

## **Alfredo Del Rosso**

by Howard Culbertson

*Material for this biography was gathered in Italy in the late 1970's from letters, books, magazine articles and interviews with many of the principal characters including several missionaries to Italy, Alfredo Del Rosso himself (1890-1985) and members of his family. Many of those interviewed for this biography have since died.*

### **1. Introduction**

Before I met Alfredo Del Rosso, I had formed a mental picture of him that was completely wrong. We had been appointed as missionaries to Italy in February of 1974. That summer, during the last weekend I spent at my parents' home before leaving for Italy, I spent a morning in the library of what is now Southern Nazarene University. On that summer morning of 1974, I browsed through back issues of the *Other Sheep*, the old missionary magazine of the Church of the Nazarene. I was looking for and reading anything and everything about the work of the Church of the Nazarene in Italy.

I found quite a bit of stuff written by Alfredo Del Rosso. Then, in an old bound volume from 1948, I came across an interview of Del Rosso complete with his picture. The photo was only a mug shot, so I had let my imagination put a body under that head. I imagined him to be a tall, impressive person physically. So, you can imagine my shock when I first met Alfredo Del Rosso at a pastors' meeting in Rome just after we arrived in Italy. There, in the small sanctuary of our Rome church, I found myself looking down at Alfredo Del Rosso -- and I'm only 5' 7" tall myself!

After recovering the shock of how much my mental picture differed from the reality, I discovered that Alfredo Del Rosso was an impressive person, regardless of his physical stature. Through the last 75 years of his life, he was propelled by a single-mindedness to the proclamation of the message of second-blessing holiness. In fact, one of my most vivid memories of him is an incident on the front steps of our half-basement chapel in Rome. Barbara and I were still struggling through language school, and Del Rosso had come to Rome for a special service. Afterward, we stood out front talking. I heard him saying, "Holiness makes sense to the Italian's way of thinking. All his life, the Italian has searched for release from sin, for a feeling of purity within. The biblical doctrine of entire sanctification is exactly what he's been looking for all along."

The idea to write the life story of this intriguing man was born partially out of my desire to reconcile two conflicting assessments I kept hearing of his life and ministry. Alfredo Del Rosso wasn't one to be ignored by either Italian or American colleagues. He also lived in an era when ethnocentrism and cultural insensitivity flourished unnoticed among church leaders. Because Alfredo Del Rosso was a strong personality, he came to be either revered or scorned. So it was partially out of a curiosity to discover who this man really was that gave birth to extensive research into his life. It turned out to be a delightful study.

While Alfredo Del Rosso is no superhuman, he was a man who had been mastered by a dream of participating in a flourishing holiness movement in Italy. To Del Rosso's credit must be added the fact that (as Nazarene missiologist Paul Orjala pointed out) he is about the only leader of an independent work in one of the world mission areas who

merged an existing work into the Church of the Nazarene and then stayed around and became a loyal Nazarene himself. Most other independent leaders who merged works into the Church of the Nazarene found it too difficult to give up the top spot and work within the lower ranks of the hierarchy of a larger organization. That Alfredo Del Rosso is a significant figure in Nazarene history can be seen by the fact that he has wound up being mentioned in the brief official denominational history at the beginning of the Nazarene Manual.

I need to thank a host of friends on both sides of the Atlantic who let me read letters, recounted stories to me and scoured their memories and files to provide necessary bits of insight and information. I'll refrain from making a listing of these dear people -- American, Italian, and Swiss -- who patiently answered my questions and told me what they knew of Alfredo Del Rosso. Such a list would be long and still I'd undoubtedly forget someone. At any rate, a word of special thanks does go to Edward Lawlor who, at the very beginning stages of this project, encouraged me to follow through on it. I'm also indebted to my wife and two kids who allowed me to spend most of one vacation pulling together all of my notes into the first drafts of this manuscript.

## **2. If this be Pentecostalism . . .**

The Church of the Nazarene was granted legal standing as a denomination by the Italian government in 1961. This recognition did not, however, signal the opening of a new mission field by the Nazarenes. Since the summer of 1948, the Nazarene General Board departments of Home and World Missions had been operating and financing a work in Italy. Even 1948 is far too late to begin tracing the history of Nazarene work in Italy. The roots of the Nazarene movement in this boot-shaped European country go back to 1890.

In the U.S., 1890 was the year a Methodist preacher named Bresee was moving from the pastorate of the Pasadena, California, Methodist Church to the Los Angeles Asbury Methodist Church, a move partially caused by the heavy criticism he was receiving for his insistent preaching of second-blessing holiness. That same summer of 1890, a quarter of the way around the world, a third son was born to Italo Del Rosso, a railroad worker living in Poggibonsi, a central Italian town of 10,000 people surrounded by olive groves and grape vineyards. If Italian custom was followed, on the day of Alfredo's birth a large blue ribbon bow would have appeared on the door of the family home. It was through Alfredo that God would plant the Church of the Nazarene on that southern European peninsula where first century Christianity had found fertile soil.

The Del Rosso family was somewhat typical for its time. Italo, like quite a few Italians of the day, played the accordion. Religiously, he was a nominal Roman Catholic while Alfredo's mother, captivated by the rise of a humanistic socialism, said she was an atheist. Italy, however, is a land encrusted by centuries of Roman Catholic tradition. Family tradition that runs deep often overrides personal beliefs, and so a week after his July 7 birth, little Alfredo was taken down to the rather drab-looking Collegiate Church of Poggibonsi to be baptized.

Not long afterward, Alfredo Del Rosso's father was transferred by the railroad about 20 miles southward to Siena where he was made supervisor in the freight handling department. It was in Siena that Alfredo grew up. Being there would afford Alfredo a

wider view of the world than the little town of Poggibonsi would have been able to give him.

Siena, like most of Italy's cities, is old. Even today, it looks like it was preserved almost intact out of the Middle Ages. It is full of great stone buildings lining twisting cobblestone streets. The old city lies in a Y-shape across three steep hills. Because of the terrain on which they are built, Siena's streets can suddenly become flights of steps and flights of steps turn into subterranean restaurants or magnificent churches.

Confirmation for Roman Catholic youngsters could take place when they were about seven years old. So with his neighborhood peers, Alfredo began attending doctrine classes at the parish church. It looked like Alfredo Del Rosso was on his way to becoming an ordinary Italian Roman Catholic. He carried around little images of saints as good-luck charms and had a statue of the Madonna over his bed. But in that confirmation class Alfredo Del Rosso began to have some very disturbing experiences. He was a boisterous youngster by nature and, by his account, the priests responded quite roughly to him, slapping, threatening, and sending him out of the classroom to discipline him. A few times they forced the children to pray kneeling on a layer of dried beans on the hard marble floor. Such forced penance had little effect on the heart of young Alfredo except to turn him away from what he eventually came to believe was a caricature of authentic Christianity. Because of the way he was treated, Alfredo Del Rosso did not go through with his confirmation ceremony.

Alfredo had reached school age. The family wanted him to get an education, so they made a decision based solely on financial grounds -- or at least they thought so. His mother decided to send Alfredo to the Waldensian elementary school instead of to the parochial Catholic one.

In Italy state schools were still few and far between. The choices for parents in Siena were limited to private schools -- the Catholic ones or one run by the Waldensian church -- a denomination formed about 1200 in northern Italy and which for more than over a century has had links with American Presbyterianism. In the late 1890's, the Waldensians were operating 40 elementary schools in Italy. One of those happened to be in Siena.

To be sent to a Protestant private school was a startling decision to Alfredo. He had always thought of himself as a Catholic. He asked his mother why she was sending him to the Protestant school. "It's cheaper, son," she replied.

In the Waldensian school Alfredo was treated radically different from what he had experienced in his previous encounter with a church. In his eyes at least, the atmosphere in the Protestant school was very different from that in the Roman Catholic environment. He described the Protestant teachers as kind. He had the feeling that they loved him even in his most difficult moments.

Even though liberalism and formalism had already begun coloring the Waldensian church, the Siena congregation had their pastor teach a weekly gospel lesson to the children in their elementary school. The pastor proclaimed a salvation made possible when the Son of God gave himself for the sins of a lost world, including a mischievous little Alfredo who didn't always seem to be listening.

Alfredo Del Rosso also began to attend Sunday school at the Waldensian church with about 100 other children ranging from ages five to fifteen. There people talked about a living Christ, a Christ who was more than a painting or a picture on a card carried as a

good-luck charm. At a Christmas program Alfredo Del Rosso received his first Bible. To him, that was a real treasure. He took the Bible home and began to read it to his family.

However, it wasn't until Alfredo Del Rosso was in his teenage years that he became a born-again believer. By that time he had finished all five years of the Waldensian school and had begun working and studying at night for his high school diploma. He described his conversion, "On Easter Day of 1907, at the age of seventeen I accepted Jesus as my personal Savior . . . My sins were pardoned; I received Jesus into my heart. I was regenerated; and I began a new life, not merely a new religion. . . Without regrets, I left the Catholic church."

Present in church that Easter Sunday was Carlo Padelletti, Alfredo's Sunday school teacher. Dr. Padelletti was a wealthy physician whose ancestry could be traced back to Melancthon -- one of Martin Luther's right-hand men during Reformation days. Little did Dr. Padelletti guess that morning that in twenty years this short little teenager would become his spiritual counselor and would eventually even conduct his funeral. For teen-aged Alfredo Del Rosso, that Easter Sunday conversion experience was more than a passing emotional crisis. He had really committed his life forever to the Lord. From that moment forward, said his nephew Raffaello, "He knew where he was going. He was not like the rest of us Italians."

That same fall a church merger took place in Chicago, Illinois between the Eastern and Western roots of the Church of the Nazarene. In that October, 1907 merger, a missionary-minded eastern U.S. holiness movement with leaders including H.F. Reynolds and Susan Fitkin fused with the Los Angeles-born Church of the Nazarene. As that was happening in the U.S., a new babe in Christ in historic Siena, Italy, was beginning a spiritual pilgrimage toward the abundant life in the Spirit. These two events were key steps in a string of events that would eventually bring a strong holiness witness to Italy.

Two years later, in 1909, nineteen-year-old Alfredo began his military service -- a career which would total 12 years of active duty in the two World Wars. When a recruitment inducement was offered the enabled soldiers to be stationed in their home towns, Alfredo Del Rosso enlisted a year earlier than what was normal for Italian young men to do their compulsory military service. His life in the church had come to be so important to him that he did not want to be sent away from home. While in the army, Alfredo began witnessing to fellow soldiers of his faith in Christ. As he shared his faith and explained the scriptures Alfredo Del Rosso discovered a profound sense of satisfaction. He didn't yet fully realize it, but the Lord was already equipping him for a lifetime of a ministry of the Word.

Toward the end of Alfredo's three years of compulsory military service, Italy, with dreams of re-establishing the Roman Empire, invaded Libya in north Africa. This invasion in October of 1911 was a first step toward realizing an expansionist dream of having an Italian colonial empire. The taking of Libya was justified, the Italian government told its people, to stop the "hemorrhage" of emigration to the U.S. and other affluent countries.

While many of Alfredo's soldier friends were shipped off to Libya to fight and die against the Turks, Corporal First Class Del Rosso's assignment took him only as far as Rome where he was given a responsibility in railway transportation. His duties involved a lot of train riding, so he had plenty of time for spiritual meditation and even writing. It

was during this period that Alfredo Del Rosso finally settled on the ministry as God's will for his life. His call had not come through some miraculous event or vision. Instead, it came as a growing conviction and certainty that all signs pointed in the direction of full-time Christian service.

So while in Rome he sought out the moderator of the Waldensian church to talk about preparation. He was interested in attending the Waldensian Theological School located in Florence, about 60 miles north of his home town. Normal entrance requirements included a high school diploma and Alfredo did not have one. However, the Waldensian leader agreed to intervene for him and an exception was made in Del Rosso's case. Going to the ministerial training school in Florence would be a pivotal move for Del Rosso. It would open for him the opportunity to hear a clear witness to second-blessing holiness and also to learn English, something that would be the avenue through which he eventually met some Nazarenes.

After Alfredo's military duty was over, he moved to Florence -- that birthplace of the Renaissance, the home of Savanarola, of Dante, of Macchiavelli, and of Michelangelo. The Waldensian school was located on the southern side of the Arno river. It was in an old mansion constructed in the 1600's for a family named Del Rosso. The school was located about three blocks from the inn where Martin Luther stayed on his way to visit Rome in 1510.

While Del Rosso was there in that two-year Bible school course, one of his most noted professors was Giovanni Luzzi. At that time Dr. Luzzi was in the middle of a monumental task he had begun in 1906: a complete revision of the Bible in the Italian language. Completed in 1924, that version achieved the kind of universal acceptance among Italian evangelicals which the King James Version had among the English-speaking world until about 50 years ago.

"During my stage in the theological college," said Del Rosso, "I was praying to be a good servant of Christ, able to live a real and consistent Christian life. For a long time, almost seven years, I had sought an experience beyond salvation. My professors advised me to study English, French and German to deepen my theological experience. But books did not give me what I sought . . . My heart desired something more . . . And no one had yet told me of the possibility and the necessity of a complete purging of the heart, of a complete sanctification of the life."

It took a husband and wife team who had experienced the baptism of the Holy Spirit in Switzerland to point Del Rosso to the heart purity, cleansing and empowerment for which he hungered. This young couple, the Coppinis, were custodians of the Baptist Church building which was a former theater building just across the Arno river from the Waldensian school. In August of 1914 Del Rosso had gone with some other students to a series of special services in the Baptist church. There Del Rosso heard this young Florentine with his Swiss wife testifying about something he didn't have.

"I wanted to say it wasn't true," he says of their testimony to second-blessing holiness, "because all I had heard in sermons and prayers was that we were poor sinners." Sensing his interest, the Coppinis invited him over to their home after the service and there they stayed for hours (even through a mealtime) poring over passage after passage in the Word of God. In the biblical model the Coppinis were Alfredo Del Rosso's Aquila and Priscilla and he was their Apollo.

Del Rosso recounted what happened after he went home that evening:

"I went alone to my bedroom of the Bible School -- a little room with a bookcase, a small bed and a table. I started to pray with the Bible in my hands and I had not remained long in prayer when the light of the Holy Spirit showed me that the purpose of the work of Christ was to save and to wholly sanctify souls . . . and that my soul could be sanctified fully in that moment by faith. I confessed my need and asked God to completely purify my heart. I renounced with joy the world and its pleasures to accept a pure heart, a heart that was holy, full of the Holy Spirit of Christ. I received that which I asked of God by faith, immediately, fully. The Lord worked in my life the greatest miracle, that of full salvation. He sanctified me; took all of me for himself. The joy in my heart and life was great and Florence itself even seemed like a new city."

Something really did happen that night to a young theological student. Young Del Rosso laid down his pack of cigarettes, never to pick them up again. He obtained a couple of books on holiness -- one by Commissioner Samuel Logan Brengle of the Salvation Army and the other by William Booth, the Salvation Army's founder. There, in those 20-year-old writings he found a clear, lucid, biblical explanation of the experience he had had in his room on Serragli street. These two books, together with the Bible, were to be the only holiness textbooks Del Rosso would have for the next 30 years. "Then I met the Nazarenes," he later joked, "and they really loaded me down with stuff."

That heart-changing experience came to Del Rosso in August of 1914. Though he didn't know it at the time, the rapidly growing young Church of the Nazarene in the U.S. was already eyeing Europe. In the spring of that same year Nazarene General Superintendent Edward F. Walker had been in Scotland exploring the possibilities of a Nazarene merger with George Sharpe's The Pentecostal Church of Scotland. In September, Superintendent H. F. Reynolds visited the British Isles. It was agreed that a merger would be finalized at the Nazarene General Assembly in the United States the following year. Historian Timothy Smith makes an interesting observation about one important result of this union between the American Church of the Nazarene and the Pentecostal Church of Scotland. Smith wrote: "In this merger was conceived the vision of an international holiness communion."

It would be another 30 years before that vision would be realized in a way that included Italy. Still, it is interesting -- and perhaps even significant -- that Del Rosso was saved in the same year that mergers began in the U.S. to create the Church of the Nazarene and then he was sanctified in the same year that an across-the-Atlantic merger created "the vision of an international holiness communion."

At almost the same time a young teenage girl in the Baptist youth group was sanctified wholly. Born into a Florence Roman Catholic family in 1868, Niny Batacchi was drawn into the Florence Waldensian church through a Christmas program when she was eight years old. A little while later, Niny began attending the Baptist Church. In 1913 at the age of 16 she was converted. The next year, 1914, was also a crucial year for Niny too was sanctified under the influence of the Coppinis. Here's her story: "We had been praying about two hours: a group of the young people of the Baptist church, the pastor and his wife and two students from the Waldensian Theological Seminary -- one of them my future husband. I was the only girl. How could I forget that evening, that hour, that instant in which God spoke to my heart in a very special way? I could see all the ugliness

of my heart . . . Then I heard a voice insistently saying, 'Behold, I have touched you; your iniquity is taken away and your sin is purged.'

After his own sanctification experience, Alfredo returned to the Bible School and began to testify to it to his professors and to the other students. Their reaction was that Alfredo Del Rosso had really gone off the deep end this time. After all, he'd always been a little eccentric. This "Pentecostalism" as they termed it, however, seemed a bit too much. There was even some talk by faculty members of not allowing Alfredo Del Rosso to get his degree. Alfredo told them, "Well, I'm not certain what kind of label you want to pin on me. But if what I have is Pentecostalism, then I suppose I must be a Pentecostal."

What had historically been a fairly neutral word -- Pentecostal -- was rapidly being associated exclusively with those groups persons who promoted speaking in tongues (glossolalia or ecstatic utterances) as "evidence" of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. In fact, at that moment in the U.S., talk was underway in the Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene to drop the adjective "Pentecostal" because of some misunderstandings (it had been added at the union in 1907 and would be dropped by General Assembly action in 1919).

Del Rosso's life-long study of and love for the learning of languages began here at the Waldensian school. Besides English, French and German, he was required to learn some Greek and Hebrew as part of the two-year course at the school. As the years passed, Del Rosso would also take up Latin, Arabic, Spanish, Danish, Norwegian, Swedish, Croatian and even Esperanto (which was an attempt to create a "universal language"). Because of his language interest and ability, Del Rosso would eventually become a fluent preacher and interpreter in four languages: Italian, English, French and German.

The Waldensian school gave Del Rosso an introduction to the secretarial skills of typing and shorthand and some elementary principles of music. A talent for music inherited from his father would enable him to play the mandolin, the guitar, the violin, piano, organ and the accordion. This musical ability would later be useful more than 30 years later in developing a distinctive hymnology for the infant Nazarene work in Italy.

After finishing his work at the Bible school in 1914 (the faculty did relent and granted him a degree), Del Rosso was appointed pastor of the Waldensian congregation at Follonica, a town on Italy's western coast south of Pisa. He had already done some supply preaching at Follonica, but he did not get to actually assume the position as the congregation's pastor. Initial fighting in what eventually would be called the First World War began in Europe in July of 1914. During the first month of hostilities, Italy declared itself neutral. As fighting intensified to its north, the Italian government ordered a precautionary mobilization. Del Rosso was recalled into active duty.

After his initial call-up back to military duty, Del Rosso was granted leave and sent home to await further developments. He couldn't accept any kind of permanent assignment such as pastoring a church, but through his Waldensian contacts he got himself accepted as a book and Bible salesman by the British and Foreign Bible Society. While waiting to see what would happen with the war, he began to travel on bicycle throughout central Italy selling Bibles and religious books in the public squares.

This work in the provinces or regions of Lazio (where Rome is located) and Tuscany (where Florence, Pisa and Siena are located) was not without opposition. Protestants were a tiny minority in Italy and they would often encounter open antagonism by the Roman Catholic majority.

Del Rosso recounted one harrowing incident: "I remember speaking in the piazza of the village of Capranica (north of Rome), preaching to about 200 women. They listened attentively as I explained several Scripture passages. I even saw some of them drying tears on their eyes. They bought portions of the Scriptures, promising to read them to their menfolks when they returned from work in the fields. But just then the Catholic priest arrived and began to circulate the word, 'He's a Protestant. Throw him out.'"

"He incited the women, who turned on me and began to threaten me. Seeing it was impossible to continue selling books and Bibles, I picked up everything and headed for the hotel. But I was followed by the infuriated mob stirred up by that fanatic priest. We passed a fruit stand and they picked up all kinds of fruit and vegetables and began to throw them at me. I made it to the hotel on the edge of town but the crowd surrounded that little building. In my second story room, I went to my knees and began to pray and suddenly everything grew quiet outside. I peeked out the window . . . and the street was deserted. God had saved my life by an evident miracle. For in that very moment some carloads of military recruits sent home on leave had arrived and the people left me to celebrate."

That evening, Del Rosso slipped out of the hotel and walked unmolested to the train station two miles away to return to Siena.

In time, some influential Italians began to think that their country's position of neutrality in the spreading war wasn't the most profitable one for Italy's long-term interests. They imagined the prestige and additional territory that a victorious war could bring to their newly unified country. So, in April of 1915, without consulting Parliament or public opinion (both of which clearly favored neutrality) Italian Premier Antonio Salandro concluded the secret Treaty of London. He thus committed Italy to fight on the side of England and France against its former friends, Germany and Austria. Three weeks after Germany moved against the Russians, Italy entered the First World War as one of the Allied Powers. By May 23, a Bible-selling colporteur in central Italy had become a corporal in the 87th Italian regiment on the Austrian-Hungarian front.

The main contribution of Italy to the war effort was to keep a significant part of the German armies tied down in the mountainous border areas of Italy and Austria. The fighting was bitter. Lots of people -- combatants and civilians -- were killed and buildings and railroads and bridges were destroyed. For almost 39 consecutive months Del Rosso would be on that battlefield. Due both to his native abilities and to the high mortality rate among the soldiers, Del Rosso would be rapidly promoted. In 1916 he was made an officer's cadet. A month later he was promoted to sub-lieutenant. In October of that year he was involved in a battle in which two thirds of his fellow Italian soldiers were killed. Assigned to the Twenty-Second regiment, nine months later he found himself promoted to full lieutenant.

During those long months of heavy bombardment Del Rosso maintained an unswerving belief that the Lord who had called him to the ministry would bring him safely home. He was wounded twice -- once in the head by an exploding hand grenade and then later in his right hand by a rocket flare. An epidemic of cholera broke out and his battalion had to be quarantined for a month. "I saw officers and men die in my section and in my dormitory," he said, "but the Lord miraculously delivered me from that contagious disease." As a small contribution to the ongoing work of God's Kingdom

while he was at the battlefield, he sent his paycheck to the Coppini family for them to use in the spreading of the gospel.

On April 16, 1917, the American Congress declared war on Germany and before the signing of the armistice a year and a half later, two million U.S. troops arrived on the front in France. It would be through just such an invasion of American G.I.'s that Del Rosso would make contact with the Church of the Nazarene. But the unfolding of that story would have to wait for another World War and for the invasion of an Italy fighting as an ally of Germany rather than its adversary.

At one point during his service on the Austrian front Del Rosso was suspected of espionage. His commanding general had received a disturbing report about Del Rosso's correspondence with persons in a foreign country. An over-zealous Catholic chaplain had noticed strange, almost code-type words such as "Maranatha" and "Hallelujah" on Del Rosso's postcards addressed to a Coppini family who were at that point living in Switzerland. Disturbed by what might be secret communications going to the enemy, the chaplain reported his suspicions to the general. Del Rosso was called in.

Startled at the accusation of treason, then amused by it, Del Rosso explained to the general what the words meant and followed up with his personal testimony. The general rose, shook Del Rosso's hand and told him to feel free not only to write the words on postcards, but also to share that same testimony with the officers and men in the brigade.

In 1918, with the war drawing to a close, Del Rosso was promoted to captain. The promotion also brought a welcome change of assignment away from the front. He was placed in charge of a company of Yugoslav prisoners some distance from the front. While there, during one of his brief leaves, he married 20-year-old Niny Batacchi, that young Baptist girl from Florence for whom he had prayed in 1914. Niny's activism in the Baptist church had brought opposition and ridicule from her family, but Niny had remained true to the faith. While she and Alfredo were two different personalities, they did complement each other. That same year Alfredo's mother died.

In the autumn the Italians defeated the Hapsburg army at Vittorio Veneto and soon after came the November 11 armistice. During those three years of what one Italian writer has called "the suicide of Europe," Del Rosso received two medals: the War Cross and the Eulogy of the King. With the ending of the war, Del Rosso was placed on permanent reserve status where he remained until recalled in 1941 at the start of World War II.

Del Rosso began looking for a way to enter the active ministry. The Waldensians, already on the decline, were in dire financial straits. Thus, Del Rosso's own church did not have an opening for a young pastor like him. The Baptists invited the newly-wed couple to cast their lot with them.

Del Rosso says, "The president of the union asked me if I would have any difficulty in accepting a position as pastor of one of their churches in Rome. I responded that I had been called to preach the Word of the Lord. Because the church promised me the freedom to freely preach full salvation, I accepted the position." But it would soon become apparent that the Scottish Baptist mission wasn't fully aware of all that Del Rosso meant when he requested "freedom to freely preach full salvation."

Niny and Alfredo Del Rosso moved to Rome where Alfredo was ordained to the ministry by a local Baptist church. Almost immediately, his preaching of full salvation and the holy life began to cause some problems in his new charge. He had an argument

with the Baptist union president's wife in which she insisted that we can be saved from "our sins, but not from our sin." Del Rosso vehemently disagreed. Since the president himself smoked, it wasn't long before the two men had some lively disagreements over Del Rosso's denunciation of what he considered worldly habits and addictions.

Baptist officials got Del Rosso to agree on a transfer to another church. They thought that perhaps the church he had come to was just too old and had too many long-established traditions for its pillar families to respond to his kind of preaching. So Baptist leaders asked Del Rosso to move to a church in poorer area of the city across the Tiber near the Vatican. That crowded area of Rome is known as Trastevere or "across the Tiber". The people who live there, they say, are the "romanest" of the Romans.

But even there in the shadow of St. Peter's basilica, the heat generated by this young fireball of a preacher was still too much for Baptist leadership. And so in 1921 Alfredo Del Rosso was transferred with his wife and two-year-old son to the seacoast town of Civitavecchia about 60 miles west of Rome.

In the early 1920's Italy was experiencing social and political upheaval. The Italian communist party was born in the northern part of Italy in the same year Del Rosso moved to Civitavecchia. The birth of that new movement had been accompanied by bloody conflicts between workers and the police. The Fascist movement headed by Mussolini transformed itself into a political party and, in 1922, managed to gain control of the government. It was in the midst of all that social upheaval that revival broke out in the Civitavecchia congregation under Del Rosso's leadership. In the five years the Del Rossos were in Civitavecchia, they baptized over 100 persons, and the congregation built a nice parsonage to replace the one-room house the Del Rossos had moved into on their arrival in 1921.

In 1924 Pio Boccini, a Baptist from Rome who worked for the railroad was intrigued by what he had heard about Del Rosso and his ministry in Civitavecchia. So, Pio Boccini made a special trip to see Del Rosso. Boccini was so impressed that he returned in 1925 to be present at the inauguration of the new Civitavecchia church building. A friendship began to develop between the two men that would endure until Pio's death in Rome in 1975.

Even in Civitavecchia, Del Rosso's emphasis on holy living disturbed many of the old timers in the church. Revival? Yes! New converts? Yes, but holy living? Oh, no. Del Rosso insisted, for instance, that marriage celebrations not end up in drunken dances. And the deacons felt that no pastor had a right to insist on that. After all, aren't we living by faith alone and not by works?

By 1926, some of old-timers in the the local church had taken all they could. They called to the Baptist union headquarters asking for a doctrinal investigation of their pastor. They couldn't very well throw him out on the grounds that he was against smoking, drinking and dancing although that was really what was stirring up the controversy. The only legitimate grounds on which to legitimately attack Del Rosso were doctrinal. His preaching of the baptism of the Holy Spirit as an action subsequent to regeneration was thought by some of the Baptist church members to be a doctrine of the Pentecostal Assembly of God denomination which had entered Rome and southern Italy in 1908.

Out to Civitavecchia came some leading Baptist clergymen. It wasn't a time for tolerance outside of the church. On the political scene, all political parties other than the

Fascist one had been suppressed. Newspapers which refused to toe the party line were being closed down. The culture of intolerance made it a bad time for anyone who held divergent opinions from the reigning authority, be that authority religious or political.

After talking to Del Rosso and members of his church, the Baptist leaders decided that Del Rosso did believe and preach a great deal more than a good spiritual descendant of John Calvin should. They did admit that he had been used of the Holy Spirit to bring revival to all the Baptist churches he had pastored. However, feeling that he'd be more at home in some Pentecostal church (and they'd certainly be more comfortable with him there), they counseled him to resign and fulfill his call elsewhere.

At that point neither Del Rosso nor the Baptist leaders knew anything about the fairly new, but now 63,000 member strong Church of the Nazarene that had emerged in the U.S.A. So, they couldn't recommend that Del Rosso check out the Nazarenes. It might not have mattered even if they had. In 1926, the foreign missionary work of the Church of the Nazarene was in crisis. The denomination's financial resources had been badly managed. While some new countries were entered at the beginning of 1926, by the end of that year, the operating budget for missions had to be slashed by one-third. Twenty-nine missionaries were recalled from the field (out of a total staff of about 90).

So, had contact even been made at this point between Del Rosso and the Nazarenes, no financial help could have come to support even this one "national pastor." Certainly no Nazarene missionaries would have been sent to Italy for quite some time. In God's providence, contact between this young holiness preacher and the people called Nazarenes had to wait for a more propitious time.

### **3. Out under the stars**

Alfredo Del Rosso faced a decision not unlike that faced by many of the holiness preachers in the U.S.A. a couple of decades earlier. As some of those American preachers found themselves forced out of existing churches because of their preaching of entire sanctification, they talked about being forced to "go out under the stars." It was a reference to the fact that they were no longer preaching to established congregations meeting in church buildings.

In Italy, Alfredo Del Rosso found himself in a similar situation. He could stay in the Civitavecchia Baptist church and thus be assured of housing for his family, a regular income, and a place to fulfill his call to ministry. But to do so he would have change the way he explained his own religious experience as well as the theological content of his preaching about the Christian life.

Late one night Del Rosso and his wife were wrestling with the decision facing them. Suddenly, their seven-year-old son Paolo -- whom they supposed was asleep in the corner of the room -- sat up in his bed. "Pick up the book," he said pointing to a Bible, "and read page 242." Then he lay back down fast asleep.

Startled, they took the Bible off the shelf and opened it. The page Paolo had indicated was the 18th chapter of Acts. They began to read. Verse 9 said: "One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision: 'Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent.'" It seemed clear to Alfredo and Niny that the Lord had spoken through their small son. So Alfredo Del Rosso resigned as pastor of the Civitavecchia Baptist Church, telling his

parishioners, "Even if I have to stay here alone in this city preaching sanctification by faith, I'll do it, confident of certain victory."

He started to make arrangements to send his wife and kids north to Florence to live with relatives but Niny protested, "No, we're in this thing together."

Word of what was happening to the Del Rossos reached railroad conductor Pio Boccini. He said, "I heard that Del Rosso was being sent out of the church because he preached against a worldly life and it truly grieved my heart. How come? Why are they putting such a good man out of the church? I did not know what to do."

There were others as equally disturbed as Pio Boccini. Thus when Del Rosso resigned as pastor, he did not leave the Civitavecchia church alone. After he turned in his resignation, fifty members of the congregation said they were leaving with him. The change wasn't an abrupt one. It was nearly a month before the Del Rossos could move out of the parsonage. Because the church was a month behind on Del Rosso's salary, he didn't have any funds to rent a house for his wife, their 1-year-old son and new-born baby girl. Finally, however, he did get his last month's paycheck and moved his family out of their new parsonage into a tiny two-room apartment.

In that little apartment Del Rosso began holding prayer meetings and Bible studies for the people who had left the Baptist church with them. To help provide for the Del Rosso family, these people began bringing in food poundings (a very Nazarene-style custom even if they weren't yet Nazarenes!)

Strangely, the split in the Civitavecchia church did not create a lot of bitterness nor lingering negative feelings. While the Baptists were convinced that Del Rosso needed to go because of the theology he espoused about Christian life and experience, years later he would be quite fondly remembered even by those members who remained Baptist. Toward the end of his life, his ministry in Civitavecchia would be remembered by Italian Baptist Union officials as one of the spiritual high points of that congregation. And in fact, following the second World War (almost twenty years after he had left the Civitavecchia church) the Baptist Union offered Alfredo Del Rosso another pastorate.

In spite of the fact that the Del Rossos had some families who left the church in solidarity with them, the first months after Alfredo's resignation were difficult financially. Even before the split, the Civitavecchia church was not self-supporting. Then, one day a letter postmarked in Denmark arrived at the Del Rosso house. Inside the envelope were 50 Danish Krone (worth about \$250 which was a considerable sum at the time) and a letter from a lady who had met Del Rosso when he was pastoring in Rome. She had felt impressed to write him and to send some money -- the first gift of many that she would send across the years. In the letter she said, "If you ever need help, please do not hesitate to call on me. Let me know if you ever need anything."

In the correspondence that developed, Alfredo explained his current situation and what had happened to bring it about. The lady was a member of the Apostolic Church, a denomination with roots in a revival in Galles (Great Britain) in 1904-05. Since it appeared to her that Del Rosso was quite close theologically to her denomination, she put him in contact with the church's top leadership in England.

At that point in time, the Apostolic Church was open to entering Italy. So that same year, 1927, a delegation of British pastors came to Italy to assess the situation and to talk with Del Rosso. It seemed to Del Rosso that this was the closest denomination doctrinally

to what he believed. Even though he was puzzled by a few things they said, their warm assurances convinced him and he joined up with them.

With Apostolic Church backing, Alfredo Del Rosso began services at Grosseto, a city about 75 miles north of Civitavecchia. While he was pastoring the Civitavecchia Baptist congregation, he had gone up there once a week and had established a small Baptist congregation. Now, he went to work to plant a second church in that city, this time an Apostolic one. Real revival broke out. There, Pio Boccini would be sanctified wholly in 1929. Del Rosso also began regular meetings in Dr. Carlo Padelletti's house in Montalcino (a village south of Siena where Del Rosso had grown up). At the meetings in Montalcino, which continued until the late 1950s under Nazarene sponsorship, two teenagers who worked for the Padelletti family -- Ado Lagomarsino and his future wife Olga -- were converted. Fifteen years later Ado and Olga Lagomarsino would be the backbone of a new group in Florence.

It wasn't long, however, before Del Rosso began to suspect that he wasn't quite as close doctrinally to the Apostolic Church as he had originally thought. Denominational leaders began insisting that Del Rosso's ministry include a strong emphasis on what they affirmed were two valid gifts of the Spirit: directly-revealed prophecy and glossolalia (speaking in unknown tongues). Sanctification -- a key word for Del Rosso -- was for them an experience separate from the baptism with the Holy Spirit. This did not exactly square with what Del Rosso believed to be a scripturally balanced doctrine of the work of the Holy Spirit.

At the end of three years, an Englishman named Evans traveled to Italy to straighten out this Italian preacher. Evans was one of the Apostolic Church's recognized "prophets" and he told Del Rosso he had a direct word from the Lord for him. In the Apostolic Church it was strictly forbidden to challenge the word of a church prophet, but Del Rosso broke that rule. And so out "under the stars" again he went. Not long afterward, Del Rosso's friend Pio Boccini followed him out of the Apostolic Church. Pio too felt the tongues-speaking practices of that particular denomination was unscriptural.

When Del Rosso split with the Baptists doctrinally, there wasn't a rupture of friendship. There wasn't any such rupture this time either with Del Rosso being remembered as "a strong preacher with a clear message." At the 50th anniversary celebration of the founding of the Apostolic Church in Italy, Alfredo Del Rosso was invited to Grosseto to be one of the featured speakers.

Del Rosso's family was growing in these years. Noemi, the second daughter, had been born in 1928. Then Lea was born in 1930 and a year later came Maria. Even with these five children to support, Del Rosso saw an independent ministry as the only possibility for him. So he began working under the title of "Independent Holiness Mission." Then a year after Maria's birth, the future suddenly darkened. Del Rosso contracted pneumonia. It was a disease that at that time killed one in every three people that contracted it. But Del Rosso was miraculously healed.

By this time Fascism had raised its ugly head in Italy and then grabbed power. That would affect Del Rosso's ministry. Benito Mussolini, a former newspaper editor who had come to power in Italy in 1922, slowly, but surely, began turning the country into his own personal domain. In February of 1929 this dictator (who had once declared himself an atheist) bought the Roman Catholic church's support through his negotiation and signing of the Lateran treaties. Mussolini agreed to declare the 109 acres of the Vatican an

independent country, to make Roman Catholicism the official state religion (with regular financial support), and to introduce compulsory Roman Catholic instruction in the schools. He also gave the church the equivalent of two to three million U.S. dollars as compensation for residential properties seized in the 1870 takeover of Rome by the Italian government. Through this agreement, said an American Roman Catholic journalist, "Mussolini was to do more for the Vatican than any man, any cleric, any Pope, in all history."

Governmental persecution of the small Protestant minority also began since, as one Italian lawyer wrote, the Protestants seemed to be "infected with the virus of democracy." A 1931 law gave the police the right to break up any religious meeting which had not applied for and received proper permission in advance. In 1934 this persecution was intensified by the government. Eight awful years followed in which all Pentecostal-style groups were ordered suppressed for the "mental and physical health of the race." Pastors were sent to prison or to concentration camps. Believers had to meet secretly in caves, cellars or in private homes behind closed doors and shuttered windows. Del Rosso's groups were classified within the Pentecostal camp. So, they were officially prohibited from meeting although he continued to hold services for a time in Civitavecchia, conducting meetings at 5 a.m. in different homes on different mornings to evade the authorities.

At one point the persecution of Protestants became so oppressive that Del Rosso felt it best to leave the country temporarily. Since the Coppinis -- his friends from Florence -- were in Switzerland, he went there. Almost immediately he met up with some Swiss Pentecostals who, although not agreeing 100 percent doctrinally with Del Rosso, began to support him financially -- a support that would continue up until World War II. As Del Rosso's fame began to spread, he started to travel extensively throughout northern Europe as a revival campaign speaker.

These campaigns would include two or three services a day and lasted from one to two weeks. They were fully evangelistic with altar calls inviting people to seek salvation, sanctification and healing. In approximately seven years of this type of ministry Del Rosso said he saw thousands of people praying at the altar. As he described them to friends, he already sounded very Nazarene for he talked of the number of seekers at the altar, saying "some of them for the first time." His preaching trips took him to the major cities of Switzerland, to Paris, to London, to Bristol in England and into Wales. He spoke in the Scandinavian countries of Denmark, Norway and Sweden. His preaching was done in four languages: English, Italian, French and German.

This wasn't preaching done through an interpreter like many American evangelists do today. His messages were merely brief memorized sermonettes given in languages Del Rosso didn't really know. It was real preaching in those languages. All the while, however, Del Rosso said, "The vision of a holiness work in Italy burned in my heart." He was also honing cross-cultural communication skills that he would use effectively the rest of his life.

Most of Del Rosso's traveling was done by train. Thieves and robbers were not unheard of during night travel on European trains. So Del Rosso would divide his money up into all of his pockets saying, "Well, if I get robbed, I'll let them have everything in this pocket. But then I'll have three or four pockets left for myself."

Though no longer a young man (he was now in his forties), Del Rosso was incessantly on the go even when he was back in Italy. One would often find him headed over to Pio Boccini's home in Rome to hold a service or going up to Montalcino to conduct a service in the private chapel of the Padelletti family there. He conducted the wedding of the Lagomarsinos in that Montalcino chapel and in 1935 that young couple moved to Florence where they would be ready, after the war, to help Del Rosso launch the Church of the Nazarene in Italy. At times, the relatives of this seemingly untiring man stood back in awe. Said his nephew in wonderment, "He lives as though there's someone beside him holding him up." His wife, who was having to do everything at home, had a little more down to earth assessment one day when she said to him in exasperation, "All you know how to do is preach!"

During this period Alfredo Del Rosso came into contact with the Italian branch of the Salvation Army. It had begun work in Italy in the 1880's not long after its birth in England. Since Del Rosso had been heavily influenced by the writings of Salvationists Brengle and Booth, he considered the possibility of joining up with them. But the official in charge of the Italian work said that would be possible only if Del Rosso would leave his family in Civitavecchia and go to England to attend officers' training school. Having already graduated from the Waldensian Bible School, having satisfied Baptist ordination requirements and having pastored Baptist churches for eight years, having helped get the Apostolic Church started and then worked as an independent evangelist, Del Rosso did not feel that particular sacrifice was necessary for the fulfillment of his call. That -- combined with the Salvation Army's army-like administrative structure and what they were offering to pay a man with five children -- caused him to remain independent.

War clouds had begun gathering in Europe in October of 1935 with the invasion of Ethiopia by Mussolini, an invasion supported by his new ally, the Roman Catholic Church. The following year Mussolini sent some Italian troops to fight on the side of General Franco in the Spanish Civil War. On Good Friday of 1939, piqued at Hitler for not having forewarned him about the German invasion of Czechoslovakia, Mussolini seized Albania. Alarmed at the two European dictators' expansionist actions, American president Franklin Roosevelt appealed directly to both of them. Mussolini responded that "a virile people have a right to empire." On September 1, Hitler attacked Poland and World War II was on.

At first Italy declared its non-belligerency in the Nazi-initiated conflict. But by 1940 Mussolini became afraid that if he stood by and did not get in the war on Germany's side, he would not be in on the cutting up of the victory pie. He told his Fascist Council that by the following September the war in Europe would be finished and that he had need of a few thousand dead to claim a place at the peace table as one of the co-belligerents. Mussolini also had a special hatred for England along with scores he felt Italy needed to settle with France. Seeing a chance to get even with those two countries, in June of 1940 Mussolini declared war on France and England in a public speech from the balcony of the Palazzo Venezia in Rome. Mussolini had made a terrible miscalculation. For, by the "following September," there was no peace table in sight. Mussolini's forces were in rout in North Africa and there were no slices of victory pie being handed out to the Italians.

As Italy mobilized for what was supposed to be a quick, almost painless victory, the Fascist party approached 50-year-old Reserve Army captain Del Rosso with an offer to

join the elite Fascist black-shirt militia. Del Rosso declined the offer, choosing instead to wait to be drafted into the regular army, something which did happen in 1941.

Del Rosso was given command of a company of soldiers that had the responsibility of guarding the coast of Calabria (the southern tip of Italy's "boot"). As an officer, Del Rosso was ahead of his time in the methods he used in dealing with his men. He treated them as human beings instead of as expendable machines . . . and he acted this way in a dictator's army! The ability Del Rosso had to deal with men did not go unnoticed and before long he was promoted to major.

With the promotion he was given a short leave to go home and visit relatives. Besides seeing his wife and children in Civitavecchia, he took time to go to Empoli near Florence to see his brother and family. His nephew Raffaello came to the railroad station to pick him up. On their way out of the station, Del Rosso and his nephew passed the Fascist Police Commissioner for the area. Because Del Rosso was wearing a high-ranking army uniform, the commissioner saluted him, but the salute was accomplished with a startled expression.

That evening the Police Commissioner sent for Raffaello. "Who was that officer with you at the railroad station?" the commissioner asked when Raffaello arrived at his office.

"That was my uncle, Alfredo Del Rosso."

"Oh no," groaned the Commissioner, "I closed up that man's evangelical church in Civitavecchia some years ago."

Fearful that Del Rosso might use his high rank in the military to exact revenge against him, the Police Commissioner sent word to Del Rosso, asking if could find the time to come see him. When Del Rosso arrived in his office, the Commissioner indirectly apologized to Del Rosso for the way he and his group of believers had been treated some years before. What the Commissioner didn't know was that he need not have been nervous at all. Del Rosso had not remembered him.

Japanese imperial forces attacked U.S. territory at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. The U.S. declared war on Japan. Four days later, Germany and Italy issued a joint declaration of war against the United States -- an act that would eventually bring Nazarene young men into the Florence area and into the temporary living quarters of the Del Rosso family.

With the entry of American forces into the war, Mussolini's dream of a new Roman Empire began collapsing. Under the direction of General Dwight Eisenhower, the 8th English army and the 7th American army invaded Sicily in July of 1943. Due to the pressures of Italian surrenders in May in North Africa, this early July invasion of Sicily and then an Allied air raid on Rome itself on July 19, the Italian King forced Mussolini to resign. Mussolini was arrested on July 25, 1943 and three days later the Fascist Party itself was dissolved.

About the same point in time, Del Rosso became ill with malaria down in Calabria and was given a furlough to recuperate. As he traveled toward home, he worried about his family. He had heard that allied bombing raids had already begun on Civitavecchia in an effort to destroy the port and railroad lines. When he arrived, their home was still intact, but his family was not there. He made his way up to Florence to inquire from his wife's relatives if they knew anything about his wife and four girls and son Paolo (who was in the army). He found his family living with his wife's sister in her home which was located on the same street as the Florence Baptist Church.

On September 3 the allied armies crossed the strait of Messina to the mainland of Italy. What was left of the Italian army began to collapse. On September 5 the provisional Italian government signed an armistice with the allies. The following day the American Fifth Army under the direction of General Mark Clark came ashore at Salerno, just south of Naples. In that invasion force was a young communications expert named Bob Shultz, a born-again believer whose path would cross that of Alfredo Del Rosso nearly a year later when his army unit was fighting its way north through Italy.

Sensing the southern defense perimeter of their "fortress Europe" collapsing, the Nazis rushed reinforcements south to hold off the Allied military forces. In the span of a few short days the Germans had been transformed from the Italians' comrades-in-arms into unfriendly occupation forces. The flow of German forces into Italy meant that almost a year would pass before the Allies would arrive in Florence.

Some Italian army units went over to the Nazi side (including the one of Del Rosso's son, Paolo). Those Italian forces that found themselves in zones liberated by the allies just disbanded and the soldiers went home. Italian military units still in German-occupied territory which did not voluntarily offer themselves to the Nazis were often shipped up to Germany to work in war munitions factories.

Del Rosso found himself in that third category of units within German-occupied territory. Because of his linguistic capabilities, Del Rosso was soon picked up by the Nazis to act as an interpreter. His family feared that Del Rosso would eventually be shipped off to Germany. It wasn't too long before he began to have the same fears himself. So one day on the train he simply discarded his army uniform, put on civilian clothes and slipped back into Florence to live with his family. As long as the Germans occupied the area, he was in a great deal of danger. So, Alfredo Del Rosso's presence in Florence was kept a secret. And, in fact, not long after Florence's liberation in August of 1944, Raffaello came over from Empoli to Florence to console the family over the loss of Alfredo. There in Florence he encountered Alfredo Del Rosso himself.

"The Lord hasn't forgotten about me," Alfredo exulted to his incredulous nephew.

Word reached the Del Rossos from Civitavecchia that during the fighting in and around that city, their home had been looted and everything stolen. To cap it all off, when the American infantrymen had arrived in the Civitavecchia area, they had used Del Rosso's library books to fuel campfires. The destruction of their home was a crushing blow to Niny. She had taken pride in her home. Over the years, she had nicely and tastefully furnished it. Now, all of that was gone. Niny took it graciously, using the words of Job to explain the situation to her teen-age girls, "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised." (Job 1:21). In the end, the loss had its good side because the Del Rossos would have no reason to return to Civitavecchia after the battle front passed through Florence.

In the spring of 1944 the Del Rosso family moved out of Niny's sister's home and went to the mountains near Pistoia northwest of Florence. Not long afterward, their old friends, the Coppinis, offered them the use of a home they owned in Florence on the southern bank of the Arno. So the Del Rossos returned to Florence although they would soon be forced out again when the fighting reached that city in August. During the month that Allied and German forces faced off in Florence the Del Rosso family lived in a barn out in the country. In the long months of the slow German retreat up the peninsula, during the heavy Allied bombardments of Civitavecchia, and during the close fighting in and

around Florence, only one Del Rosso family member was injured. Just before the Del Rossos fled to the countryside in August to live in that barn, Noemi was wounded when a grenade exploded in the yard of their home.

Up until the fighting reached Florence, this historic city had been listed as "open" or "white" by the Nazi High Command. Then, as fighting reached the area, the Germans decided to make a stand against the British Eighth Army right in the middle of Florence. They would use the Arno River as their major line of defense. In spite of pleas by leading citizens and the intervention of the Swiss consul, on August 4, 1944, German demolition experts devastated the center of the city. Of all the historic bridges across the Arno, only Ponte Vecchio was left standing and the streets leading to it for a radius of 200 yards were reduced to a heap of rubble. The electric generating plant, the waterworks and communications systems were destroyed in spite of attempts by the Italian Partisan fighters to prevent damage to important infrastructure facilities.

The Allies refused to be drawn into heavy combat inside Florence. Eventually their encircling actions plus the efforts of Partisan fighters within the city caused the Germans to withdraw. In those first hours immediately following the city's liberation and before the Allied military command had time to cross the river and take control of the situation, those Italians who had collaborated openly with German occupation forces were executed in the city squares by the Partisans. Because Del Rosso had for a time worked with the Germans as an interpreter there was fear by some that he might be denounced as a "traitor." But he wasn't.

Three weeks of military confrontation in Florence had killed 90,000 farm animals, destroyed 150,000 olive trees and decimated an estimated 2 million grape vines and 50,000 fruit trees in the area. So, by necessity, the military occupation authorities put the populace on very strict food rationing. One day Del Rosso was making his way across one of the makeshift "Bailey" bridges the military had erected across the Arno river. As he walked along Del Rosso fell into conversation with an old man who was also crossing the river. The old man began to grumble about the tiny ration of bread he was allowed.

Del Rosso listened to him, then moved in close and slipped a part of his own bread ration into the man's pocket. Then he said, "You know, the Lord cares about you. Why, just look in your pocket. The Lord has given you something extra." And he rushed on, leaving the man open-mouthed.

Such ready and joyous sharing of what little they had became a hallmark of the Del Rosso family during Italy's slow recovery from the ravages of war. And the Del Rosso family itself? How did they eat? Well, stretching food is not a new problem for the Lord. Remember the widow's container of oil? Remember the loaves and fishes?

After the Germans withdrew from the Florence area Noemi was taken to a first aid center set up by the Salvation Army to check on injuries caused by an exploding grenade. There, Alfredo discovered that the Salvation Army was starting to hold some open-air meetings. Del Rosso went to some of those meetings and there met an Englishman charged with re-organizing the work of the Salvation Army in newly-liberated Florence. Since Alfredo knew the city quite well, he volunteered to help the man get back in contact with families who had been part of the Salvation Army's ministry prior to the war.

As Del Rosso looked back on this meeting later he said, "The Lord was guiding in everything toward my introduction to the Church of the Nazarene, an introduction which

would mean the beginning of the work of holiness in the city of Florence and the mission of the Church of the Nazarene in Italy."

Because Florence had been selected as a rest and recreation area for soldiers of the Allied armies, the Salvation Army decided to open a canteen there. The military authorities offered them use of a building which would eventually house the Florence central post office. The Salvation Army leadership was impressed with this multi-lingual evangelist named Del Rosso. They asked him to become the manager of this canteen. He agreed, and it quickly became an activity for the whole family -- father, mother, and four teen-age daughters (their son Paolo wound up for a while in a prisoner of war camp).

Looking back on events as they unfolded, it seems quite clear the hand of the Lord was guiding the life of the Del Rossos even in the small details. As he wrote about these experiences years later, he would say, "In that canteen I had the opportunity of knowing some English Christians, who soon spoke of me and of my family to their American companions-in-arms. They were Christians too and were seeking a Christian home for a meeting place for their evening hours after duty."

It would be in these home meetings that Del Rosso would have the unexpected joy of hearing testimonies from American young men that said they were saved and sanctified wholly.

#### **4. The Nazarenes have landed and the situation is well in hand**

The arrival of Allied armies in the Florence area brought more than political freedom to Tuscany. The struggle between German and American troops in the area became the catalyst to bring together Del Rosso and some American Christians. For thirty years he had preached to, fellowshiped with and prayed with Christians from all over Europe. He knew them quite well -- the Swiss, the English, the Danes. And now he began to acculturate himself to these strange beings called Americans.

Through his work at the Salvation Army canteen Del Rosso met Bob Shultz, a signal corps soldier assigned to General Clark's communications center. Before being shipped overseas in 1942, Bob had led Bible studies for his fellow soldiers back in Camp Crowder near Joplin, Missouri. Now he wanted to organize the same thing in Florence. But he lacked a meeting place.

Del Rosso offered the use of the Coppini home where they were living and so in 1944 Friday night meetings for the English-speaking occupation forces and any interested Italians were begun. Space quickly became a problem, so the meetings were moved across the street to the home of a ninety-year-old retired Methodist minister, Rev. Cavazzuti. Rev. Cavazzuti was an old-time Methodist who had even met Dwight L. Moody in 1892 when he preached in Rome at the Presbyterian Church there. These two men, Cavazzuti and Del Rosso, helped Shultz organize services designed to be of encouragement to Christian servicemen who found themselves a long ways from their home churches. They were very informal fellowship style meetings attended by up to 50 servicemen. There would often even be non-Christians who came, several of whom were converted.

Among the Italians who attended these meetings was young Luciano Galli who lived above the Cavazzuti family. At first, Luciano pretended not to show a great deal of interest, but finally in 1947 he was converted through the patient and persistent witness of

the Del Rosso family. He quickly became an active participant in the work of the Salvation Army and wound up as head of the Italian film division of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association.

In December of 1944 a hospital unit arrived from Africa and set up in the Pistoia area, a town about 30 kilometers west of Florence. A United Church of Christ chaplain and his young assistant, corporal Arthur Wiens, soon made their way into Florence seeking Christian fellowship. They happened into the Salvation Army canteen and meet Del Rosso. And another permanent relationship began as Del Rosso and young Wiens struck up a friendship.

Chaplain Palmer allowed Art to supply Del Rosso with hundreds of Gideon New Testaments and whatever other literature Del Rosso needed and wanted in his work with American, Australian and English servicemen. Art often brought patients from the Pistoia hospital to the Friday night meetings. Then in July the hospital unit was transferred to Florence itself so Wiens became even more involved with the ministry of the Del Rosso family.

Art remembered one morning his chaplain saying, "There's not much to do today. Why don't you take the jeep over to the Del Rossos and see if they need any help?"

The moment Art Wiens arrived at the Del Rosso home on the curving street near the river, the Del Rossos began to praise the Lord. When Wiens asked if he could be of any help and offered the jeep for transportation, their shouting of praises to the Lord about brought down the tower on the old house. The Del Rossos had recently learned that their son Paolo was being held in an allied prisoner of war camp near Pisa (he'd been in one of those Italian units that had continued fighting on the side of the Germans). They were greatly concerned about Paolo and that very night had been on their knees the entire night praying, asking the Lord to give there sane way to hear from Paolo, some way to communicate with him. Now here, the first thing in the morning was the answer from the Lord: an American army jeep complete with driver ready to take them to Pisa.

Another American chaplain named Garrett who was stationed in Pisa struck up close friendship with Del Rosso. Garrett was already carrying a burden for the Italians and began to dream with Del Rosso of possible plans for carrying out effective post-war evangelization of the country. One of Garrett's dreams was to establish a bible school for training Italian pastors and evangelists. Garrett and Del Rosso even had a little pamphlet printed up in English explaining their hopes. The little pamphlet included Del Rosso's photo and testimony.

It was with the help and intervention of these chaplain friends that the Del Rossos were able to get their son Paolo released from the prisoner of war camp earlier than would normally have been possible.

Two other American boys on whom Del Rosso had a great influence were Arthur Chadwick and Stan Davies -- both of whom returned to Italy after the war as Plymouth Brethren missionaries. Art Chadwick worked in the Turin area while Stan Davies spent several years in the Naples area.

Out of gratitude to the Del Rossos for what they were doing, the G.I.'s did all they could help the Del Rossos live in some degree of comfort. Del Rosso's temporary responsibility at the Salvation Army canteen didn't really provide enough income for a family of seven to live. So, the American servicemen were always bringing over extra

rations and sometimes even clothing (which the Del Rossos often distributed to other needy families instead of utilizing it themselves.)

His activity at the canteen also led Del Rosso to become involved in the Salvation Army services and street meetings being held in Piazza Beccaria just across the river from his home. To Del Rosso it seemed like a miracle -- those street meetings without any police interference. For fifteen years it had even been dangerous to hold home prayer meetings behind closed doors and shuttered windows. Passing out tracts had been strictly forbidden. Now there he was speaking openly and legally in a public square to crowds of Italians and occupation soldiers. It was at one of these street meetings that his daughter Maria made her public commitment to Jesus Christ.

The Del Rosso home quickly became known as the place to go for Christians. Naturally the fact that there were also four teen-age daughters helped to make it all the most hospitable for those young American soldiers so far away from home. Whoever dropped in always found himself involved in a time of prayer before he left. "For us, Florence was the Del Rosso home. Alfredo Del Rosso had a great influence on the American army," said Art Wiens.

The burden of this family did greatly impress the soldiers, particularly men like Art Wiens, Arthur Chadwick, Stan Davies and Bob Shultz, who for years was the chief engineer of Trans World Radio in Montecarlo with its powerful transmitters aimed at Italy and other European countries. Interestingly enough, Bob Shultz was at Trans World Radio in Montecarlo when "L'Ora Nazarena" first went on the air in April of 1976 (He was later transferred to Trans World's transmitting station on Guam).

Then one day some special young men happened into the Del Rosso home and the course of this 55-year old holiness preacher's life was altered somewhat. During the late nineteenth-century, journalist Richard Harding Davis popularized the saying, "The Marines have landed and have the situation well in hand." In Italy in the middle 1940s, some Nazarenes in the U.S. military landed and very quickly the situation seemed to be in hand.

Del Rosso recounted what happened:

"One evening, among the military men that testified of their faith, there was a glowing testimony of a young American soldier from the state of Indiana who belonged to the Church of the Nazarene. He spoke of his experience of salvation and sanctification with such conviction that I wanted to know the Church of the Nazarene better."

That young man was Albert Carey. He had heard of these Friday night meetings through Noemi when she was receiving treatment for the injury suffered in a grenade explosion in August of 1944. Albert soon became a favorite with the family and the group of soldiers for he had learned to play music on a carpenter's saw. His music was often the highlight of the meetings.

Then another Nazarene, Charles "Chuck" Leppert from Kansas City First Church, began to attend the services led by Del Rosso. Leppert gave the same kind of testimony that Albert Carey had given. Thirty years had passed since Del Rosso's experience of entire sanctification. He had given up hope of finding a denomination that believed and preached the experience he had had in that little room in the Waldensian Bible School. But the more Del Rosso talked with Carey and Leppert, the more he realized that Nazarene theology coincided with what he believed and had been preaching since 1914.

Leppert and Carey were also impressed with this short, peppery Italian. They sensed in Alfredo Del Rosso a kindred spirit. When they returned to the U.S. in 1946 they wrote to the Kansas City general headquarters of the church asking that some literature and books be sent to Del Rosso at their personal expense. They also initiated a letter campaign with general church officials urging them to consider establishing a work in Italy through Alfredo Del Rosso. At the same time Leppert entered Olivet Nazarene University where he made friends with Earl Morgan, the son of an Italian immigrant to the U.S. from Rome.

A correspondence was initiated between Del Rosso and C. Warren Jones, executive secretary of the Department of Foreign Missions. It was a positive correspondence as far as both sides were concerned. At that time the Del Rossos were attending Sunday services at the Florence Baptist Church. Sensing that this was an unusual man, the Baptist leadership approached him with an offer of a pastorate in Sicily. But Del Rosso turned down the offer without too many second thoughts, noting, "After the war I didn't know how I would carry on my ministry--but then I met the Nazarenes. Finally I had found the church to promote holiness in Italy. I had a near hope for the realization of my vision for my country."

Nazarene leaders decided to take some concrete steps in exploring the possibilities of starting the Church of the Nazarene in Italy. So, in 1947, while on his way home from a visitation trip to other mission areas, Nazarene General Superintendent H.V. Miller stopped in Italy. Enthusiastically, Del Rosso took him to visit visited the little groups of Italian believers he had in Florence and in Rome. For by this time Del Rosso had already started home prayer meetings among his old friends in Civitavecchia, in the Boccini home in Rome and in Florence he had several families interested, including the Lagomarsinos who had moved up from Montalcino and a former Pentecostal family, the Tararás who had emigrated to Florence after the war from Sicily looking for work.

While Miller was in Florence, Del Rosso even arranged for him to conduct a service in the beautiful 40-year-old American Episcopal Church building.

Favorably impressed with Rev. Del Rosso, General Superintendent Miller was also interested to find that Del Rosso had already translated into Italian the first part of the Nazarene Manual (a book of polity similar to the Methodist Discipline or the Presbyterian Book of Order).

In his report to the Nazarene General Board in January of 1948, Miller wrote:

"Could it be that God is now pointing the way for the Church of the Nazarene to be a greater and more effective minister to the people of the earth? . . . We feel that (1) Brother Del Rosso should be brought to the General Assembly representing his people. This would make it possible to acquaint him personally with the spirit of our church and our general program . . . (2) That in such event, work should be begun, it should be started only in a limited and conservative manner with the objective of building a national, self--supporting church as we go."

The self-support hope was a bold one. Possibly the only self-supporting work of any denomination in Italy is that of the Apostolic Church (which Del Rosso helped begin). All of old-line denominations from Baptists to Waldensians receive aid from outside Italy to help finance their work. Nevertheless, based on Nazarene experience in another European country, Great Britain, self-support from the start was the goal. It would also be

a different strategy from what had been used to start Nazarene mission work in other countries.

An invitation was extended to Del Rosso to come to St. Louis for the Nazarene General Assembly in the summer of 1948. While on a trip to Switzerland, Del Rosso sent word back through a California pastor, Rev. Griffith, of his acceptance of the invitation. His daughter Febe had become engaged to an English Salvation Army officer, so the wedding was scheduled to fall just before Del Rosso's trip to the U.S. He went to England, participated in the wedding, and then left for the U.S. in company with George Frame in May of 1948. A speaking tour had been arranged by C. Warren Jones which would take Del Rosso to 23 different U.S. states. As Del Rosso traveled he would be accompanied by Rev. Griffith who had a dream himself of going to Italy and helping oversee the new work.

One of Del Rosso's first stops was a visit the first week of June to the Northwest Indiana district -- the home district of Albert Carey. District Superintendent George J. Franklin was just one year older than Del Rosso and took a liking to him immediately. Rev. Franklin writes, "Both of us are emotionally made up and we kept the pot boiling. . . . We traveled together, prayed and wept together and also shouted some."

As Del Rosso traveled and spoke, his pleas to the churches included a request for food and clothing. The war had devastated Italy; a government with all of its infrastructure had been toppled and it would take some time to get the country back on its feet. The large scale European Recovery Program, popularly called the Marshall Plan, had only been approved by the U.S. Congress in the spring of 1948. So it would take some time before the effects of it would be felt. (Although within the space of four years, the U.S. would pour more than 12 billion dollars into Europe).

While it was almost a foregone conclusion that the Nazarenes would enter Italy, that had not yet been officially decided. There was a financial crisis on in the mission work of the church. The world was still tense after the war and that was especially true in Europe. Just before the 1948 Nazarene General Assembly the allies had begun an airlift to counter a Russian land blockade of Berlin. Even with all this, however, Miller felt strongly that now was the time to enter the European continent.

He confided to Del Rosso, "If I'm re-elected at the General Assembly, we'll open the work in Italy."

On the opening Sunday of that 1948 Nazarene General Assembly, Alfredo Del Rosso spoke for three minutes in the afternoon service. In those three short minutes he captured the hearts of the Nazarenes. Judging from reports of crowd reaction, it would be a good guess that even if General Superintendent Miller hadn't been re-elected (he was, with 571 votes out of 626), Nazarene work would still have been opened in Italy. This 1948 General Assembly launched the Mid-Century Crusade for Souls. It was the General Assembly at which J. B. Chapman gave his masterful address, "All Out for Souls." There was rejoicing as reports showed that per capita giving was approaching the one hundred dollar mark per year and membership had topped 200,000. Even with all that, a little 58-year-old, five-foot-tall Italian named Alfredo Del Rosso had a key place in the spotlight.

"The time has come," Del Rosso declared fearlessly that Sunday afternoon, "to possess the land of Italy with true holiness."

Present and listening that afternoon was a young student at Nazarene Theological Seminary, Earl Morgan.

Following one of the morning business sessions that week, Miller, who had by then been re-elected called Lester L. Zimmerman, pastor in Hammond, Indiana, to the platform. Miller asked Zimmerman if he would take Del Rosso in as a member of his local church and then recommend to the district assembly the recognition of Del Rosso's elder's orders. Rev. Zimmerman agreed to do so.

Immediately after the General Assembly the Board of General Superintendents voted to open Nazarene work in South Africa and in Italy. These two countries would be placed in a rather unique arrangement under a new Overseas Division of the Department of Home Missions and Evangelism. There, they would be under the direction of executive secretary Roy F. Smee along with Australia and Hawaii (both entered in 1946) and Alaska (entered in 1936). This decision was made out of the feeling that such an administrative setup would expedite the opening of these new countries. It was also felt that it would give the Board of General Superintendents some latitude for innovation in Italy, for example, where we were starting without any missionary leadership and were absorbing an existing work and making its present leader the district superintendent. The arrangement would also set the precedent for opening the work in Germany and other northern European countries and in American Samoa.

Thus, the Second World War which had brought untold suffering and sorrow was being used by God to open the door of continental Europe to the Church of the Nazarene and to the message of full salvation not only from "our sins" as Del Rosso's Baptist colleagues had agreed, but also from "our sin" as Del Rosso had insisted.

Following the General Assembly Del Rosso went back to Kansas City. General Superintendent Miller took him in to the office of the Department of Home Missions and Evangelism. There he was to set up an annual budget for his own salary, travel, housing and office expenses. While Miller wanted the work in Italy to proceed on a self-supporting basis, at least Del Rosso's salary and expenses as superintendent would be carried by the General Church). As far as Del Rosso was concerned it was an almost incredible rags-to-riches story. He was a man who for thirty years had been an independent holiness evangelist living on freewill offerings. He had met his first Nazarene only two years previously and now he himself was suddenly being named to be a Nazarene district superintendent. And on top of that he was being given the privilege of naming his own salary!

The church's generous offers of financial help plus the willingness of local churches to be of help in any help led him to conclude that maybe some Italians were right when they said about the U.S.: "You go outside in your lawn in America, push in a stick, and out spurts oil."

However, the Nazarenes didn't go quite as far with Del Rosso as one independent American mission board did not long afterward trying to recruit a young Italian preacher named Elio Milazzo. While that particular group was trying to convince him to head up their work in Italy, Milazzo attempted to show the futility of what they were asking him to do by saying, "Why, I couldn't possibly cover all the territory you're asking me to cover without a helicopter."

They didn't blink an eye. He said they just looked back at him and asked, "Well, how much would one cost?"

While the Nazarenes hadn't gone as far with Del Rosso as that other mission board did with Milazzo, it was clear to Del Rosso, however, that the financial resources of the

American Nazarenes, even if limited, far outweighed those of his countrymen devastated by war and used to a church almost entirely financed by government taxes.

In August, Del Rosso went back to the Northwest Indiana district. This time his tour included a weekend at Hammond First Church where in a special service on Sunday morning, August 14 he joined the Church of the Nazarene. On the Saturday previous he asked Rev. Zimmerman to drop him off in downtown Hammond for some shopping. When he came down for breakfast the next morning at the parsonage he was wearing a dark blue shirt and bright yellow tie -- a very un-Italian-looking combination. To the startled Zimmerman family, Del Rosso said, "Well, I wanted to look like an American Nazarene preacher this morning."

That morning was a special one for him. "He shouted the praises of God when I received him into membership," remembered Pastor Zimmerman. "He was so happy to be one of us."

Immediately Alfredo Del Rosso applied through the Northwest Indiana District Board of Orders and Relations for recognition of his elder's orders from the Baptist Church.

During the district assembly and the campmeeting that followed, that recognition was recommended by the district Board and approved by General Superintendent H.V. Miller who was conducting the assembly. Del Rosso's membership was maintained at Hammond First Church until 1971 when it was officially transferred to Italy. The church's missionary society named one of their study groups the "Del Rosso Chapter." The kind of unusual arrangement almost seemed to confer on him missionary status. To be sure, it was an unusual way to handle the situation. But at least it did accomplish the goal of getting the Church of the Nazarene into Italy.

Since the initial contact was made by soldiers it is interesting to note that the Nazarenes borrowed a strategy from the Allied armies for they began invading the continent through Italy first just as the allies had done. Germany and northern Europe would have to wait until 1958 and France until 1977.

While in the U. S., Del Rosso was captivated by the way the Nazarenes sang. And he decided that one of his top priorities would be to put Italian words to some of those wonderful gospel songs. So it is that today, of the 223 hymns in the latest Italian Nazarene hymnal, 65 of them have words written or translated by Alfredo Del Rosso.

Arriving back in Italy in late October, he wrote an article for the Nazarene missions magazine which was then called *Other Sheep*. It would be the first of many reports he would send to that publication. In that initial article, Del Rosso wrote to his primarily American readership:

"A new era starts in the evangelization of Italy. I believe God will give us a real holiness revival among the Italian people . . . Pray for us, dear brothers and sisters as we work for Christ and the cause of holiness, calling sinners to repentance and salvation, and believers to the real Pentecostal baptism with the Holy Ghost and fire, the scriptural second-blessing holiness . . . The harvest is ready in Italy . . . Finally we can preach the full gospel of the grace that saves and sanctifies without having people say to us that sanctification is extremism."

The long search of this now 58 year old preacher was over. To English-speaking Nazarenes he wrote: "I have had this vision for many years for my land. Now it's like a wonderful dream to know that a holiness church is here in Italy . . . To know that our

whole church prays for us and loves us, from the General Superintendents down to the last new convert, gives us the full assurance that our work in Italy will prosper and grow." And it did. Good records started being kept in 1952. For the next twenty years, the average annual membership gain was 6 percent -- nothing fantastic but at least equivalent to and perhaps even a little better than U.S. growth rates for the same period.

To Nazarene general church leaders Del Rosso had listed as one of the top priorities the planting the church the establishment of a Bible school to train workers. Preliminary plans called for it to be set up in Florence. His daughter Noemi started to school at what is now Point Loma Nazarene University. The plan was that a degree from the Nazarene college would prepare her to be a key figure in launching the infant Nazarene work in Italy. Unfortunately, ill health altered those plans, causing Noemi to return to Italy even before Christmas of 1948.

Del Rosso now had four groups meeting with some degree of regularity in Italy, having added one since Miller's coming. Each group counted about 30 persons as adherents.

## **5. Superintendent Del Rosso**

On June 30, 1948 the charter of the First Church of the Nazarene on the continent of Europe was officially opened (although Del Rosso himself didn't join the Church of the Nazarene until the middle of August). Those first members in Florence included the Lagomarsinos and their two daughters--one of whom would become a Nazarene pastor's wife. Others were Mrs. Tarará and her two married daughters, who were the same age as Del Rosso's daughters. Then there was Del Rosso's son Paolo and Paolo's future father-in-law, Foresto Palandri.

Worship services at that time were being held in the Coppini house on Bartolomeo Scala street where the Del Rossos still lived. While most Italians are apartment dwellers, this was actually a single family dwelling with an iron gate and fence out front. It was complete with a kind of roof-top terrace-tower. A weekly meeting was also being held on Sundays across town in the Lagomarsino home. It was in one of those meetings that Del Rosso baptized Olga Lagomarsino by sprinkling.

When Del Rosso returned to Italy in the fall of 1948, he immediately made contact by letter with a chemical refinery worker down in Sicily named Angelo Cereda. Cereda and Del Rosso had been introduced to each other by Cereda's father-in-law. Angelo had been converted in the Baptist Church in Catania, but had begun conducting independent prayer meetings in his home when the Baptist church became too much of a political club to suit him. From what little Del Rosso knew about Angelo, he thought Angelo might be interested in becoming a Nazarene. And he was.

In less than two years Angelo and his two house churches -- one in Catania and the other in Misterbianco to the north -- became part of the Church of the Nazarene. Thus, the Nazarenes established a beachhead on the island of Sicily, a island with 5 million residents. On this island attached to Italy was a population exceeding that of the entire nation of New Zealand or of the Dominican Republic or of Jamaica or of Papua New Guinea. And the Nazarenes now had entered it.

It was not to be an easy nor a calm union, this joining of the Sicilians with the work in central Italy. Catania was a long ways from Florence -- 600 miles. Given that distance

and the difficulty of travel and communication, misunderstandings could and did arise between the new superintendent and the untrained lay pastor. But it is marvelous to think that within two years, God had helped the Church of the Nazarene to plant its witness in the strategic centers of:

- Florence, in the north-central part of Italy
- Rome in the central
- The island of Sicily in the south

After Art Wiens was discharged from the U.S. army, he enrolled in Wheaton College near Chicago, Illinois to prepare for the full-time ministry. At Christmas time of 1948 he received a card from the Del Rossos. It asked the bold question: "When are you coming back to Italy to serve the Lord?" While Art had enjoyed his fellowship with the Del Rossos and other Christians in the Florence area, up to this point in time he had not considered his call from the Lord to be one that included missionary service in Italy. But he could not shake the Del Rosso's question from his mind. So, in February of 1949 Art Wiens finally prayed through on a missions call and settled on Italy as his place of service.

Del Rosso continued to travel extensively both inside of Italy and throughout the rest of Europe as well just as he had done in the years 1930-40 when he was an independent evangelist. He enjoyed this itinerant type of ministry and carried a heavy burden for the spiritual welfare of isolated believers. At times Del Rosso's constant traveling evoked criticism from others, but it was his type of ministry. He felt much, much more comfortable in an itinerant evangelist role than he did as an administrator trying to run things from an office.

There is one little episode that illustrates this very clearly. One day Alfredo Del Rosso arrived home in Florence just before noon. He was tired, exhausted and worn-out. "I'm so tired of traveling," he sighed to his wife, "I just can't do this any longer. I've got to call it quits."

But, after he had eaten and had a cup of strong Italian espresso coffee, Del Rosso seemed to catch a second wind. "Niny," he said, looking over the top of his coffee cup, "do you think I can make that three o'clock train? Get my suitcase ready!"

Niny protested. Alfredo had just arrived with a suitcase full of dirty laundry. He had seemed so tired an hour before. Surely he couldn't have been rejuvenated so quickly. But she saw it was useless. He made the three o'clock train.

Having been a high-ranking army officer, Del Rosso got special reductions on railroad fares. This did enable him to do this kind of extensive travel even on a small budget. And he had early learned to make excellent use of those hours on the train, praying, reading and meditating. Some years ago I sat beside Alfredo Del Rosso on the return flight from a European Nazarene Pastors and Leaders Conference in the British Isles. As our plane took off and headed toward Italy, Alfredo Del Rosso settled himself in his seat and pulled out a well-worn copy of a holiness classic by Andrew Murray.

It wasn't long before he began to pray about and make plans for purchasing properties for the two most active and promising groups: those in Florence and in Civitavecchia. To help the fledgling church gain proper legal standing and thus be able to own property in the name of the denomination, they sought the advice and counsel of a lawyer. The lawyer attempted to help them gain acceptance as an incorporated denomination, but they were rejected on the grounds they were too small to be recognized as a denomination

(After all, at that time there was only one Nazarene full-time worker and the groups reported as churches owned no properties nor did they have any rented halls with services open to the public.)

Having been turned down there, the lawyer suggested that they incorporate themselves as a small business with the name of "The Nazarene Company." This would allow them to hold property and to make business transactions as an organization and not merely as individuals. It was apparently the best solution that could be had at the time.

So, on October 16, 1951, the Nazarene Company came into existence in Italy. Stockholders were listed as Alfredo Del Rosso, Pio Boccini (Del Rosso's railroad conductor friend from Rome), Ado Lagomarsino (converted as a teenager under his ministry in Montalcino back in 1930), Umberto Ascenzi (a brick mason and plasterer from the Civitavecchia group) and Del Rosso's daughter Lea. With Lea's marriage in 1953 to a Salvation Army officer, Paolo Del Rosso would become a "stockholder" in the Nazarene company.

The company was given a charter by the Italian government. The charter was to be good until April 30, 2000. The company's stated purpose was "the purchase of real estate and the construction of buildings to be used in nonprofit religious work." Stock was capitalized at 15,000 lira. The "stockholders" of this company also played the role of district advisory board until 1961 when the company was dissolved and Bob Cerrato succeeded in getting legal recognition of the Church of the Nazarene as an incorporated denomination.

In those early years after the way, there were many independent groups and workers looking for a place to light, a place to get some financial subsidy to carry on their work. As word got around hear that Del Rosso had introduced the Church of the Nazarene to Italy, several of these independent workers and groups contacted him to ask about either joining the church or of merging their work with the Church of the Nazarene. Most were interested in the Nazarenes, not so much because of doctrinal affinity, but because they were seeking some kind of material support.

From Del Rosso's past experiences and from a great concern to maintain an undiluted holiness witness, he took in almost none of them. He was criticized and second-guessed for those decisions and perhaps he was too cautious. But, on the other hand, Alfredo Del Rosso was also criticized for being too interested in reporting large statistics back to the U.S. So, perhaps he had found the middle ground after all. Besides, he did not have a large operating budget that would enable him to take on full-time personnel and provide financial subsidies for a lot of small, struggling groups.

It must be remembered that here was a 60-year old man struggling to establish the work of a denomination he didn't know all that well. He was attempting to accomplish it without missionary help or without a Bible school to provide trained workers. When missionary help did come in 1952 it was only one couple. So there Alfredo Del Rosso was, trying to plant his newly adopted church in a country that stretched nearly a thousand miles in length. He felt he couldn't afford to take in groups or workers he wasn't 100 percent certain about. Given the distances he would have had to travel to supervise them, he felt was just too far away to keep a tight rein on people about whom he had some misgivings. As a result, he did tend toward being conservative in organizing churches and in accepting workers. And of course, his Waldensian training had not

equipped him to be a pioneer church administrator and a church growth specialist. To Del Rosso, the holiness message was the most crucial part of his ministry. If anything had to suffer, it would be the speed of the work. It would not be the clear proclamation of the message of holiness.

In early 1950, Alfredo Del Rosso had gone to Switzerland on a preaching mission. While in a small Swiss town named Frutigen, he asked what Protestant churches might be in the area because he wanted to attend a worship service. A man told him about the various mainline denominations that had congregations there. Del Rosso wasn't particularly interested in any of them. So he asked, "Are these all?"

"Well, there's another group, but I doubt you'd be interested in them. They're a strange sect nicknamed the 'pure hearts.'"

"I think that may be my crowd," replied Del Rosso and got their address. It was the somewhat new Swiss Evangelical Brotherhood Church and it so happened that they were having a special conference at that time.

Del Rosso enjoyed his time with them very much. While there, he met a young Swiss railroad communications worker named Fritz Liechti. The two men had their picture taken together. Later at Bern, he met a Mr. Schlacter who knew quite a bit about the Evangelical Brotherhood Church. Schlacter talked with Del Rosso quite freely and fully about their theological stance. It seemed to Del Rosso that this group was pretty close to where he and the Nazarenes were theologically. So he wrote to the group's founder, Fritz Berger. Berger died about the same time and the new president of the church followed up on the correspondence, sending Del Rosso a couple of books written by Berger along with an invitation to attend their conference later in May of 1950.

Del Rosso went to that conference and became a regular feature of that group's meetings in the spring at Moutier, in the summer at Steffisburg and in the autumn at Zurich. In those first years, Del Rosso also helped them hold services for Italian immigrant workers in Switzerland. He began to hope that a merger could take place between the Brotherhood Church and the Church of the Nazarene -- but it never came off.

In 1950 Del Rosso's friend Cavazzuti, the elderly Methodist pastor who lived across the street, died at the age of 95. It was also in the fall of 1950 that Art Wiens arrived back in Italy, fresh out of Wheaton College. He had come back as a single missionary under the sponsorship of the Gospel Missionary Union, the missionary arm of the "Back to the Bible" broadcast. It was a decision which Art says was almost totally due to the speaking of the Holy Spirit through Alfredo Del Rosso.

Wiens said, "Del Rosso was happy in the Lord's work and he wanted other young men to discover the joy of being involved too."

When Art arrived in Florence, the Del Rossos took him in to their home as though he were their own son. For the first month Art Wiens ate all of his meals with the Del Rossos. He became an active participant in the Friday night meetings held in the Del Rosso home. After three months in Italy he met his future bride in the Del Rosso home. A young single Canadian named Irma arrived as a missionary, and the Del Rossos helped her get settled too. She and Art began dating some (which usually meant attending the meetings in the Del Rosso home together). Then, in September of 1951, they were married in a ceremony in which Del Rosso preached the main message (in Italian-style weddings there's always a sermon). During the three years the Wiens spent in Florence in

language study and acculturation, Del Rosso warned them that the road ahead would not be easy, but he assured them that the Lord would walk it with them.

The Wiens went on to direct one of the major evangelical publishing houses in Italy and operated one of the more extensive Italian language radio ministries of anybody. They also planted a flourishing church in Modena that is affiliated with the Plymouth Brethren denomination.

It is thus clear that while Del Rosso had a mind single to the message of holiness, he was not denominational in a narrow-minded way. He had lived far too long as an independent evangelist to believe that the Nazarenes could evangelize the world -- or even Italy -- single-handedly.

The following year, 1951, Del Rosso's son Paolo married. About the same time that young Swiss railroad worker from Frutigen, Fritz Liechti, showed up at the Del Rosso home in Florence. Fritz had gone for a ride on his motorcycle in the Swiss mountains. As he rode along he began to think more and more about that Italian named Del Rosso whose photograph he carried in his pocket. Taken by a whim of the moment, Liechti decided to go visit Del Rosso. Before he knew it, Fritz Liechti found himself crossing the Italian border on his cycle, headed south to Florence.

Arriving in the city, he managed to find his way to the Del Rosso apartment. Fritz Liechti didn't know a word of Italian and when he arrived at the Del Rosso home he discovered that Alfredo and not Niny was the multi-lingual person. Alfredo was gone and his wife spoke only Italian. Finally, in his fruitless attempts at communicating who he was, Fritz pulled the photograph of Alfredo Del Rosso out of his pocket.

"The instant I did," he said, "She opened her arms and hugged me like a son."

This contact bore fruit in 1952 when Rev. Bob Cerrato brought this same young Swiss down to Florence as an associate missionary to help in pastoring the Florence congregation. The Liechti family had applied through their Swiss church to be missionaries to New Guinea, but had been turned down. The opportunity offered the Liechti family by Cerrato gave them a chance to fulfill what they felt was a valid missionary call. Eventually, the Liechti family wound up serving with a Swiss evangelistic mission which distributed 60,000 daily meditation calendars annually plus thousands of records, cassettes and other evangelistic materials in Italian. And it all developed out of a seed planted by Del Rosso that grew into a burden.

Fritz marveled at the ability of Del Rosso to communicate so very well in different cultures and through different languages. He noted that Del Rosso is one of the few people he has ever known who seemed equally at ease with boisterous American Nazarenes or with staid Swiss Evangelical Brotherhood people.

In 1951, G. B. Williamson, in his first quadrennium as a General Superintendent, visited Italy. Before the summer of 1952 General Superintendent Hardy Powers came and brought with him Rev. and Mrs. Leslie Parrott. Les Parrott wrote his memories of that trip:

"I remember going to Civitavecchia and holding services there in a home with a large number of people present. I remember one of the ladies had to walk the long way around because a Catholic land owner would not allow her to walk across his pasture if she was coming to our service. . . . We ate at a restaurant down close to the Mediterranean and the owner sent out for violinists and singers who came in to entertain us while we were

eating. We rode in an open horse-drawn carriage from the restaurant up to the house where we were going to hold services. Also, on that trip we visited the city of Florence where a piece of property was shown to Dr. Powers. I remember then talking considerably about the fact that the building would be constructed like an apartment to get a permit but the partitions would be left out of a large area on the first floor to make a sanctuary."

The property had been purchased in a section of Florence where there were no other evangelical groups operating. Finding such an area wasn't really all that difficult. Even today, this city of 500,000 persons only has 8-10 Protestant churches.

After his visit to Italy, Williamson returned to the U.S. to raise money for the new Florence "training school" building. His first tour was on the Northwest Indiana district where Del Rosso's elder's orders had been recognized and where he still held his membership. In two zone rallies in which Williamson spoke, over \$4,000 was pledged toward the construction.

In January of 1952 the Nazarene General Board did some re-thinking of the Italian situation. At the urging of Del Rosso himself, Italy was moved administratively from Roy Smee's leadership in the Department of Home Missions and Evangelism to the Department of Foreign Missions effective May 1, 1952. Following that move the Department of Foreign Missions appointed a young seminary graduate of Italian ancestry, Earl Morgan and his wife Thelma to Italy. At the time the Morgans were pastoring in Marshall, Missouri. It was hoped that Earl Morgan's seminary training would equip him to set up the Italian Nazarene Bible School in Florence.

The new missionaries were to work under the direct supervision of District Superintendent Del Rosso. For the early 1950's having a national leader supervise an American missionary was an unusual experiment, even though Del Rosso did have what amounted to missionary status and salary. Italy proved to be a good testing ground for innovations in Nazarene missions strategy. Lessons learned in this experiment have shaped the strategy where joint missionary-national leadership is involved in the Church of the Nazarene.

In June of 1952 Del Rosso returned to the U.S. on board the liner "Queen Elizabeth." He was headed for the quadrennial Nazarene General Assembly being held in Kansas City. On his way across the U.S., Del Rosso visited briefly the Northwest Indiana district. Once again at the General Assembly Alfredo Del Rosso was on the program of the Sunday afternoon missionary rally.

Those were exciting days for the Nazarene world outreach program. In the seven years since the close of World War II, the number of missionaries serving under the Church of the Nazarene had more than doubled. There, at that afternoon victory rally on June 22, Del Rosso was given four minutes to speak. Directly in front of him was the new class of outgoing missionary appointees -- including the Earl Morgans heading to Italy. It was an electrifying four minutes. Edward Lawlor, who would eventually become the responsible General Superintendent for Italy, said, "I shall never forget the sight of him standing in front of the General Assembly pleading for men and money to bring the message of holiness to Italy."

It was also a memorable occasion for the Morgans. Earl Morgan recounted it this way: "As he (Del Rosso) told about preaching holiness one block from the Vatican, he had 10,000 people on their feet shouting."

By this time Del Rosso was counting five groups or preaching points in Italy, none of them actually organized properly as churches (although he was reporting membership statistics for each of them). The five were Rome, Florence, Montalcino, Catania and Misterbianco. Civitavecchia was not mentioned so perhaps the work there had gone temporarily dormant. Without stable internal organization, groups could appear and dissolve quickly without leaving traces since everything depended upon a preacher being able to conduct a service in someone's front room.

Because Nazarene work in Italy was being started on the idea that it would be financially self-supporting from the start, Del Rosso was the only worker for whom finances were included in the subsidy being sent from Nazarene headquarters. Niny would be pressed into service as pastor of the Florence congregation off and on during the next several years. Later, she would also fulfill a lot of the pastoral duties in the Civitavecchia church. However, she would do all of this without ever even applying for a local preacher's license.

The Morgans arrived in Italy in August after General Assembly. Almost immediately they were put to work with the youth and music program of the Florence church. The two preachers -- Del Rosso and Morgan -- began sizing each other up. Said Morgan, "Del Rosso had a hearty, explosive laugh. He could be very kind; he could be very tough. He could be very friendly; he could be very hard. He could be very diplomatic . . . We had quite a time!"

The following year, in 1953, a hall was opened in Civitavecchia and construction was begun on the building in Florence by a relative of Mrs. Del Rosso. The design of the building was such that it would allow for easy conversion into a Bible school classroom and dormitory building (an idea which never materialized so the building was left with a rather strange configuration). The Del Rossos moved in upstairs in the Bible school area which made a large 7-room apartment while the Morgan family took the smaller 3-room parsonage downstairs which opened on to the sanctuary.

The Florence property purchase was criticized by many Italians because it was on the edge of town. Fifty years later that building is surrounded by tall apartment houses as Florence has grown to engulf the fields around and beyond it.

In 1953 Del Rosso's daughter Lea married a Salvation Army officer. In that same year General Superintendent and Mrs. D. I. Vanderpool paid Del Rosso a visit. They were on a trip which included visits to the work in the Middle East and the oversight of the division of the British Isles work into two districts. Arriving back home, Vanderpool wrote a small travelogue about his trip. Titled *In Their Steps*, it was published as a Nazarene missionary reading book in 1956. Of Italy, Vanderpool wrote, "Our great need in this field is trained workers. An excellent training school property has been secured and an adequate building erected. We have a fine group of students now in training . . . I feel certain that every dollar of General Budget (now World Evangelism Fund) money which we have invested in Italy will bring back wonderful returns." Vanderpool also came away greatly moved by his visits to the Coliseum and St. Peter's basilica in Rome. In his chapter on Italy Vanderpool included a short biography of the life of Del Rosso.

A monthly mimeographed magazine was launched to help bind the churches together. Then Del Rosso set himself to work on a translation of the first part of the Nazarene Manual. It contained the historical statement, the church constitution and special rules

and part of the section on local church government. Published in Florence in 1954, this small extract was the only Manual in print in Italian for more than 25 years.

Mario Cianchi, who had pastoral stints at several of the Nazarene churches in Italy, was converted that year in the Florence church. An outspoken young communist, Mario had gone to one of the services in the newly constructed building to try to persuade his mother to leave. But the Holy Spirit began to work on his heart and before long he was converted and became a real worker in the church. One of Mario Cianchi's biggest struggles after his conversion was giving up smoking. But the Del Rossos kept preaching and prodding and one day in the furnace room of the Florence church building, Mario finally surrendered his cigarettes to the Lord.

Mario remembers Del Rosso and his strong commitment to the Church of the Nazarene, its doctrine and polity. "When he spoke of Kansas City (and the church's headquarters)," said Mario, "I almost had visions of a Nazarene Vatican."

The Sunday night services at the church became very special events. Often, Del Rosso's nephew would drive all the way to Florence from Empoli just to be in the service even though he was not a Christian. A florist on the nearby busy street would close up early Sunday evening to come and listen to the music.

Del Rosso began to look toward opening a work in Naples. He and Earl Morgan discussed the possibility of asking Nazarene leaders for another missionary couple to send to Naples. Some contacts were begun with a young fellow living in Naples who had been with Del Rosso when Del Rosso was helping organize the Apostolic church.

Morgan continued to remind Del Rosso that he had been sent with the responsibility of starting a Bible school. Del Rosso's response was, "The Lord will provide the workers." Del Rosso was a strongly motivated self-starter and he looked for the same kind of person. He also knew that his own Bible school training had not really equipped him to be a holiness evangelist and church planter. He thus had trouble envisioning a Bible school that could adequately do such a job. But Morgan kept talking and finally after a couple of years Del Rosso acquiesced. Evening classes were begun in Florence for some of the local young people. It was to these evening classes that Vanderpool referred when he talked about the Florence Nazarene training school in *In Their Steps*.

In 1954 the Italian Nazarenes published a hymnal with tunes from the Nazarene English hymnal *Glorious Gospel Hymns* using either Del Rosso's translations of the English words or entirely new lyrics composed by him. Del Rosso would often write the words to a song in one sitting. With his accordion on his lap to try out each phrase as he went, he would read the English words and dictate to Niny the Italian lyrics. Hymn writing as well as articles for the little magazine was done on his trips between Civitavecchia, Rome and Florence. Sermon preparation, on the other hand, was usually done during early morning walks. His preaching normally had a vein of subtle humor running through it.

Together with his daughter Maria, Del Rosso helped Missionary Morgan put out a mimeographed booklet titled *Sanctification by Faith*. A Biblical study of holiness, it was a series of messages that Morgan had preached in the Florence church. It's a little booklet that was revised and re-printed 25 years later.

In January of 1955 the now 65-year-old Del Rosso wrote to the three main leaders of the group in Rome, reminding them that they were Nazarenes and that they must be in full knowledge of and in full agreement with the Manual (however, they did only have

his short abridgment to study). He wrote, "You must teach clearly the baptism of the Holy Spirit." He reminded them that the Church of the Nazarene uses the biblical principle of tithing to finance the Lord's work. One of these men, Pio Boccini, became one of the strongest givers percentage-wise in the Italian Nazarene movement, quite often fasting in order to be able to give more to the church.

Del Rosso urged these men not to get mixed up with the Pentecostals because, he told them, "sooner or later, the doctrine of tongues will disturb the souls, forcing them away from genuine sanctification."

Del Rosso would be severely criticized for not having led the Italian Nazarenes into stronger financial self-support. But that probably stemmed not so much from a lack of desire on his part as it did from the fact that what he had at this point were not really organized churches. They were basically only preaching points using homes, a rented hall in Civitavecchia and a one-room church in Florence. That Del Rosso did not view self-support as an impossibility (as some have accused him) can be seen in what he wrote in a May, 1955 letter to Nazarene General Superintendent Benner. In that letter Del Rosso wrote: "The Italian Nazarenes are like anyone else -- when they have got the spiritual blessing, they are glad to give the material."

Construction on a combination parsonage-sanctuary was begun in Civitavecchia in 1955. It cost more than Del Rosso had projected (not an unusual happening in any Italian building project!) and he wound up having to use \$6,000 of Alabaster money which had been earmarked for Catania. It was a decision that aroused some long-lasting hard feelings among the Sicilians. He also had to use some money that had been earmarked for Naples. The Civitavecchia building was a good investment, though, and constructing it now looks like a wise move. For years, the Civitavecchia church was the strongest Nazarene church in Italy organizationally, numerically and financially.

Nazarene work in Naples opened in 1956 under the leadership of a lay preacher who had formerly been with the Apostolic Church. By 1959, the work in this large metropolitan area (it has a population comparable to that of Houston, Tex.) had grown to four preaching points. It was a year of change in the Florence area. A baby was born to Thelma and Earl Morgan and Maria Del Rosso married and moved to Rome. Even with her move, Maria continued to serve as editor of the mimeographed Nazarene magazine while a young man in the Florence congregation, Vincenzo Izzo, took over the periodical's production and distribution. Vincenzo was active in the evening Bible school classes run by Earl Morgan. Later, he would marry one of Ado Lagomarsino's daughters and become a pastor in the Naples area.

Even up until this point in time, the Nazarene work was not without opposition from the government. A 1931 law promulgated by Mussolini's fascist government had required evangelicals to obtain police permission for every service they conducted -- whether inside or outside of the church building. That law had remained in effect even after the fall of fascism, and thus allowed zealous and bigoted Catholic public officials to continue to persecute evangelicals. In fact, in 1952 Del Rosso had written in the *Other Sheep*, "The authorities are Catholic and they do many things to hinder people from coming to the services." Finally, however, in a victory for Italian evangelicals this law requiring permission for every evangelical church service was struck down as being unconstitutional on March 19, 1957, by the Italian Supreme Court.

Within days of that court decision Del Rosso had written to some of his co-workers, "Beginning now, we can meet whenever and wherever we want and no authority can stop us!"

In the same year Del Rosso completed 50 years as a born-again Christian. Reminiscing on that anniversary Del Rosso wrote, "The Devil has tried in these fifty years to kill my soul and body in many different ways. But today I can say I have fought a good fight . . . I have kept the faith."

It was also in 1957 that Del Rosso had to go to Montalcino to conduct the funeral of his old friend and Sunday school teacher from Siena, Carlo Padelletti. Not long afterward, the preaching point which had been functioning in the Padeletti private chapel since 1930 was closed down.

In August of 1957 the Morgans returned to the U.S. for furlough. They had completed five years of service in Italy and were due for a year of rest, of getting reacquainted with families, and of deputation work. Their departure, however, would leave the field without a missionary for the next three years. Earl had just written a Nazarene missionary reading book entitled *They of Italy Salute You*. Published in the spring of 1958, the book gave an overview of the Italian Nazarene work centered on the lives of several of the Italian workers.

To fill the gap left in Florence by the Morgans' departure, Del Rosso got Elio Milazzo to join the church and named him pastor of Florence. A former medical student who felt a call to preach, Milazzo had been working with both the Nazarenes and the Salvation Army. He was the first full-time addition to pastoral staff the Nazarenes had made their 10 years of work in Italy. The relationship between him and Del Rosso would be a stormy one because both men were strong-willed. Furthermore, Milazzo's tendency to come off as somewhat harsh grated on Niny.

In 1959 General Superintendent Powers made a visit to Italy. Thelma Morgan had just been diagnosed with Hodgkin's disease. That, coupled with some visa problems the Morgans were having, led the Nazarene Department of Foreign Missions to re-assign them to Lebanon.

In the Del Rosso study one day, Dr. Powers was discussing the implications of this with the only two full-time Nazarene workers: Del Rosso and Milazzo. The conversation turned to Del Rosso's age and his upcoming mandatory retirement as district superintendent. Del Rosso asked, "But who will be superintendent if I step down?"

"What about him?" said Dr. Powers, motioning to Milazzo, this young, new Nazarene who had just so recently become pastor of Florence.

"Why, he's not even ordained," objected Del Rosso.

The already-strained relationship between the two of them did not take long to break. In January of 1960, Milazzo resigned as the Florence pastor and within three months had been taken in by the Mennonite Church as director of their radio ministry. With no missionary around and no one in sight to pick up the reins from Del Rosso, Milazzo had become convinced that Nazarene work in Italy would fold with Del Rosso's retirement. Kansas City seemed just too far away. Later Milazzo realized he had misjudged the Nazarenes and their commitment to world evangelism. As he watched Nazarene work from the outside, Elio Milazzo came to marvel at "the gift of the general superintendency. Those men could arrive on a plane and within a few hours grasp the situation perfectly."

Del Rosso's days as district superintendent were drawing to a close. He was seventy years old and the Nazarene polity clearly said in the Manual: "No superintendent shall serve beyond the District Assembly following his seventieth birthday."

Alfredo Del Rosso may not have been all that the church could have hoped for in a model pioneer district superintendent. Still, in 12 years Del Rosso helped plant the Nazarene witness in central and southern Italy. He had published a hymnal filled with lyrics he had written or translated. He had translated and published two books. He had inspired several young men to enter the ministry. He had overseen the construction of two buildings, and got the Nazarenes to begin focusing their attention on Europe. For example, in 1958, two years previous to Del Rosso's retirement, Jerry Johnson was sent to Germany to start the work there.

Del Rosso may not have succeeded totally in getting the Italian work on its feet organizationally, but he had planted the Nazarene flag in key Italian cities and had insisted that wherever the name Nazarene was carried, the message of holiness would be preached. All in all, that's not a bad legacy for a man to leave.

## **6. Retirement? Not quite**

In August of 1960 Rev. and Mrs. Rocco Cerrato arrived from a pastorate in the New York area to serve as short-term missionaries. Cerrato had been asked to go to Italy to enable the now 70-year-old Del Rosso to retire and to bridge the leadership gap until a career-missionary could be sent.

Rev. Cerrato was of Italian ancestry and the Board of General Superintendents had prevailed on him to accept this assignment even though he felt no call to missionary service. They felt that Cerrato might be able to move into the cultural and linguistic situation more quickly than would someone without an Italian heritage. After wrestling with the decision for several agonizing months, he finally did pray through on going to Italy -- but he committed to only two years with the understanding that at that time he would be replaced by a career missionary.

Before the arrival of the Cerratos, Del Rosso confided to Elio Milazzo that he could not see himself retiring. He felt the work was too important to flounder while an American (even if he did have Italian blood) attempted to learn the language and to become acculturated. Besides, it was not all that abnormal for someone approaching retirement age to become protective and even possessive of an organization he founded and directed. As a result, the Cerrato family was not greeted with an open-arms welcome and handed the key to the city. However, Cerrato was as strong-willed as Del Rosso and he quickly earned the respect of the elder man.

About the same time the Cerratos arrived in 1960, Earl Morgan and his family returned to Italy for a short time, but the combination of the two missionaries' personalities just didn't work out. So, in 1961, the Morgans went back to Lebanon. That brief overlap between the two missionary families had, however, given the Cerratos enough time to do some language study and to get a feel of the situation.

In the fall of 1961, General Superintendent Hardy Powers made a trip to Italy with George Coulter, then the head of the Nazarene Department of World Missions. While Del Rosso had not been ready to turn anything over to Cerrato when Cerrato had arrived a year earlier, he was now convinced that it was the proper thing to do. Meeting in Rome

together with Powers, Coulter and a lawyer, Del Rosso and Cerrato worked out a retirement agreement that included procedures for transferring legal authority from the church from Del Rosso to Cerrato. The 10-year-old Nazarene Company was also dissolved and inside of a month the Italian Minister of Internal Affairs had given the Church of the Nazarene legal standing as a recognized denomination. This wasn't just due to the arrival of Cerrato. The obstacles to that recognition had really been cleared away two years earlier when the Assemblies of God triumphed in their long court battle to obtain legal recognition.

The properties at Florence and Civitavecchia were deeded by the Nazarene Company to the Church of the Nazarene (although this "gift" did create tax problems that took years to resolve!).

At that time the Italian district was reporting 300 full members in 7 organized churches and preaching points. Apart from Del Rosso and his wife, there were no full-time workers. So, although the naming of a missionary as superintendent was in some respects a step backward in the indigenization of the work, it seemed to be a solution that would actually allow the work to move forward.

Although the government had granted the church full legal recognition, Italian Nazarene ministers would not obtain eligibility for governmental pension and health insurance programs until 1971. So a "semi-retirement" salary for Alfredo Del Rosso of 120 dollars monthly was established by the church. At its meeting in January of 1962, the Department of World Missions officially placed Del Rosso in a retired relationship. Alfredo and Niny moved to Civitavecchia to pastor the congregation there with the understanding that house and utilities would be provided in addition to the pension.

While in Italy, Dr. Powers toured several of the churches again. It was during this series of special services that a famous translation -- or mistranslation -- occurred of one of Dr. Powers' sermons on tithing and self-support. Rocco Cerrato, who was present, said that parts of Powers' sermon on tithing became in Del Rosso's translation a sermon on "God is love." As the story began spreading among Nazarene leaders, the impression was given that Del Rosso didn't believe in tithing and had taken it upon himself to protect the Italian church from the message. Intentional or not on the part of Del Rosso, the story unfortunately became the most famous thing known about Del Rosso in some Nazarene circles and colored Nazarene leaders' view of him.

In the light of what I know about Del Rosso plus having heard a lot of translating goofs (and having made some myself), it's most likely that where Del Rosso's translating broke down, it was purely unintentional. Del Rosso's successor at Civitavecchia and eventually as superintendent, Salvatore Scognamiglio, for instance, would often miss contractions when he was translating American preachers. Scognamiglio would often hear "can't" as "can" and "wouldn't" as "would." He would work hard in his translations trying to things fit with the rest of the sermon. For a few moments things would sound awkward, but he wasn't intentionally trying to mess up the speaker. Sometimes, as a translator, if you lose a speaker's train of thought, rather than stopping the flow of a message, you fill in with something until you can figure out what the speaker is trying to say. I think that's what happened with Del Rosso and Powers.

On Sunday, December 17, 1961, Cerrato organized a Rev. and Mrs. Del Rosso day in the Florence church. Gifts were presented to them by Cerrato on behalf of the General Church. Words of greeting from the Nazarene General Board were brought by Mark

Moore who happened to be present for the occasion. The retirement celebration marked the end of 15 years of active pastoral ministry in the city of Florence on the part of Alfredo and Niny Del Rosso. Now they were moving to Civitavecchia, and although supposedly retired, would spend the next eight years pastoring in that city.

Another missionary couple, the Adragnas from the middle western United States, arrived and were sent to Rome to help Pio Boccini establish a viable congregation there. Sadly, unresolved culture shock forced them home even before they had finished language study. Del Rosso continued to dream and pray for the assignment of another missionary couple who would go to the Naples area.

Mario Cianchi was sent from the Florence congregation in what would be an unsuccessful attempt to plant a church in the Venice region at a town named Vicenza. There were no funds available for Mario's full-time support, so he found a job to support himself while he worked to start the new group. An independent congregation in Sarzana where Luigi Morano was pastor merged with the Church of the Nazarene. That congregation soon helped give birth to another group in nearby La Spezia where some of Angelo Cereda's converts from Sicily had moved to find work. Although Fritz Liechti was without Bible school training, he accepted an invitation to come down from Switzerland to help pastor the Florence congregation.

Cerrato became good friends with Jerry Johnson, the superintendent of the new work in Germany (the district was officially called Middle Europe since it had the responsibility for planting churches not only in Germany but also in Denmark, the Netherlands, and Switzerland). It wasn't long before conversations between the two Americans turned to a mutual problem -- training national pastors. Since the departure of the Morgans, Italy had been without any type of ministerial training program. Johnson had started a kind of Bible school in the church at Frankfurt, but was not totally satisfied. Cerrato and Johnson began to dream about the possibility of launching a school that could serve both districts. It sounded like a good idea to Nazarene General Church leaders too. So, they agreed to take on the project and thus the European Nazarene College was born.

In 1964 the Cerratos returned to the U.S. They had agreed to go to Italy on a two-year assignment and had overstayed that time by two years. They were anxious to return to a U.S. pastorate. In a debriefing with the Nazarene Department of World Missions, Cerrato recommended moving away from the policy of sending couples of Italian ancestry as unnecessary and even at times counterproductive. The Paul Wires from central Oklahoma had been placed under general appointment by the General Board in January of 1964. When the Cerratos stood firm on their decision to return to the U.S., the Wires were sent to replace them.

By January of 1965 an old inn on the banks of the Rhine river in Busingen, Germany had been purchased to house the new European Nazarene College. The location -- a German enclave within the borders of Switzerland -- seemed ideal and the inn was easily renovated to serve as the initial building. Alfredo Del Rosso was asked to come and teach in that first term. His subjects were to be the Manual, theology and evangelism.

Incredibly for a man his age, Alfredo Del Rosso was to continue pastoring Civitavecchia, commuting back and forth every weekend. His daughter Maria and her husband Alberto Parenti who were living in Rome at that time began coming out to help with the church.

John Nielson had been named as first rector of the college. He recounts some of the reasons why Del Rosso was recruited to help in that first semester: "(1) To help orient Italian students to the multi-national environment; (2) To help interpret English lectures and church services to Italians until some became proficient themselves in the use of English; (3) To relate the college more directly to our Italian work and help tie the two more closely together; (4) To recognize as well as use the strengths and abilities of this church leader in the development of spiritual cohesiveness among the 7 or 8 nationalities; (5) To assist in the translation of materials for curriculum, and promotional work." All of this was expected from a 75-year-old man traveling over 1500 miles round trip by train every weekend to pastor a church.

Among the Italian students Alfredo Del Rosso was helping in that first semester at the new school was Salvatore Scognamiglio, who went on to become the Italian district superintendent, and Mario Cianchi, who for several years served as district NYI president.

Says Nielson of Del Rosso's contribution to the school: "The students and staff loved him, responded positively to his spiritual leadership, dynamic instruction in the classroom, and his wholesome friendship. He was most cooperative and supportive in every way."

It had been a hope of both Cerrato and Johnson that the school could be established on a fully multi-lingual basis. The original dream was that some teaching being done in each student's mother tongue and then English would be used for chapel services and for social occasions. It didn't work out that way. English came to be used exclusively in the classroom as well as on the campus. So here was Del Rosso teaching theology, evangelism and church polity in English to Germans, Italians and other Europeans.

Del Rosso carried a heavy burden for Italian-speaking people wherever they were. In August of 1965 Del Rosso wrote back to Missionary Superintendent Wire from Switzerland, "In Italy, Germany, Switzerland, and Austria, there are Italians who ought to be saved and sanctified, and the Church of the Nazarene had the full message to bring them." It was a plea for the Italian church to raise its sights beyond the borders of Italy. That plea began to be answered in part when, for several years, powerful Radio Montecarlo began beaming a weekly 15-minute broadcast, "L'Ora Nazarena" into all of Europe, reaching as far south as North Africa.

Del Rosso was asked to come back to the school in the fall of 1965 and teach another short course. His wife's health was deteriorating and at first he refused to leave her to go back to Switzerland. Then, however, he relented and went up for a couple of weeks.

That fall Alfredo Del Rosso wrote in the Nazarene missions magazine, *Other Sheep*: "The Church of the Nazarene is in Civitavecchia, the harbor of Rome. The church has something to say in these last days to this ancient, historical city and we are happy to still be a pastor in such a church as this."

Moving toward the proper organization of the Italian work as a district, Paul Wire put together a preachers' and workers' conference in 1965. It was the second such meeting in the history of the work, the first having been held by Cerrato in 1963. Del Rosso was asked to speak on "The Importance and Necessity of the Altar in our Church Services." Mrs. Del Rosso spoke on the Sunday school.

In April of 1966, 76-year-old Del Rosso bought a new motorbike for 200 dollars. That same spring he finished the translation of M. E. Redford's book, *The Rise of the Church*

of the Nazarene, which was published in 1968. That summer found him busy working on study questions for the pastoral course of study. Del Rosso was like a one-man Board of Ministerial Studies, making up questions and grading the papers for men who were preparing for ordination. He was working with men like Angelo Cereda, Vincenzo Izzo and Mario Cianchi (who dropped out of the Switzerland school to return to Italy). Those men were all already pastoring and preferred to work toward ordination through a home study type course instead of dropping out of local church ministry for three or four years to go to Bible school.

In November of 1966, a disastrous flood hit Florence. Because Nazarene church property is in a higher section of the city, it only had a foot of water inside. Other sections of Florence, however, were under as much as 15-20 feet of water and mud.

Disagreements over the role of American missionary Wire in disaster relief caused Del Rosso's son Paolo and his son-in-law Alberto Parenti to leave the Church of the Nazarene. It hurt Del Rosso for he had wanted to see them both as leaders in the Italian holiness movement. Paolo became a Baptist and Alberto and Maria just dropped out of church completely. Del Rosso wrote Wire a compassionate letter of encouragement, saying the church would go ahead regardless of this particular setback.

In 1967 plans began to be made for the first Italian district assembly. Thinking about it gave Del Rosso unsettled feelings. Even though Nazarene work in Italy was now nearly 20 years old, Del Rosso was hesitant about the idea of an assembly. In a February letter to Paul Wire he urged him to wait a few more years saying there were still had too few churches and two few preachers to conduct a district assembly. After all, Italy was still a long, long ways from district organizations he'd seen in the U.S. He was afraid holding an assembly in Italy including electing district officers and making decisions on ordaining preachers would "wreck havoc."

In April, a month before that first assembly, Del Rosso finished translating the entire Manual, a rather major project that never reached the printing shop.

In May, the assembly about which Del Rosso had been so hesitant came off successfully. Four men that he had personally prepared and examined were ordained by General Superintendent G. B. Williamson. They were: Angelo Cereda from Sicily, Luigi Morano from Sarzana, Vincenzo Izzo who was now pastoring in Naples and Mario Cianchi who had just moved to Florence as assistant pastor of the congregation there. A district preacher's license was issued to Alberto Ricchiardino who would shortly open the work in the Turin area. Del Rosso himself was elected district church school board chairman. John Nielson had come down from Switzerland to represent the Bible college and reported 22 students at the new school, 7 of them from Italy.

It was an exciting day and a half. In the spirit of that moment Wire set before the district a goal of moving from the present 306 members to 450 members by the following 26th anniversary year (they would reach 402). He also challenged them to reach a goal of 700 members by the General Assembly of 1972.

The next year, 1968, Del Rosso began to talk about really retiring. He had given 20 years of service to the Church of the Nazarene and neither he nor his wife's health was all that good. But he felt that he just could not afford retire at that point since it would mean the loss of housing and utilities.

Another missionary couple, the Roy Fullers, arrived just before the Paul Wires went home for a year's furlough that summer. One of the assignments given to the Fullers by

Paul Wire before he left was to locate and purchase suitable property in Rome for a church, district office space, and missionary home.

In the spring of 1969, just before the annual preachers' meeting, Del Rosso was up in Prato near Florence visiting his daughter Maria. Back at the parsonage in Civitavecchia, Niny Del Rosso just seemed to go to sleep while sitting at the table following supper one evening.

When an old family friend who had dropped in attempted to rouse her, he discovered that she was dead. Rather than calling Del Rosso directly, he contacted Roy Fuller in Florence and asked him to convey the news to Prato. So Roy picked up Mario Cianchi and the two went over to Prato to deliver the message to Del Rosso and his daughter.

Niny and Alfredo Del Rosso had spent nearly 50 years together and so her death was a blow. Del Rosso carried on as pastor of the Civitavecchia congregation for the next several months, but, as he says, "I didn't know what an important part of me and my ministry she was until she died." He just couldn't carry the load by himself so his retirement from the pastorate was officially set for August of 1969.

By that time it had become clear that the Wires, due to family problems, would be unable to return to Italy. So Roy Fuller was named superintendent by the Department of World Missions and he began to make the necessary arrangements for a new pastor at Civitavecchia. His plans included a promising Bible school student who had been converted in the Florence congregation under the leadership of Bob Cerrato and then sanctified under the ministry of Fritz Liechti.

## **7. Retirement? Finally**

As Alfredo Del Rosso's scheduled retirement date of August of 1969 approached, he began to have second thoughts about stepping down as pastor of the Church of the Nazarene in Civitavecchia, Italy. He attempted to talk missionary superintendent Roy Fuller into just one more year in that coastal town, suggesting that young Salvatore Scognamiglio -- who was slated to replace him -- could be put to work in another church for one year. Perhaps the now 79-year-old Del Rosso feared the unknowns of being completely retired. He was alone now; Niny was gone. But Roy Fuller didn't budge and kindly, but firmly, he insisted that Del Rosso step down and allow Scognamiglio to step in as planned.

In Del Rosso's thoughts may have been some economic uncertainties. When he stepped down as pastor, he would continue to receive the \$120 monthly pension he had been granted in 1961. However, since he was no longer pastoring, he would not be provided the housing and utilities which had come with the Civitavecchia assignment. As a result of that loss of that benefit, Alfredo Del Rosso moved to Prato upon his retirement to live with his daughter Maria and her family in their condominium apartment. Son-in-law Alberto Parenti had become public relations representative for the huge Italian textile manufacturers' association headquartered near Florence. Salvatore Scognamiglio and his family arrived from European Nazarene College in Busingen (Germany) to pastor the 90-member strong Civitavecchia congregation.

At that point Alfredo Del Rosso did not retreat to rocking-chair retirement. He continued doing some translation work. In 1970 he wrote Roy Fuller that he had

completed a thorough revision of the Nazarene Manual translation which he had done some time before. That particular manuscript was not, however, ever printed.

The work of the district for which Del Rosso had laid the foundations also continued to progress. In 1971 two more men were ordained and that summer the district's first youth camp was conducted (the Italians had already participated in two all-Europe youth institutes).

After property had been purchased and renovated for church/office/parsonage space in the Montesacro suburb of Rome, the Fullers invited Del Rosso to give the dedicatory address. However, a snowstorm prevented him from making the trip from Prato to Rome. The new chapel was located close to the home of Del Rosso's daughter Noemi, and she and her family joined the Boccinis and the Fullers to become the nucleus of that congregation. Two of Del Rosso's other daughters, Febe and Lea, were part of the Salvation Army in England and Italy.

Reflecting his burden for the spiritual health of his family, Del Rosso wrote to Roy Fuller in November of 1973, "May the Lord bless all our dear families and give us to see all our dear ones saved and sanctified by the Holy Spirit." It was only natural that Del Rosso should hope that his children and grandchildren would form part of a strong corps of second- and third-generation Nazarenes and thus carry forward his legacy. That didn't happen to the degree he had long hoped, but after all, his family had been about grown when he became a Nazarene in 1948.

Alfredo Del Rosso's vision for a holiness work which would reach every Italian burned bright to the very end of his life. In April of 1973 he wrote to Roy Fuller, "May the Lord give us a revival of preaching in the Holy Spirit and Italy will return as it was in the times of the first saints and apostles in Rome." His dreams also continued to reach beyond the borders of Italy. In March of 1974 Del Rosso made a moving plea for an Italian-speaking pastor to be sent to minister to the Italian-speaking population near European Nazarene College in the area of Schaffhausen, Switzerland. After three decades it's a plea that is yet to be answered.

After our own appointment to Italy in January of 1974, a story along with photos of all the new missionary appointees and our assignments appeared in the English-language Herald of Holiness (now called Holiness Today). Upon receiving his copy, Del Rosso wrote to Roy Fuller, "I saw in the Herald of Holiness the photos of two new missionaries to Italy. May the Lord bless them and bring them to our country with His blessing. They will be two more souls working in Italy that believe in the full salvation from sin."

At the 1975 district assembly conducted in the just-dedicated Moncalieri church building in suburban Turin, district leadership was faced with a confession of adultery by Rev. Ricchiardino, one of the men ordained in 1971 and who was then pastor of the Moncalieri congregation. The denomination had to ask that Ricchiardino surrender his credentials as an ordained elder. After a sad meeting of the Italian Board of Ministerial Credentials with General Superintendent Edward Lawlor, Del Rosso wrote Roy Fuller, "Forward, dear brother. Forward, young missionaries . . . The Nazarene work will go forward and prosper. Every church will be revived. Other churches will join. Young people will consecrate their lives and will go to the Bible school to prepare themselves for the holiness work in Italy! Hallelujah! God is with us!"

It was the kind of uplifting letter that Roy Fuller needed at that moment. Only two years before he had had to take the credentials from another Italian pastor, Rev. Izzo, who

had been caught taking money from a bookstore where he worked in Naples. Now another promising and effective man on the district had let Satan enter his life and destroy his ministry in the church. Those were tough blows for missionary Fuller, but the strong support and encouragement of Del Rosso helped to soften it.

To be sure, Alfredo Del Rosso wasn't without his faults -- but he poured his life into proclaiming full salvation from all sin. As he grew old, he did not become bitter. He did not become disgusted with the way the younger generation ran things in the church nor did he ever express fear for its continued existence.

Asked to lead a morning Bible study at the 1975 Nazarene family camp held on the Italian Riviera, Alfredo Del Rosso used one session to lead Olga Spannacini to the Lord. Olga had come to the camp to aid her handicapped son who had been a part of the Florence congregation for two decades. The fire ignited in this 65-year old woman's heart after her conversion soon brought an elementary-age granddaughter to the Lord and then one of her two daughters and her husband -- all as a result of Del Rosso's clear witness and insistent challenge.

To the end of his life in 1985 Alfredo Del Rosso's one concern remained that the Nazarenes maintain a clear doctrine of entire sanctification and that the experience be a reality in their lives. In a letter to Roy Fuller in February of 1975 he noted, "Great is the need of preaching true holiness." That same month, during a district-wide evangelism conference held in Rome, I saw him take aside Domenico Calabrese, a local preacher from Florence, and explain to him "more clearly the way of holiness" after Calabrese said something which Del Rosso thought revealed some theological confusion on his part.

Alfredo Del Rosso still enjoyed playing his accordion and nearly every Sunday traveled the 20 miles from Prato to Florence on the bus to participate in morning worship. He was also used on the district as a supply preacher when pastors had to be gone from their posts. Age, however, began to slow Del Rosso down. One evening during the 1976 district assembly in Florence, he collapsed and had to be rushed to the hospital by Maria and her husband. The delegates were greatly concerned for him and even had special prayer. By the next evening Del Rosso was feeling good enough to exert some authority and sign himself out of the hospital.

One odd thing in Alfredo Del Rosso's personal story is that a tight filming schedule prevented his appearing in *Mission Europe*, a 1970's film produced on Nazarene work and ministry in Europe. The filming had to be done in the summer of 1974 immediately following the Nazarene World Youth Conference in Switzerland. During that particular period Alfredo Del Rosso was out of the country on vacation with family and friends. So, the man who had been responsible for planting the Church of the Nazarene on the European continent is conspicuously absent from that film.

What evaluation can we make today of Alfredo Del Rosso, this man who's revered by some and maligned by others? Well, he and his wife were instrumental in planting the two strongest Nazarene churches in Italy -- Florence and Civitavecchia. Through him almost all other existing congregations had their beginnings -- either as a result of his contacts or of contacts made by his contacts. He helped to launch the publishing program and was superintendent when the fledgling Bible school was launched which eventually merged with the German school to become European Nazarene College. The second generation of Nazarenes has taken over. The son of Angelo Cereda attended European Nazarene College to prepare for the ministry and is now the Nazarene leader in Sicily.

Elide Capannoli (of the Florence Lagomarsino family) opened her home in Siena for the start of a work in the city where Del Rosso grew up. By the late 1970's the Italian district had passed the 40 percent self-support level and had accepted the challenge of becoming a regular district by the year 1990 when Alfredo Del Rosso would have turned 100 (he died in 1985 at age 95). At the 1977 district assembly, Salvatore Scognamiglio was named district superintendent by General Superintendent V. H. Lewis.

At the 1975 district assembly General Superintendent Edward Lawlor preached a stirring message on "Mastered by a vision."

You ask me what my evaluation is of Del Rosso? I think that's it: here's a man who allowed himself to be mastered by a vision. Looking back over the years from this vantage point in time, he had been a man who was in the right place at the right moment and who allowed himself to be guided by that vision from the Holy Spirit.