

DON GIUSEPPE DE LUCA E LA CULTURA ITALIANA DEL  
NOVECENTO. ATTI DEL CONVEGNO NEL CENTENARIO DELLA  
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A cura di Paolo Vian

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The history of Italian spirituality in the Twentieth Century appears as a complex and not yet fully explored planet. Modern literary scholars often limit themselves to studying fashionable political themes focusing on ideological and somewhat ephemeral issues. In the process, some figures that belong to the soul and soil of Italian history are neglected. Popular names such as Padre Pio, Mother Cabrini and Maria Goretti, belong to the realm of hagiography, just as figures who were and operated inside the parameters of the Catholic Church (Maria Montessori, Giuseppe Dossetti or Giorgio La Pira) are not given the attention they deserve. Within this variegated landscape, Don Giuseppe De Luca occupies a special place in that he is an extraordinarily gifted intellectual as well as a loyal priest. Furthermore, in addition to these activities he was acknowledged as a scholar whose prodigious output spans from sacred art and mysticism to modern literature.

The present volume, *Don Giuseppe De Luca e la cultura italiana del Novecento*, intends to redress the neglect. Technically, the work is divided in four parts: I. Testimonianze (Testimonials); II. De Luca prete romano (De Luca Roman priest); III. De Luca storico della Pietà (De Luca Historian of Piety); IV. De Luca letterato, erudito e imprenditore di cultura (De Luca Man of Letters, Scholar, and Entrepreneur of Culture). These are the four facets of his prismatic personality, which the contributions and testimonials by some of the most authoritative intellectuals and scholars who operate in some of the major universities, the church, and the political scene, try to explore and highlight. The contributors range from Vittore Branca to: Emilio Colombo, Paolo Vian, Romana Guarnieri, Giuseppe Maria Viscardi, Eugenio Massa, Ezio Raimondi, Gabriele De Rosa, just to mention few names from the list of twenty-four contributors. More generally, their common effort consists in taking the measure of De Luca's singular and rich personality.

Many contributions, characterized primarily by a tone of friendship, commemorate the gift of this man's humanity. Vittore Branca, for instance, writes of the time when he was a young man in the Catholic FUCI (the Catholic Federation Students' Association). It was the time when De Luca became his spiritual guide or mentor. On the other hand, while Emilio Colombo writes about De Luca's intellectual courage and inner freedom, Giuseppe Maria Viscardi re-examines De Luca's relation to modernism, and Enzo Raimondi relates De Luca's erudition to that of a great Jesuit of the

Baroque age, Daniello Bartoli. Other pieces, such as Cardinal Achille Silvestrini's, focus on and highlight the pastoral gift of this man, his way of helping his friends to heed the demands of their spiritual life. Here lies the secret of De Luca's work: an ethics of care that stretches to the historical past, the living present, the spiritual realities, and the end of time.

More importantly, taken all together, these articles seek to capture the inner spirituality of this exceptional man. Yet, his essence remains elusive. For, as De Luca knew, human beings are authentic riddles, and no easy answer or solution can be formulated. For students of literature, however, this volume is excellent because it makes us understand that a literary experience cannot be understood in isolation from other spiritual and practical activities. Were we to take literature as a game or mere pastime, then we would risk making it appear sterile. From this point of view, De Luca's life and works remain central in the common effort that we all make to turn within and find in our inner self the traces of a possible fulfillment. His prose – simple and yet profound – his exceptional familiarity with the complexities of the literary and artistic history of Italy, appear as a light guiding those who are on the way to self-knowledge. For this alone, Giuseppe De Luca's future place in the history of religious life is assured.

MARIA C. PASTORE PASSARO

Central Connecticut State University,  
New Britain, Connecticut