assume a universal character attributable to the force of its message of justice giving the power of the word to the poorest.

At the root of Integral Ecology

An intellectual curiosity animated the social and environmental on-field research conducted by Lorenzo Milani Comparetti, who never started from preconceptions

⁴⁵ Fioretta Mazzei (Firenze, 1923-1998) has been an important exponent of political Catholicism in Firenze both as collaborator of famous Mayor of Firenze, Giorgio La Pira (1905-1977), and as a member of the Town Council. She knew very well the priest Lorenzo Milani Comparetti. The short interview to Fioretta Mazzei has been found in the documentary of Bernard Kleindienst entitled *Adieu Barbiana*, filmed in 1994 by Les Films de l'Interstice, France.

⁴⁶ See: S. LAGOMARSINI, *Ogni anno riuniti, ora il Papa. Le tante Barbiane del mondo come il cuore della Chiesa*, «Avvenire», 17 giugno 2017.

that overlooked reality. He explored the social micro-cosmos of both Calenzano and Barbiana, following an open-minded approach. For him, reality represents the main source of empirical data, and nothing can be taken for granted. This vision was in contrast with the common prejudiced viewpoints dominating ecclesiastic hierarchies at that time. The latter promoted cultural opposition to the social and political rural *milieux*, where the Marxist ideology was spreading⁴⁷. From a methodological point of view, Milani's approach appears to be very close to the statements expressed by Pope Francis in the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013). Here, the Pope asserts that the «realities are greater than ideas» (EG 233). Yet Lorenzo Milani Comparetti had adopted this principle of reality as a fundamental tool for evangelization at least sixty years before. Therefore, Milani's method to investigate reality is based on scientific assumptions, since in this case both evangelization and methodology for social science do not appear to contradict each other. This particular aspect can thus help us to continue and penetrate the idea of Integral Ecology as has been expressed in the Encyclical Letter *Laudato si* (2015) of Pope Francis. Nowadays, «Pope Francis' concept of integral ecology, points to its inspirations and sources both in the medieval mind of St Francis of Assisi and in works of modern thinkers such as Jacques Maritain, Thomas Berry and Leonardo Boff. In addition, the concept of integral ecology developed by Pope Francis appears to elaborate and systematize the work of John Paul II and Benedict XVI about the concern for all creation (...). There are also many analogies between the Integral Ecology of Pope Francis and the Integral Humanism of Jacques Maritain (...), that seems to be consistent with the teachings of Pope Francis»⁴⁸. In the same year of Milani's death (1967), Pope Paul VI introduced the *Humanisme intégral* by his Encyclical Letter *Populorum Progressio* worldwide. Throughout the idea of the Man's Complete Development (PP 6), he asked the social question as he did the moral question. Thus, «Pope Paul VI championed *integral development*. This kind of development would promote the economic progress of humanity, but it would do so within a broader framework of the moral and religious maturation of the human person»⁴⁹. Twenty years after the death of Milani, the Brundtland Report (1987) was published. It is well-known as the *Our common future*, declaring the universal concept of Sustainable Development. Therefore, there exist similarities, connections and thematic coincidences that cannot be determined from each respective case-study, but indicate a common and profound inspiration, that being the *fil rouge*. The latter connects the pedagogy of Don Milani of Barbiana, aimed at

⁴⁷ About the particular relationship between the local Church and the Communist Party, we refer to the story of the death of Libero. He was a worker that was died at the Cementizia of Calenzano on August 27, 1954, in those months when Lorenzo Milani Comparetti started to write his *Esperienze Pastorali*. A big crowd took part to the funeral transport of Libero, and in that occurrence, the flags of Communist Party were brought into the church, causing the harsh reaction of the priest Milani. He wrote in his letter to his mother: «In 50 years we will not be able to explain to our sons about the true relationship between the Church and Communist Party existing in our Tuscan countryside. Neither we will be not able to indicate which ideology was predominant in our strange two-faced heart» (cfr. MILANI, *Lettere alla mamma 1943-1967*, cit., pp. 114-115).

⁴⁸ R.F. SADOWSKI, *The concept of Integral Ecology in the Encyclical Laudato si*, «Divyadaan», 27, 1, 2016, pp. 21-24.

⁴⁹ J.J. CONLEY, *An Elusive Integral Ecology*, «America, The National Catholic Review», 213, 2015, pp. 3-27.

informing citizens of the realities and their rights, to that of ecological citizenship recently invoked by Pope Francis in his encyclical *Laudato si'*.

Pope Francis said «only by cultivating sound virtues will people be able to make a selfless ecological commitment» (LS 211). Moreover, «if we want to bring about a profound change, we need to realize that certain mindsets influence our behavior. Our efforts at education will be inadequate and ineffectual unless we strive to promote a new way of thinking about human beings, life, society and our relationship with nature» (LS 215). The personal experience of poverty and environmental isolation on Mount Giovi appears to have been a confined situation in which Lorenzo Milani Comparetti had the possibility explore in-depth. This permitted him to attain a full understanding the social and economic gaps existing in not only in that historical time period, but valid for all times. Only by remaining on the periphery of the world, is it possible to assume the holistic view of the social and economic dynamics in the same world; that being the integral idea of both humanism and ecology. There exists a unique socio-environmental crisis, which requires a unique approach to fight poverty, by giving dignity and care to the poor and excluded⁵⁰. Hence, the example of Barbiana's prior marks the crucial passage from the "to think with" to the "to be with", meaning the care of common house. The famous motto "I care" used by Lorenzo Milani Comparetti for the Barbiana School clearly illustrates the same feelings of Pope Francis towards safeguarding Planet Earth.

Conclusion

The talent of Lorenzo Milani Comparetti to profoundly observe both social and environmental realities, as well as his almost prophetic attitude in observing events around him by adopting a very long-term vision are evident when reading *Esperienze Pastorali*. Milani's deep insight was possible due to his ecclesiastic exile in Barbiana. His life experiences alongside the poor and in incorporating their point of view was for him a favored approach in judging the world. He cast a glance towards the future from the very rural periphery of a society in Italy in the 1950s. He introduced himself in an interior and existential manner, oriented toward the so-called «undergrounds of history», using the effective expression of Frei Betto (1991)⁵¹. For this reason, the message of Lorenzo Milani Comparetti is characteristic and localized, but in the same time, universalistic. As a modern prophet, he make an ethical link between the past and the present.

Many studies have explored Milani's innovative pedagogy, which has been associated with that of Paulo Freire⁵². The two letters of the Barbiana's School, namely the

⁵⁰ The letters to the mother, which are collected in the abovementioned book *Letters to the Mother*, tell different episodes of the life at the Barbiana focused on the relationship between the natural environment and the economic condition of the people, which was sharply observed by the priest Milani. On the occasion of a summer fire, which destroyed part of the natural wood and a woodlot of firs and pines for domestic firewood, Milani observed: «It never ends to see how the mountaineers are unhappy. In these circumstances, they have their eyes such as it is not understandable if they are ferocious or resigned» (cfr. Lettera alla madre 11.8.1955, MILANI, *Lettere alla mamma 1943-1967*, cit., p. 131).

⁵¹ See: A. ZANOTELLI, *Dai sotterranei della storia*, «Il Margine», 5, 1991.

⁵² See: P. MAYO, *Critical Approaches to Education in the work of Lorenzo Milani and Paulo Freire*, «Studies in Philosophy and Education», 26, 6, November 2007, pp. 525-544.

Lettera ai Giudici [Letter to the Judges] (1965) and the *Lettera a una Professoressa* [Letter to a Teacher] (1967) represented the ideal borders between the “Pedagogy against empire” and the “Pedagogy of the oppressed”. «The writings *Lettera a una Professoressa* and *Esperienze Pastorali* anticipate or complement, the arguments submitted by French and US philosophers and sociologists – some Marxist or neo-Marxist – concerning the role of formal education of the bourgeois in the process of social and cultural reproduction (...). The convergences between Milani’s writings, or those written by the Barbiana students under his direction, and those of the French anthropologist/sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (non-Marxist) with respect to the school and bourgeois ‘cultural capital’ are “uncanny”» (Mayo, 2013). The literary criticism on these arguments is varied and extensive. The *Dizionario del Pensiero Ecologico* [Dictionary of Ecological Thinking] edited in Italy about ten years ago, mentions the pedagogical experience of Lorenzo Milani in terms of a «school that is opened towards the Nature, and the peasant reality, a school installed under the shadow of mountain [*The Mount Giovi*] where people usually study and live together: that is the sign of an ecological feeling».

In our work, we have explored the contribution of Lorenzo Milani Comparetti describing the relationship between human and environmental spheres, from the standpoint of a strong personal ethical position. In other words, in certain manner, we have described how Lorenzo Milani Comparetti anticipated the social-environmental issues that today have been incorporated into the concept of Integral Ecology: «When we speak of the “environment”, what we really mean is a relationship existing between nature and the society which lives in it. Nature cannot be regarded as something separate from ourselves or as a mere setting in which we live. We are part of nature, included in it and thus in constant interaction with it» (LS 139). Thus, our viewpoint has not been about a pedagogical examination, and not even about the importance of this priest for the social Catholicism and Church history in Italy. Many literary works have already been dedicated to these research themes. Rather, our objective was to view Lorenzo Milani Comparetti as an *ante-litteram* anthropologist engaged in a fight against social injustice. His book *Esperienze Pastorali* [Pastoral Experiences] is the true witness of this actuality. In his letter, dated 12th December 1956, addressed to his friend, judge Gian Paolo Meucci (1919-1986), Lorenzo Milani Comparetti wrote the following about his book:

You say that the book [Pastoral Experience] is an act of intelligence and therefore secondary, meaning that it can be written down without too much thought. On the contrary, I think at length about it and measure the value of the words I write down because I know how much I paid for my words and actions at San Donato, and I imagine how much I will have to pay for these. If they are going to cost me so much, I want at least to be sure that I have paid the price for a proportionately serious work. Regarding this point I want you to know that when I say I want to keep on working on the book, I’m not in the least interested, as you claim, in its aesthetic perfection, I just want to rethink the things I say, to be sure that’s what I really think⁵³.

Lorenzo Milani Comparetti never wanted to write a tractate of sociology, and

⁵³ Part of the text of this letter has been found in this book: A. SURIAN, F. BATINI, P. MAYO, *Lorenzo Milani, the School of Barbiana and the Struggle for Social Justice*, New York 2014.

his *Esperienze Pastorali* was intended only for the use of priests and not for the general population. As observed by Scattigno (1981)⁵⁴, the characteristic use of both features and sociological enquiry in this book can be assumed to convey the following meaning: «to oppose the gaunt reality of figures related to the inconsistency of a form of knowledge, that although capable of grasping the fragments of reality, is false to the base. The figures reveal things that we do not see, unless we see it worthwhile to take into consideration (...). The poverty of the poor is not measured in terms of bread, a house or heat. It is measured in terms of culture and social function (...). The distinction in social classes cannot therefore be performed on cadastral tax but on cultural values» (Milani, 1957).

The life of Lorenzo Milani Comparetti was a testimony of profound ethical choices that binds the past and present. It represented an actual letter within a context of social and environmental ethics, which in the light of integrated ecology of *Laudato si'*, reflects two aspects in a single conceptual knot. The author of *Esperienze Pastorali* does not use this very recent lexicon. Instead, with his educational, ecclesial and above all civil choices, he has boldly embodied the cry of the poor with the cry of the earth. This was attributable to his life experience in a particular universe, that being the narrow universe of Mount Giovi in Barbiana. For this reason Lorenzo Milani Comparetti is still an author worthy of study and in-depth exploration, given the astounding topic of his writings. In this sense, he constructs bridges towards the future.

«Barbiana is an ecosystem»⁵⁵; it is a fragile ecosystem whose equilibrium must not be disturbed. Fortunately, it has been conserved up until now by the former students of the priest Lorenzo Milani Comparetti. Climbing up to Barbiana, the visitor or pilgrim is able to experience the unchanged 60-year passage of time, because the church, the rectory and the environment around the few impoverished buildings are testimony to the vivid memory of the Milani's universalistic message. All of this, is not a museum. The external woodland environment of Mount Giovi, as well as the internal environment of the old classroom in the small School of Barbiana, represent as a whole the *genus loci* of the Milani's life. The principle objective of future generations will be to conserve this human and natural environment. The broad media coverage after the visit of Pope Francis to Barbiana (June 2017) could transform this place into a touristic sanctuary.

LORENZO ORIOLI, DANIELE VERGARI

⁵⁴ *Alle origini di «Esperienze Pastorali»: don Lorenzo Milani cappellano*, cit., pp. 117-142.

⁵⁵ D. MOSCHELLA, *La Barbiana di don Milani aspetta Papa Francesco: «Così difendiamo memoria e fede»*, «La Nazione», 19 June 2017.



The Barbiana place: the church, the rectory and the classrooms such as an unique universe closed (photo Orioli, June 2017)

