

Honouring Father Aldo Mei

Recently I did a beautiful hike from Fiano near Pescaglia to Monte Acuto with my hiking group. We hiked on an easy, 8 km long trail Father Aldo Mei created in the 1940s when he was visiting the partisans hiding in the woods there. On top of Monte Acuto he erected a cross and an altar to celebrate mass with them. The cross still exists. The panoramic view of the valley below us was breath taking and our guide told us the sad story of Father Aldo Mei.

Aldo Mei was born in Ruota, near Capannori, in 1912. He joined the seminary in 1925, was ordained in 1935, and served as parish priest of Fiano, a small village near Pescaglia, from 1935 to 1944.

On 2 August 1944, immediately after celebrating Mass, he was arrested by the Germans during a round-up. He was found guilty of hiding and helping Jews and giving communion to partisans hiding in the woods of Monte Acuto. Lucca's archbishop, Monsignor Torrini, was unable to save him.

Father Aldo Mei was sentenced to death and at 10 p.m. on 4 August 1944 he was forced to dig his own grave under the ramparts of the Walls of Lucca near Porta Elisa. He was shot 28 times. While being shot he forgave and blessed his murderers. And he left a message of hope for his parents. *I'm dying because of hate's dark storm, I, who only wanted to live for love*, he wrote.

The next day his body was moved to the Barbantini (Camillian) sisters' residence in Lucca, in Via Elisa.

In 1945, a marble memorial stone was placed at the execution site. In 1966, a statue was erected in Fiano, where in 1987 he found his final resting place in the church and a small museum was set up in the rectory. Capannori also named the local secondary school after him.

Father Aldo Mei's memorial is just outside the wall near Porta Elisa. Beautiful rose bushes are planted around it. I was deeply moved by his tragic story and the day after the hike I laid flowers at his memorial, teared up and prayed for his forgiveness. The collective guilt that was hammered into my generation of Germans in school made me feel terrible! Never forget!

— by Diana Stidl



This cross raised by don Aldo Mei in 1940 awaited the designated victim, soon to the supreme sacrifice, expiation and offering for a world of love.

In memory of the centenary of the birth of the one who promoted its erection, the people of Fiano are mindful and grateful. 23 September 2012

