



# St Nicholas News

**A communication channel to get in touch with the Saint Nicholas' Friends around the World**

**9**

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**From Fr. Gerardo Cioffari, o.p. director of the**

**CENTRO STUDI NICOLAIANI**

**Bari (Italy)**

## *JUSTICE AT THE THEATER*

### **BARIAN SAILORS TRIED FOR ROBBERY AND DESECRATION OF ST NICHOLAS' GRAVE**

#### **Heroes or robbers ? That is the question !**

The sailors who the 9th of May of the year 1087 brought St Nicholas relics to Bari (Southern Italy under Norman domination) from Myra (Asia Minor, today Turkey) have been put under trial. State prosecutor Antonio Laudati, in the context of a formula already employed in several Italian cities in order to get people closer to the problems of justice and history, organized a trial show in the main city Theater. At the presence of a crowd that filled the Petruzzelli Theater, state prosecutor Corrado Lembo (from Santa Maria Capua



Vetere) committed the sailors to the court for trial, charging them both for armed robbery and desecration of a grave. To face robbery charges was the young sailor Matthew (the one who actually broke St Nicholas sepulcher in Myra, Asia Minor, today Turkey). His attorney was Aurelio Gironda, a criminal lawyer. To get inside Matthew's character was Michele Emiliano, mayor of Bari city.



*Here left: Mayor Michele Emiliano dressed up like Matthew the sailor.*

*In the column at left: State prosecutor Corrado Lembo presses the criminal charges against Matthew*

To conduct the trial was Giorgio Otranto, professor at the Bari University. On the witness box: Fr. Damiano Bova, rector of St Nicholas' Basilica in Bari.

In the presence of true judges, the trial was conducted according the rules of a real trial, although the main judge is an historian.



*Fr. Damiano Bova to the witness box*

After a long and heated debate were issued the three sentences. According to the journalists the sailors deserved to be absolved.



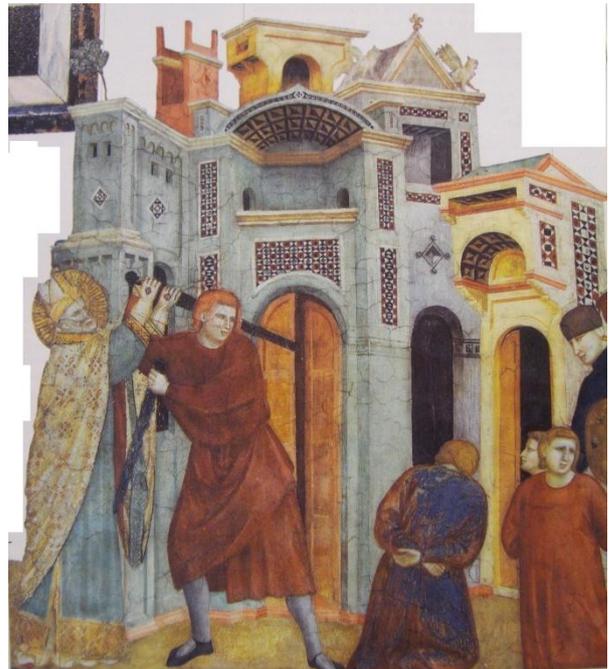
The verdict of not guilty was pronounced by judge prof. Giorgio Otranto (*in the photo above*) on the grounds that the fact doesn't constitute an offence. Out of the voting people 307 condemned Matthew, and 783 discharged him. It is interesting that so many (307) Barian people convicted Matthew on the robbery charge. But one could wonder whether these 307 votes were addressed to Matthew or to his "double" Emiliano.

## IN THE NEXT ISSUE

### AN HISTORICAL FR CIOFFARI'S COMMENTARY ON THE TRANSLATION AS A THEFT

## GIOTTO'S ST NICHOLAS IN ASSISI

In the context of the VIII Centennial of foundation of the Franciscan Order the city of Assisi has decided to celebrate the great Italian painter Giotto by restoring the wall paintings of the St Nicholas Chapel in the Basilica of St Francis. The Chapel, built with the endowments by card. Napoleon Orsini in order to locate the funeral monument of his nephew John Gaetan, was already officiated the 6 of March of the year 1306. Giotto worked in the years 1297-1300 (especially on the Saints of the large windows), while the rest of the wall paintings was made by his disciples. Restoration was assigned to the Tecnireco of Spoleto, under the direction of Vittoria Garibaldi and Sergio Fusetti. During the restoration work the visitors are allowed to climb the scaffolding and give a closer look to Giotto's colours.



Assisi. Basilica of St Francis. Giotto's School:  
St Nicholas stops the headman's sword and saves  
three innocent men of Myra.