

# Emblemi sulla Dottrina Cristiana ad uso de' Sordo-Muti [Emblems on Christian Doctrine for use by the Deaf]

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1824

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## Title Statement

Emblemi sulla Dottrina Cristiana ad uso de' Sordo-Muti [Emblems on Christian Doctrine for use by the Deaf] Emblemi sulla Dottrina Cristiana ad uso de' Sordo-Muti [Emblems on Christian Doctrine for use by the Deaf] MSS 16804

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## Publication Statement

**Publisher:** Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library

Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library  
P.O. Box 400110  
University of Virginia  
Charlottesville, Virginia 22904-4110  
URL: <https://small.library.virginia.edu/>

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2023-07-23

### Notes

Reparative

## Profile Description

**Creation:** This finding aid was produced using ArchivesSpace on 2026-03-05 17:44:35 +0000.

**Language Usage:** Description is written in: Italian, Latin script.

## Descriptive Summary

### Unit ID

MSS 16804

### Unit ID

[Archival Resource Key](#)

### Unit ID

/repositories/3/resources/1571

### Unit Date

1824

### Mixed Materials

BW 56 (box)

### Container

001 (folder)

### Language

Italian

### Creator

Assarotti, Ottavio Giovanni Battista, 1753-1829

**Extent**

.03 Cubic Feet 1 letter sized folder

**Repository**

Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library

## Administrative Information

**Conditions Governing Access**

The collection is open for research use.

**Immediate Source of Acquisition**

This collection was purchased from Musinsky Rare Books by the Small Special Collections Library at the University of Virginia Library on 6 April 2023.

**Preferred Citation**

MSS 16804, Emblemi sulla Dottrina Cristiana ad uso de' Sordo-Muti [Emblems on Christian Doctrine for use by the Deaf], Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia Library.

## Biographical / Historical

Throughout history many churches and priests abandoned the Deaf, believing that without hearing the Word of God, they were doomed to be sinners without absolution. They barred the Deaf from sacraments including marriage and any kind of normal life. Starting with Martin Luther (1483-1546) and various enlightened priests and philanthropists such as Spain's Dom Pedro Ponce de Leon (1520-1584), France's Charles-Michel de L'Épée (1712-1789), Germany's Samuel Heinicke (1727-1790) Roch-Ambroise Cucurron Sicard, and Italy's Ottavio Giovanni Battista Assarotti (1753-1829), schools and churches became available for the Deaf. Providing pupils with comprehensive and inclusive religious instructions facilitated their integration into society.

Dom Pedro Ponce de Leon, O.S.B., (1520–1584) was a Spanish Benedictine monk who is often credited as being "the first teacher for the Deaf". He established a school for the Deaf at the San Salvador Monastery in Oña. His work with Deaf children focused on helping them to learn how to speak language audibly. He also instructed children in writing and in simple gestures. He is not known to have developed a working sign language, but there is some indication from the writings of Juan Pablo Bonet—who never credited him for his method—that Ponce de Leon developed a manual alphabet which would allow a student who mastered it to spell out (letter by letter) any word. This alphabet was based, in whole or in part, on the simple hand gestures used by monks living in silence. His work with the Deaf was considered bold by contemporaries, as the prevailing opinion among most Europeans in the 16th century was that the Deaf were incapable of being educated. Many laymen falsely believed that the Deaf were too simple-minded to be eligible for salvation under Christian doctrine. Fortunately this moronic way of thinking has improved although much work still needs to be done in respecting the culture of the Deaf.

Charles-Michel de L'Épée was a philanthropic educator of 18th-century France who has become known as the "Father of the Deaf". L'Épée worked for charitable services for the poor, and, on one foray into the slums of Paris, he had a chance encounter with two young Deaf sisters who communicated using a sign language. L'Épée decided to dedicate himself to the education and salvation of the Deaf, and, in 1760, he founded a school for them. L'Épée came to believe that Deaf people were capable of language and concluded that they should be able to receive the sacraments and be absolved of sins. He began to develop a system of instruction of the French language and religion. In the early 1760s, his shelter became the world's first free school for the Deaf, open to the public. Though L'Épée's original interest was in religious education, his public advocacy and development of a kind of "Signed French" enabled Deaf people to legally defend themselves in court for the first time. Two years after L'Épée's death, the National Assembly recognised him as a "Benefactor of Humanity" and declared that Deaf people had rights according to the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen.

In 1791, the Institution Nationale des Sourds-Muets à Paris, which L'Épée had founded, began to receive government funding. It was later renamed the Institut St. Jacques and then renamed again to its present name: Institut National de Jeunes Sourds de Paris. His methods of education have spread around the world, and L'Épée is seen today as another one of the founding fathers of Deaf education.

After L'Épée's death, he was succeeded by Roch-Ambroise Cucurron Sicard, (1742-1822) who was a French abbé and instructor of the Deaf.

In 1778 Samuel Heinicke opened the first German public school for the education of the Deaf. He insisted that lipreading was the best training method because it made his students speak and understand the language as it was used in society.

In 1801 Ottavio Giovanni Battista Assarotti (1753-1829) heard of the Abbe Sicard's education of Deaf people in Paris, and resolved to do something similar in Italy. In 1805, Napoleon, hearing of his endeavors, ordered a convent to give him a school-house and funds for supporting twelve scholars, to be taken from the convent revenues. This order was renewed in 1811, and the following year Assarotti, with a considerable number of pupils, took possession of the new school. He continued there until his death in 1829. He introduced a version of methodical signing. Assarotti's school received praise for his religious zeal, humanity, and his understanding that Deaf people who had been previously abandoned by society, are fully competent and indeed capable of the highest intellectual and spiritual attainment.

Sources:

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From Dealer catalog.

## **Content Description**

## **Related Materials**

Related to MSS 16803 Illustrated Manuscript of Confessions for the Deaf

## **Keywords**

Deaf culture

Religious education

Church work with the deaf -- Catholic Church

Teachers of the deaf