

Antonio and Roberto Commemoration of the fifth anniversary

This 12 of November, HandiKOS is pleased to be present at the commemoration which Caritas from Tempio (Sardinia) arranged on the fifth anniversary of the tragic accident where doctor Antonio Sircana and the Orthopaedic Technician, Roberto Bazzoni, along with 23 other people, lost their lives, while on their way to Kosovo to lend their help to victims of the war.

Both professionals, from Sardinia, came to take the measurements of the limbs of 20 amputees due to the war, in order to make them prosthetic limbs which would have allowed them to continue with life and reintegrate them into society.

Their death gave birth to the Roberto Bazzoni Onlus which since January 2000 has stood with not only those who have lost limbs, but many other people: disabled adults and children of Kosovo.

No amputee went to Italy for a prosthetic limb, however with material sent it was possible to make prosthetic limbs for much more than the 20 people who were waiting for Antonio and Roberto on that day.

The machinery sent allowed work to become more efficient and the three young Kosovars whose education and professional preparation was financed by the Onlus are at work today at the National Centre of Ortheses and Prosthetics and continue to prepare prosthetics for the victims of the war and of the many mines which, even after the war, continue to injure innocent victims.

At the Roberto Bazzoni Onlus community centre in Drenas (formerly Glovov), through Caritas Sardegna, since November 2000, the children of the area receive physical and psycho-social rehabilitation. Here they are prepared for primary school or for special classes for children with learning difficulties. This centre also serves as a meeting place for the disabled of the area and for seminars for Handikos workers.

Thirty HandiKOS workers, who were trained by two doctors and two physiotherapists from Don Gnocchi, continue their work in 10 centres around Kosovo, rehabilitating children and teaching parents how to take care of these children at home. This is thanks to an agreement between Roberto Bazzoni Onlus, Caritas Italiana and Caritas Sardegna, as part of a project financed by the Onlus from April 2001 to March 2002.

From January 2003, the centres are monitored by an orthopaedic surgeon and a middle level physiotherapist, sponsored by the Onlus.

Since October 2002, approximately 800 children were visited in the 10 HandiKOS centres by our orthopaedic surgeon. More than 70 children were sent to undergo

orthopaedic surgery at Peje hospital and at this date, 35 have been operated upon in many more operational sittings.

The children were sent to different specialists according to their problems: from neurological, psychological, optical, dental or at the National Centre of Ortheses and Prosthetics for orthopaedic shoes or prosthetics. In this way, their standard of living has been notably improved.

The car, left at Handikos after the departure of the Don Gnocchi team from the Onlus is used every day for the visits of the physiotherapist who goes to the 10 community centres and our doctor when she visits the children.

The Roberto Bazzoni Onlus was also generously with us when in 2003 we risked having to close the community centres and for six months made our work possible in seven of the ten centres.

The solidarity and the humanitarian spirit of Antonio and Roberto and the guidance of the Onlus and in the first year, also of Caritas, has made it possible to bring disabled adults and children with their mothers to the seaside (Ulcin in Monte Negro) for ten days:

- In the summer of 2001, 50 adults with various sensorial, mental and physical disabilities;
- In the summer of 2002 we were able to organise two summer camps, one for 100 adults with various sensorial, physical and mental disabilities and another for a group of 18 children with their mothers;
- In the summer of 2003 two camps, one for 35 people affected by myelosis, paraplegics and tetraplegics, come accompanied by their assistants. In total 50 people participated at the rehabilitation camp at the beach.
- A group of friends from Sardinia visited us and witnessed the work carried out at another camp for 20 children and their mothers;
- In the summer of 2004 we were able to organise three camps: one for 35 people affected by myelosis , 13 of them went for the first time, some of them with their assistants. 50 people took part in the rehabilitation camp at the beach.
- The summer camp was enjoyed by another group of 22 children with their mothers, and by a third group of 50 adults with various sensorial, physical and mental disabilities.

We know that the humanitarian activities of the Onlus have reached other continents, this means that the seed planted in the Balkans has blossomed into many fruits, curing and bringing hope to those who suffer.

Here in Kosovo the presence of Antonio and Roberto is with us every day and spurs us on to continue with our work. All the Summer Camp participants know who it was that made their journey possible and are moved by what the Onlus is and how it was born. The mothers who came this year wanted to write a letter of thanks and we sent it to the Onlus.

Every year we commemorate the 12th November with a holy Mass at the church in Prishtina, we bring a wreath with us to Drenas and in the local newspapers we publish our gratitude to Antonio and Roberto because we do not want our workers and the Kosovar citizens to forget the two people who lost their lives trying to help us, and who still continue to help us.

Now, on this fifth anniversary of their death, we should like Caritas- Tempio, Caritas Sardinia, the relatives of Antonio and Roberto and the generous people of Sardinia to know all that has been made possible for the disabled of Kosovo in the name of Antonio and Roberto.

We want to tell you that Antonio and Roberto will live forever in Kosovo through the work of Handikos and in this way will always be near the people, adults and children, with disabilities, as was their destiny when they boarded that small plane on 12th November 1999.

Our most profound gratitude to Caritas Sardinia for all their work and dedication, for the realisation of the project, to the Roberto Bazzoni Onlus and to the relatives of Antonio and Roberto, in particular, Mr Sebastiano Bazzoni who are always close to us.

Prishtina 31 October 2004

Dr Julia Palao

(RBO-Kosovo-commemoration 12.11.2004)
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