

Reverend Father Raffaele M. Piperni

Born in Casacalenda, Province of Campobasso, Italy, on July 26, 1842. Passed away on November 15, 1930 in Richmond, California at age 88.

He was ordained a priest on April 6, 1867, following his ordination, he taught in the Catholic school in his native city.

In 1874, he entered the college of Brignole-Sale in Genoa to become a missionary. After a year of schooling, he was sent to Jerusalem where he served as a missionary priest under the supervision of Rev. Father Don Antonio Belloni of the Order of the Sacred Family.

His apostolic zeal was crowned with such marked success that after three years, he was charged to return to Europe and collect funds for the erection of churches and orphanages in Palestine.

In his travels, he visited part of France, Belgium, England and Ireland; and everywhere he met with great success.

The same object that led him to Europe to tour for the needs of the Holy Land, inspired him to come to America, and in fact in 1878, we find him in the United States for the first time.

Among other cities visited here and in Canada, he came to our city of San Francisco and in this country as in Europe, he was instrumental in raising large sums for the education of youth in his far distant missionary field.

In March of 1879, he visited New Orleans. At the time, the city was having an epidemic of yellow fever. He worked in the infirmary at the hospitals for four months; and in September of that year, he, himself, came down with yellow fever. Yet somehow, miraculously, he survived.

In October of that year, he entered Mexico where he became devoted to serving the poor. After eleven years of hard and fruitful work, he again returned to Palestine. And in the course of the next few years in company with fellow laborers, he joined the Salesian society.

Not long after, when the Salesians were about to go to Mexico to open a house there, and the superiors were looking for a proper man, Father Piperni became their choice. But Mexico was not the claim him long; a vaster field and a more important work lay ahead of him.

Early in 1897, he was transferred to San Francisco where he became pastor of S.S. Peter & Paul's Church. His work in this city became well known. He was untiring in his labors for the spiritual and material welfare of his parishioners, for the education of the young, as well as for the betterment of the sick and needy.

In 1917 he celebrated his golden jubilee as a priest. It was a major celebration in the Italian-American community of San Francisco.

In 1924, he saw the fulfillment of a dream – the completion of the new SS Peter & Paul's Church, located at 666 Filbert Street. Under his guiding eye, was formed the Salesian School & Club.

The last two years of his life were spent in Richmond, California at the Salesian Novitiate, where he spent much time writing and teaching.

He died on November 15, 1930 – Richmond – San Francisco.