

Missionary of the
HOLY FACE
 BLESSED MARIA PIERINA DE MICHELI

summary

July/September 2016

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For friends and devotees of the Holy Face there is an additional reason to celebrate together: the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, with the Decree of 16 May 2016, has notified Mother Nora Antonelli, Superior General of the Congregation of the Daughters of the Immaculate Conception of Buenos Aires, to include in the Calendar of the Institute of the celebration of the Holy Face of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Tuesday preceding Lent, as a memorial. The texts to be used for the Mass will be those previously approved for the Benedictine Congregation of the Sisters of the Reparation of the Holy Face of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Anyone interested in having the Mass celebrated in their own parish or in any shrine or chapel is asked to make a request to our editorial staff.

In celebrating the Holy Face, let us also remember the Virgin Mary who in the months of August and September is celebrated on various occasions, beginning with the Solemnity of the Assumption into Heaven on 15 August, of Our Lady of the Snows on 5 August, of Our Lady of Sorrows on 15 September. Not to forget that the memorial liturgy of Maria Pierina De Micheli is celebrated on 11 September. On that day we gather around the Eucharistic Table to celebrate our Blessed and ask her for the graces that we need, in particular the grace to be the Teacher's faithful disciples.

To prepare ourselves for this liturgical occasion, we have decided to publish the report of the Sylvestrine Benedictine

Father Leonardo Scarinci which is included in the canonical process of beatification of Mother Maria Pierina. He was a privileged witness who was able to confirm the heroic virtues of the Blessed. He reports with an abundance of details several episodes of the life of the Mother and describes them with great objectivity.

Therefore let us renew our prayer to the Lord, that we may soon see her canonization.

Editorial Staff



THE EUCHARIST OF THE FIRST CHRISTIANS: LET'S IMAGINE THEM!

The following is a translation of the homily of Cardinal Angelo Comastri, Vicar General of His Holiness for Vatican City, Archpriest of the Papal Basilica of St Peter, given on the Solemnity of Corpus Christi, Thursday, 26 May 2016, in the Vatican Basilica.

After Jesus' Ascension into heaven, the Apostles often returned to the Upper Room: there all was still spoken of Jesus, there every object became a remembrance of Him.

But above all, the empty place that Jesus had occupied at the table, gave rise to great nostalgia.

We do not know who, but certainly one day, one

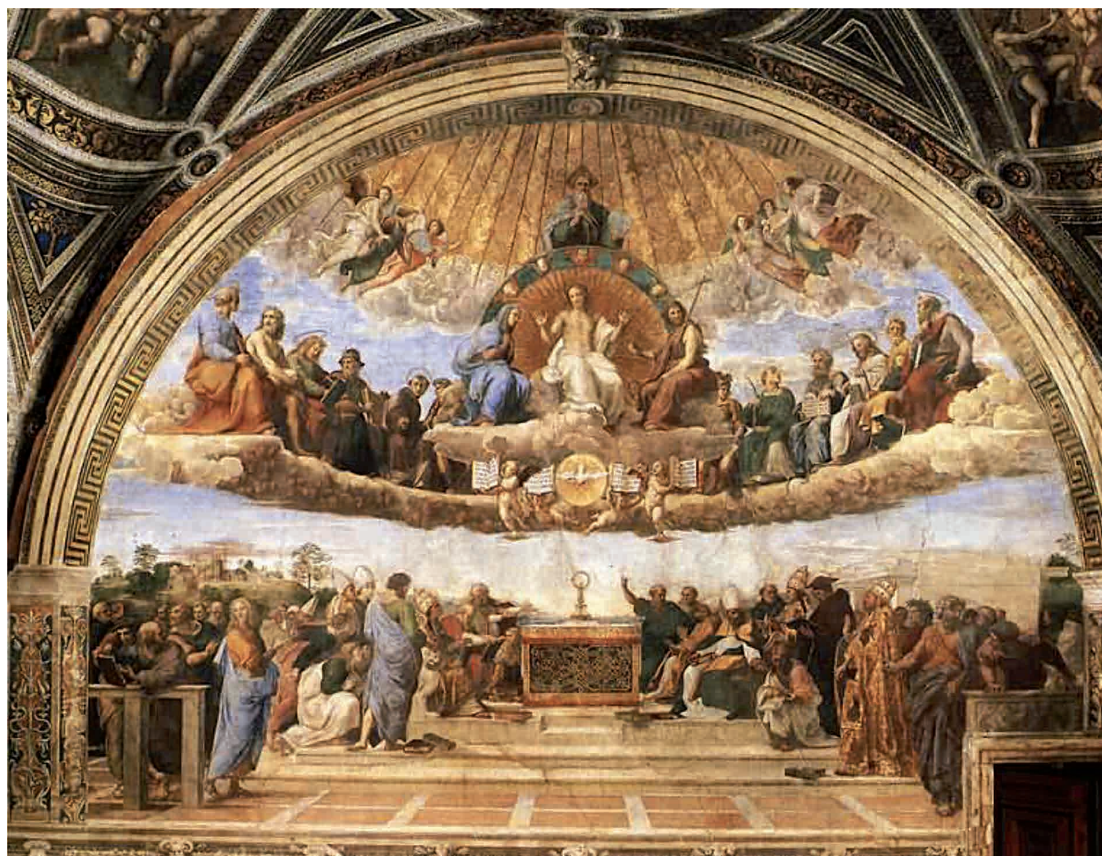
of the Apostles said: "Don't you remember what Jesus did? Don't you remember what he said, precisely during the Last Supper?"

The memory resurfaced in everyone's consciousness. And surely, Peter, who was the leader designated by Jesus in person, with trembling hands took the bread and the chalice of wine and, deeply moved, repeated the words and the gestures of Jesus.

It was the second Holy Mass.

How beautiful that moment must have been!

The "Acts of the Apostles", which are the narrative of the first steps of the Church, recount some particularly moving details of the lives of our brothers of faith.



It is thus written: "And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread".

The "breaking of bread" is the Holy Mass, in which the priest breaks the bread in order to repeat to the letter what Jesus did.

Not only that. The "Acts of the Apostles" tell us with what sentiments the first Christians celebrated the Mass.

Here is there snapshot: "Now the company of those who believed were of one heart and soul".

Imagine how wonderful it would be if, after every Mass, we saw fraternal love grow among Christians and we could read in their eyes the joy of living the commandment of love that Jesus left us.

Again in the "Acts of the Apostles" there is the narrative of a Mass celebrated at night, with a chilling moment for all those who took part. A small community of Christians lived in Tro'as, in modern-day Turkey; by then Christianity had come out of the Upper Room and from the cradle of Jerusalem.

The Apostle Paul was celebrating Mass and, before he repeated the words

and gestures of Jesus, he spoke at length kindling the hearts of those who were listening.

But it was hot in the room and a young man named Eu'tychus (which means "fortunate") sat down on the windowsill. It must have been the heat or exhaustion, but the young man fell asleep and – imagine the fright! – he fell from the window and landed hard on the street stones. It was a moment of general panic.

The Apostle Paul went down, bent over the lad, embraced him and said: "Do not be alarmed, for he lives!".

Great joy for everyone! They returned to the room and continued the Mass, giving thanks to the Lord.

Julien Green, a man who came to the faith after a long and arduous journey, was scandalized in seeing how Christians today participate in the Mass.

With near indignation he wrote: "O Christians, would you have gone to Calvary with the same indifference with which you go to Mass? Would you have come down from Calvary with the same inattentive indifference with which you leave the Church after Holy Mass? Yet



in every Mass, Calvary is present in your midst! Have you thought about it?"

He was perfectly right.

In an ancient scripture entitled the "Teaching of the Apostles", composed towards the end of the first century (thus more than 1,900 years ago!), we read these beautiful words regarding the Eucharist: "Father, as this broken bread was first scattered on the hills and, gathered, became one, thus may Your Church be gathered from the ends of the earth in Your Kingdom, for Yours is the glory and power through Jesus Christ forever!"

And, immediately thereafter, this Christian whose name we do not know, exhorted: "Every Sunday, the Lord's day, come together and break bread and give thanks to

God after confessing your sins so that your sacrifice may be pure".

The first Christians understood that the Eucharist is a marvelous gift from Jesus and, in order to partake in the Eucharist, they were able to make any sacrifice: even getting up during the night, even walking for kilometres.

St Justin, a martyr of the second century, described the Sundays of Christians 1,850 years ago!

Listen to what he wrote: "On the day of the sun – this is what non-Christians called "sunday" – all those who lived in the city as those who lived in the country, gathered in the same place and read the "Memories of the Apostles" and the scriptures of the prophets (= the liturgy of the Word). When the reading had ended, the one who presided gave a speech to admonish and exhort the imitation of these good examples (= the priest's homily). Then all of us together stood up and raised a prayer (= the prayer of the faithful). Next the bread and water and wine were brought (= the offertory) and who was presiding prayed and gave thanks (= the Consecration) and the people exclaimed: Amen! Then the consecrated foods were distributed (= Communion).

Today the same thing takes place: the Mass of the Upper Room, the Mass of Jesus is still our Mass! How beautiful all of this is!

Handed down through the centuries in the hands of countless priests, the Mass remains identical. Truly the hand of God is here!

The first three centuries were, for us Christians, a long period of persecution: sadly the newness and the





purity of the Gospel was annoying to the pride and corruption of that time (just as, after all, it annoys even today).

Yet the Church passed through that fierce storm and emerged triumphant.

How did she do it? It is explained by a Christian historian of the fourth century by the name of Eusebius of Caesarea. He writes: "Every place of suffering became for us a place to celebrate the Eucharist... whether a field, a desert, a ship, an inn or a prison!"

The Eucharist, in other words the Mass, was the moment in which Christians replenished themselves with strength and heroic love... and thus defeated the persecutors.

Centuries passed, the social landscape changed, but the secret to winning is always the same.

St Francis of Assisi, in the 13th century, made an authentic revolution: he became poor, when everyone wanted to become rich, he became humble when everyone burned with pride, he was obedient when everyone was eager to break the reins of obedience. He produced a veritable flood of the Gospel in the world; and already in his time, many young people followed him enthusiastically, became poor, humble and obedient, and found

a joy and a peace that they did not know before.

Where did the *Poverello*, Francis of Assisi, find the strength to change the habits of his contemporaries, bringing them the freshness of the Gospel?

The answer is immediate: Francis of Assisi nourished himself of the Eucharist and the Eucharist placed the love of Jesus in his heart. And the resemblance to Jesus shone in his life.

His contemporaries recounted that, when Francis of Assisi moved on foot from one Italian town to another to preach the Gospel, as soon as he saw a bell tower from afar he knelt, because he knew that there was a tabernacle there, and in that tabernacle was the Holy Eucharist.

And do you know what he did? He adored Jesus present in our midst through pure love and he prayed: "Lord Jesus, I adore You here and in all the churches that are on the earth and I praise You because with Your Holy Cross You have redeemed the world!". How wonderful!

If only today we could have an iota of his faith!

Through the intercession of Mary, the greatest believer, let us ask for the gift of a more alive, more committed faith: a faith that renders us capable of no longer resisting the love that emanates from every Eucharist, even in this Eucharist.

RELATIONSHIPS OF FATHER LEONARDO SCARINCI PART ONE

Fr Leonardo Scarinci of the Sylvestrine Benedictines, born in Scheggia, Perugia, Italy, on 2 February 1915, procurator general of the Order residing in the Monastery of Santo Stefano del Cacco in Rome, knew Mother Pierina and her spiritual director Fr Ildebrando Gregori, general superior of the Order. For three years during the Second World War, he was the chaplain in the house of the Daughters of the Immaculate Conception on Via Asinio Pollione in Rome, where Mother Maria Pierina was

superior. The following is a translation of Fr Leonardo's responses to several questions posed to him.

1) *Father, did you know Mother Maria Pierina De Micheli of the Daughters of the Immaculate Conception of Buenos Aires?*

Yes, I knew the Reverend Mother Maria Pierina De Micheli personally. I had the opportunity to spend time at the Santo Spirito Institute from the month of November 1941 to the month of July 1945.

2) *What relationships did you have with Mother Pierina?*

For better clarification, I will divide my answer into two parts: ordinary relationships and extraordinary relationships.

A) - Ordinary relationships

These were exclusively limited to the office of chaplain which I alternated for three years with several confreres. I note that my personal contacts with the Reverend Mother in these cases were brief, essential, relating to the conduct of the office. The Most Reverend Mother never remained in the sacristy, neither before nor after





the sacred functions.

I must also add that in over three years I never spoke with any other Sister, except for Sister Cesarina the doorkeeper who, every day, fair or foul, always welcomed me with the same serene face and with a tenuous smile would say: "Praised be Jesus Christ! Welcome, Father!", when she opened the door for me, and: "Good-bye Father, praised by Jesus Christ", when I left through the same door.

B) - Extraordinary relationships

I call these contacts extraordinary, not for the entity of the facts themselves, but because they occurred in non-ordinary circumstances, through which the opportunity to better and more closely know Mother Pierina's personality. I will cite four episodes.

First episode

In the Santo Spirito Institute there was careful preparation of the girls who were to receive Jesus in the Eucharist for the first time. The religious function was carried out in the chapel of the Institute itself. It was a day of great celebration, not only for the children, parents and Sisters, but in a particular way for Mother Pierina. Always serious, gathered within herself, with her face at times marked by weariness and sorrow, on that day she radiated heartfelt, profound joy, which could be read not only on her face, but in all her expressions. After the sacred rite ended, the Mother – as the Sisters called her – gave each little girl a kiss on the forehead. One could clearly see that that kiss was not a sign of pure

exterior ceremony, but the living, I would say clear, expression of a heart that burned with love for Jesus and for souls. That act that she carried out was unusually striking and, I confess, called to my mind a loftier significance: the gentleness and tenderness with which Jesus embraced the innocent.

Second episode

My task with the Sisters, other than that as chaplain, was also that of "quasi master of ceremonies" in certain circumstances, such as First Communion and Confirmation. On such days it was my custom to arrive some time before the ceremony to see that everything was ready. I did so that day that Confirmation was conferred on the students of the Institute. Just after I arrived I took a look in

the chapel: it was all lit up, candles lit, and flowers, flowers, flowers; I took a look in the sacristy as well: there too, everything seemed in order. A beautiful sight, the children dressed in white, anxious and emotional, lined up two by two in the long corridor, candle in hand, accompanied by their Godmothers. The Bishop's arrival was also punctual: he was welcomed with grand curtsies and smiles of joy. I immediately accompanied the celebrant to the sacristy to don the sacred vestments; he had already crowned his head with the sacred mitre and was about to exit the sacristy, and I was about to give the order to start the brief procession leading us to the chapel, when a... malignant little light struck me, and I asked the Bishop: "Your Excellency, did you bring the sacred chrisms?" The celebrant, surprised and dismayed, extended his arms and answered me: "No, Father." – "What shall we do, your Excellency?" I replied. "Try to get hold of some" – he told me – "as quickly as possible".

I referred the matter to the Mother, who was also shocked and saddened, but she did not lose her calm. "Father, I will get hold of some right away", she told me, and sent a car and driver to find the sacred chrisms in a neighbouring parish. It was a very long wait. The forty-five minutes that passed seemed an eternity. I was trembling. I

don't remember what the Bishop was doing. The Mother spoke to the girls and to the guests and began to recite the Holy Rosary. I was astonished that, despite the long wait under those circumstances, I did not hear agitation or whispering, nor did I see confusion of any kind. I was surprised above all by the Mother's calm. Surely on the inside she felt discomfort over the wait. She was able to maintain absolute and total composure, communicating great serenity to the others. Finally the sacred chrisms arrived! The function was carried out properly, and the joy, with the light of the Holy Spirit, enveloped the soul of everyone.

Third episode

This also took place on the occasion of the conferral of the Sacrament of Confirmation. This time too, the girls were dressed in white, in line, one after the other with a lighted candle in hand, getting ready for the sacred ceremony with the customary anxious joy that shone on their angelic faces. Suddenly a commotion was heard, then a shout: fire! Flames were seen. One girl's white dress caught fire. Shock and fear struck everyone, predicting the possible consequences. In an instant! The Mother ran. The flames went out. The Bishop arrived, the rite took place properly and ended with twofold joy: for the



Holy Spirit's descent upon those souls as pure as their dresses, and for the danger averted.

On this occasion too, I recall, Mother Pierina did not lose her usual calm; she ran to put out the flames, and afterwards made no further comment, she spoke not a word of it.

Fourth episode

I had a more closely personal contact with Mother Pierina on Armistice Day, 8 September 1943. It should be prefaced that, considering how the war was going, and that the Santo Spirito Institute was in a particularly exposed position in case the city were invaded by enemy troops, Mother had the clear foresight to understand that it was imperative that the school and the community be transferred to a more secure part of the city. In fact she rented rooms in Palazzo Altieri, situated on Via degli Astalli, a site very close to the headquarters of our General Curia, located on Via di Santo Stefano del Cacco. I remember that some of our monks, following orders of the Father Abbot Gregori, worked for many days to make improvements to the rooms, especially with regard to the electrical system. Unfortunately Mother Pierina's prediction happened. When the armistice was declared, the Germans descended on and occupied Rome, not as allies, but as enemies. One of the worst clashes took place right at Porta San Paolo, in the vicinity of the Santo Spirito Institute.

That evening, Fr Gregori was not in Rome. I often substituted for him in many duties. Thus, having learned of the skirmish at Porta San Paolo, I felt the need to visit the Institute, in order to see what had happened and

to offer some help, if any was needed, given that a small number of Sisters remained hidden in the cellar of the house to keep watch. I found the group of women religious, frightened, around the Mother in the garden. We must consider that there had been a battle that morning and that there had been victims: I saw eight corpses with my own eyes, on the steps to the Post Office.

I spoke a little with the Sisters. They told me what they had heard and seen; they accompanied me to survey the damages to the building. Then Mother Pierina stepped away from the others in order to speak to me alone: I looked into her eyes. She was serene, very serene. She repeated to me: "Father, we are in God's hands and therefore we are calm. We have brought everything; the little money that we have in Treasury Bonds I am carrying here, hidden", pointing to her chest. I understood that she was telling me such things with simplicity and trust, like a confession, so that I would be informed, in case something should happen.

I understood then that Mother Pierina was not only a sensible and prudent woman, but a strong, reserved woman who instilled peace and security even in truly tragic moments. Her daughters felt safe because they had her beside them. But above all I saw in her a woman of faith, totally



abandoned in the arms of Divine Providence. She repeated: "Father, we are in the Lord's hands". Her real strength was not the Treasury Bonds that she carried hidden in her bosom, but Jesus whom she felt alive in her heart.

3) *You told us about an episode from troubled times: the battle in the heart of the city of Rome: Germans at the door of the religious house: The Institute itself hit and damaged by bombs.... How did you see Mother Pierina in those circumstances: a self-confident woman or a woman of fragile nerves who could "lose herself"?*

I saw her serene and calm. She repeated: "We are in God's hands and thus we are calm". I did not note in her any act or expression of agitation or turmoil. In that moment I was close to her; and as usual, as I noted above, she revealed to me where she had hidden everything... the assets of the Institut Mother Pierina was a practical woman, a woman who knew how to face grave dangers even in difficult and troubled times. Sometimes you could see she was tired, weary; sometimes you could perceive that she was interiorly afflicted, but externally it never showed. I repeat: Mother Pierina was essentially a self-confident woman who controlled all of her actions. To consider her otherwise would seem to me an anomaly and a contradiction of her personality, as if I were forcing



my mind to overturn the notable characteristics of a face that I knew very well, like that of my mother.

4) *When the Sisters moved to the Palazzo Altieri, there were no simple means of transportation, there was confusion.... How did you see the Mother? agitated? Tense?*

I cannot say anything, I did not witness the Sisters' transfer. We normally collaborated in the preparation of the rooms. I must add that we did so with much joy, as if the "sisters" were coming to live near us.

5) *Did Mother Pierina sometimes come to the Monastery of Santo Stefano del Cacco?*

For more clarity I respond that she came to our house for personal issues and in particular matters of solemnity.

Personal issues

For personal issues Mother Pierina came infrequently; she was very discrete, she attended to Father Abbot Gregori in Church; if Father was late, she stayed there before the Most Holy Sacrament: she prayed... and waited.

Matters of solemnity

She came to our church punctually every 26 November for the Feast of St Sylvester, Abbot. She sent many, many flowers; she brought several of her Sisters and students with her because that day was a solemnity not only for the monks, the sons of St Sylvester, but also for her and for her Institute.

She also came to our church for particular religious functions, such as the solemn professions of the monk and the first Masses of our priests. In those circumstances Mother Pierina was radiant: she was unable to hide all of her joy and her closeness.

End of part one

NOT AN IDEA, BUT A FACE: THE FACE OF JESUS

Worship of the Holy Face of Jesus is significant in these times of “ideas, human values and images”. Not an idea, not a value nor a mere image of Jesus is presented to us, but a Person, living, contemporary in every man: He himself, in his Face. Catholicism is a life “face-to-face” with Him.

In the work of redemption of the 20th century – of our time – God called Mother Pierina De Micheli from her childhood to a unique vocation: he entrusted to her

the worship of the Holy Face of his Son Jesus, and the mission of co-redeeming the world, in the first place consecrated people, priests, youth. But why the heart and devotion precisely to the Holy Face of Jesus? Why did Satan torment her so forcibly?

In the 17th century, when Jansenism, with harshness and exceeding severity distanced souls from God, Jesus revealed his divine Heart, the Shrine of Truth and infinite love, to St Margaret Mary Alacoque and, through her, to St Claude La Colombière. He asked to be made known to the Church and to the world as Truth and Love, so that souls would be drawn by Him, in order to exchange love with Him, in order to offer Him reparation for the sins of mankind, above all of consecrated people.

Worship of the Heart of Jesus has passed through the centuries and reached us, culminating in the Encyclical *Haurietis Aquas in Gaudio* (1956) in which the venerable Holy Father Pius XII defined devotion to the Sacred Heart: “*Maxima professio catholicae fidei*”. Thanks to the love of the Heart of Jesus it will have a marvellous bloom:



of holiness in souls, of vocations and of new foundations, of missionary impulse. Worship of the Heart of Jesus is limitless devotion to his adorable Person who manifests, at the highest level in holy souls, in the time of the most negative ideologies.

In his place, one thinks that human values would suffice, in order to give valid and new direction to the world: one believes that human wisdom would suffice to resolve every problem. The man who becomes God for himself, thus is the measure of all things, tacitly or openly he boasts of needing no one but himself. In reality he cannot do without Jesus Christ: "Apart from me" - Jesus said - "you can do nothing" (Jn 15:5).

Jesus, our contemporary

The 20th century, our incipient 21st century, is the time of images and of ideas conveyed by images, in the modern means of mass communication, from newspapers to TV to the Internet. In 1898, Jesus, by way of the exceptional photograph taken by Secondo Pia of the Shroud of Turin, revealed his image, his Face.

In the meantime, from the mid-1800s, starting in France, worship and devotion to the Holy Face of Jesus began to spread. In this century in which one takes pride in "ideas" and "values" and which is also the time of images, as never before, Jesus, his Heart revealed in all its greatness and depth, reveals his Face. Not esteemed ideas and values, as professors might make, but a Face, a living, captivating, engaging Person. Not only human wisdom - a gnosis - but the Heart, the Face, the adorable Person of Jesus, Man-God.

Jesus proposes not only a spirituality, but "a life in two", "a love story", a romance novel: Jesus and the individual. The Heart of Jesus and the individual. The Face of Jesus and the individual. The adorable Person of Jesus and the individual. Worship of the Heart of Jesus, of the Face of Jesus is the worship, adoration, love, reparation, devotion, supplication to his Person: Jesus the Child, Jesus the Teacher, Jesus the crucified Martyr, Jesus



the Eucharist, Jesus risen, Jesus, the only Saviour of mankind and of the world.

This is the "good news" of Catholicism: the Gospel. One might say that the news today arrives in real time, while Jesus and his Gospel are instead of the past. In truth, Jesus, his Heart, his Face, his Work, his Person are not of the Past, but rather are of today, because Jesus, the Man-God, transcends all times and all places. Being

the Son of God, He is the contemporary of every man, in every time. Jesus arrives to the man and the youth of today, truly in real time. Jesus is our contemporary and we are contemporaries of Jesus. His Heart loves me now. His Face and his gaze look upon me now.

All is born from this contemporaneity between Jesus and each one of us. Every conversion to Jesus, all devotion to Jesus which leads from sinning to offering to Him and for Him, the new story of his image and likeness, is realized because Jesus is our contemporary. Otherwise, we would be only worshippers of history, "memorialists", not Christian-Catholics engaged with Jesus, Teacher, Friend, Lord, Spouse and Life of the soul, in the most lofty and sublime relationship of Truth and love, of supernatural life, of eternal life.

Satan, instead, does not want all this. Satan does not want contemporaneity with Jesus, which generates profound intimacy with Him, who takes away sin, renders one in Him, for God: Christ-theocentrism, which resolves everything. Satan wants to reduce Catholicism to an idea, a set of values, even valid ones, so long as they are without Christ. Satan has even fostered, in our time, the inception of "theologies without Christ" which tend only to adapt to the ways of today, moving away from the Truth of the Gospel preached and disseminated by the Apostles and by the everlasting Tradition of the Church, to exalt only human wisdom, as the unique font of human knowledge and construction. Thus, gnosis, spurious gnosis.

Satan fights against Jesus Christ and against all those who promote the His Sovereignty over souls and over history. Satan prefers ideas and values because ideas and values leave man as he is, in his sin, and do not redeem and do not save man. They do not free him from sin and from death and do not communicate the supernatural life of sanctifying grace. Jesus, however, his bleeding and glorious Wounds, his gentle and strong Face, disfigured and transfigured out of love, fulfil the work of redemption from sin, save man and society in their earthly and eternal life. If we faithfully and lovingly accept his Commandments, Jesus frees us from eternal hell and gives us Paradise.

"Make your Face shine!"

Mother Pierina De Micheli received from God the specific gift – the "charism", as we say today – to experience the attraction, the singular and unique allure of this radiant and Divine Face of Jesus, to consecrate for him her existence and the apostolate, to direct the attention of mankind of today, of our time, to the Face of Jesus, as the unique source of salvation in this life and the hereafter, thus to overcome this insufficient and arrogant affirmation of human values, incapable of giving the meaning of life and of bringing salvation: no man can satisfy himself nor

can he save himself on his own, but he must turn his gaze to the Face of He who for the glory of God and in expiation of sins, has been pierced (Jn 19:7) and look to Him unceasingly.

Since Good Friday of 1902 when, during the adoration of the Cross, Jesus asked her to kiss his insulted Face of the Crucifix, an ever more intense love for that human-divine Face grew in Pierina De Micheli, and Jesus revealed himself to her, asking her precisely for this. Mother Pierina responded to this invitation of Jesus with the fullest heroism, agreeing to consume her life to make the Holy Face of Jesus known and loved (let us consider the dissemination of her "medal", for the reparation of man's sins and for the sanctification of priests, facing a continuous struggle against Satan with unspeakable suffering).

The Mother – who in 2010 rose to the glory of the altars – indicates nothing and no one else, for the resolution of our problems, for our redemption and salvation in this life and in the hereafter, for a new springtime of holiness and of priestly and religious vocations: this Face, Jesus himself, who today and always is the divine Sun, the only Sun of the world and of eternity. "Lord, let your Face shine upon us". "Stay with us, Jesus".

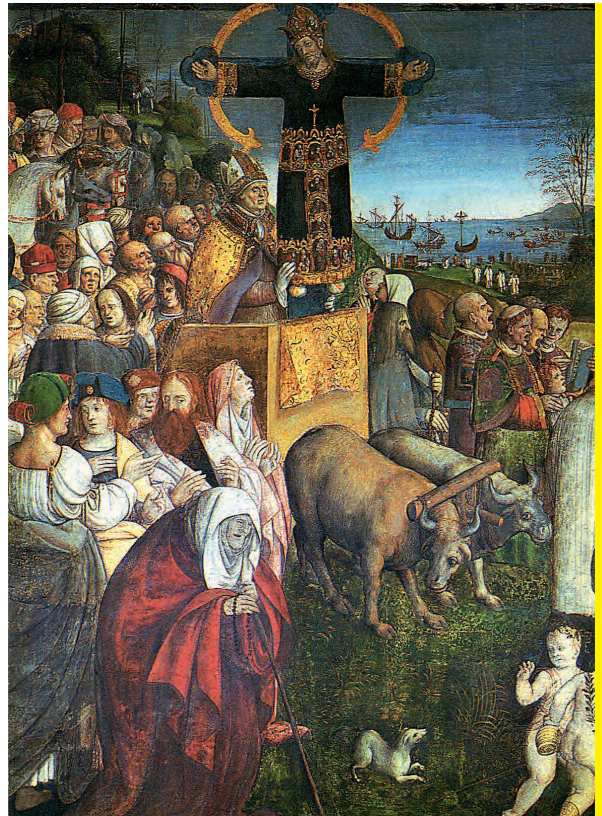
THE ARRIVAL OF THE HOLY FACE IN LUCCA

The “legend” of the Holy Face, according to which the crucifix was sculpted by Nicodemus, the “secret disciple” of Jesus, with the help of angels for the creation of the face, remained hidden for over 700 years in Ramla, a city of Palestine. There, through the inspiration of an angel, who appeared in a dream to Walfred, a sub-Alpine bishop, the sculpture was rediscovered. Walfred and his entourage, on pilgrimage to the Holy Land, took the crucifix to the port of Joppa, modern-day Jaffa, where they sealed it in bitumen, placed it on an unmanned ship and entrusted it to the sea, praying that Divine Providence would guide it to Christian lands. After miraculously crossing a large part of the Mediterranean, the ship stopped off the coast of Luni, Italy, not far from Bocca di Magra. Luni’s expert sailors, dedicated to maritime trade but also piracy, went out in boats intending to plunder the abandoned ship; but it was to no avail, for with every attempt to board her, the ship set sail away from them.

Meanwhile in Lucca, an angel appeared to the bishop, Blessed John I, revealing to him the arrival of the Holy Face in Luni and commanding him to go there with the clergy and the aristocrats of the town, to collect it and bring it to Lucca. When the bishop arrived at the port of Luni with his entourage, he saw the Luni mariners again trying with oars and sails to reach the ship, which scuttled away and dodged their harpoons. Blessed John signalled the sailors to stop, and exhorted everyone to ask for God’s help. At this point the ship spontaneously headed toward him, who opened the hatches and along with his companions entered the hold, where they found the Holy Face, at the sight of which all of them broke out in tears of joy, singing the *Gloria in excelsis*.

A dispute then began between the inhabitants of Lucca and Luni over which of the two cities had the right to guard the simulacrum. First Bishop John removed several

relics held inside the statue – among which was one of the two ampoules of the blood of Jesus Christ which today are in Sarzana, and the other is currently venerated in the San Frediano Church in Lucca – and gave them to the Bishop of Luni; then he turned to the infamous “trial of the wild steers”: the Holy Face was lifted onto a richly decorated wagon, attached to two calves that were not yet yoked. Left free to go, the animals headed toward Lucca. As a result of this “judgment of God”, the people of Luni returned to their homes, while Bishop John climbed aboard the wagon which, surrounded by other Luccans, arrived triumphant in Lucca that evening. The year was 782, during the joint reign of Charlemagne and Pepin II



IN THE POOR THE REFLECTION OF CHRIST

Published here is the homily of the Mass celebrated by Fr Luca Maria Di Girolamo, of the Order of the Servants of Mary, on Thursday, 26 May, in the Chapel of the Santo Spirito Institute of Rome.

The human and spiritual life of St Philip Neri was characterized by the charity that he offered in a time of great unrest and poverty in the city of Rome in the 16th century.

Born in Florence, Philip Neri lived his 80 years (1515-1595) in dedication to the poor, and such giving also characterizes the religious family he founded: the Priests of the Oratory, dedicated to pastoral action and recovering marginalized people on a broad scale, including pastoral reorganization.

Of particular importance was the rehabilitation of young people on the streets, by offering them an education with a good sense of humour, but not of a superficial nature. Philip's good humour came from a strong and intense spiritual life with mystical traits. Like St Francis of Assisi, Philip Neri has enjoyed wide popularity in film.

Let us now entrust ourselves to his intercession in request that our sins be forgiven, at the beginning of this Holy Mass in monthly remembrance of Blessed Mother Pierina.

The event of the blind man, Bartimaeus, narrated by Mark the evangelist in his particularly picturesque style, offers various interconnected considerations. First of all the condition of weakness of this man confined to the margins of society and, moreover, who has no opportunity to express and denounce his malaise to the One who can help him. Indeed the blind man basically identifies with Jesus. This appears to be almost a type of profession of faith or, better yet, of trust.

However in the face of this behaviour appears the prejudice that would cut off the words of this man who, nonetheless, does not stop trusting and asks for consideration of his own status of sinner.

"Have mercy on me" is an invocation that we repeat regularly and perhaps sometimes with certain nonchalance, but alongside the request, this phrase lays bare our weakness. We can all recognize ourselves in this man in whom an Easter passage is realized: from blindness to the ability to see. The reacquisition is a gift from Jesus to a humanity which, in recognizing its own situation, trust once again in the One who is capable

of all things.

But the gift does not stop there: Jesus is not the only one to give, Bartimaeus too – so to speak – once healed, follows Jesus. A following along a road that is not only urban or geographic, but existential and vital.

Today's Gospel, however, tells us nothing else in this episode, but it is clear that we cannot ignore the many situations in which Jesus recalls that acquiring salvation consists in remaining in communion with Him overlooking what is excessive and not useful.

Precisely in following Christ, in letting oneself be challenged by Him one is constituted – as Peter recalls in the First Letter – the chosen race, royal priesthood and holy nation. In this there is all the novelty that God offers us and that, in our turn, we are called to circulate.

Only by passing through this not simple path of commitment is it possible to make clear the novelty of God: it is what was done by the men and women saints whom we venerate and consider a theological existence, that is, the lives

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that speak of God and express his greatness and love.

This was the path Philip Neri had planned: to go and meet those who, in his time, were recognized in Bartimaeus the blind man, needy and longing for redemption.

An immediate lesson that comes to meet our difficulties that are recognized and epitomized in Christ who, in our suffering, constantly draws near to us, before we ourselves look to Him as the man of the pain who well knows suffer-

ing and, at the same time, as God the powerful conqueror of sin, of evil and of death.

It is the Holy Face that M. Pierina knew and experienced, sharing his victory against the Evil One and the series of terrible temptations she experienced throughout her life.

It is the Face that St Philip Neri saw in the poor who turned to him as Bartimaeus turned to Jesus



FROM THE LETTERS OF THE BLESSED

Hail + Mary
7 Sept 1944 — Rome

My Dearest Fr Riccardo
Jesus!

I have finally received your message. These are agonizing times for everyone, and everyone so looks forward to news. One hears so much, that at times turmoil really rears its head, but then an act of trust in He who can do all, and it's onward with courage. Along with your message I received Angelina's letter. I pray that she finds, as she tells me, a good job. Certainly in these times great sacrifices must be made, also because families are separated, but let's hope the calm returns.

I send you herewith a check for 25 Holy Masses, which you can say whenever possible. It would mean a lot to me if you would drop me a line for my peace of mind.

Our house in Via Elba is in very bad shape, but let's thank the Lord for it could have been worse. The Sisters

are all out. Recommend me to the Lord, as I greatly need it. Sr. M. Teofila is well, she is on retreat.

Tomorrow and afterwards Communion will be offered for our dear Giovannina and for you. She will intercede to Jesus for you, for all of You. Tell Angelina that I will write her, but please also keep me informed, because I feel as if I am alone. One thinks about everyone and receives nothing!.... *Fiat!*

Bless your affectionate
sister

Sister M. Pierina



Triduum to the Holy Face of Jesus

To implore any grace

1) O Holy Face of Jesus, my only good, to You I turn with trust and implore this grace.... Through your holy tears console me, O Jesus, and hear me through the intercession of Mary Most Holy and Saint Joseph. Our Father – Hail Mary – Glory Be.

2) O Holy Face of Jesus, my love and my everything, to You I turn with living faith, I will not be forsaken. The gentleness of Your divine eyes draws me and makes me fall in love with You, see me, O Jesus and grant me this grace.... Our Father – Hail Mary – Glory Be.

3) O Holy Face of Jesus, my joy and my treasure, to You I turn filled with trust in Your infinite mercies. It is true I am unworthy to be heard, yet by Your goodness, Jesus, I hope for this grace that I humbly ask of You.... Our Father – Hail Mary – Glory Be. Lord, show us Your Face and we shall be saved!

Prayer: Divine Saviour who deemed to impress upon Veronica's veil the contours of Your Adorable Face, grant us, we beseech You, contrition for our sins and those of others, especially for blasphemy, and render us Your fervent Apostles and Your pious Veronicas, Amen.

Eternal Father, we offer You the Adorable Face of Jesus and You grant us this grace.

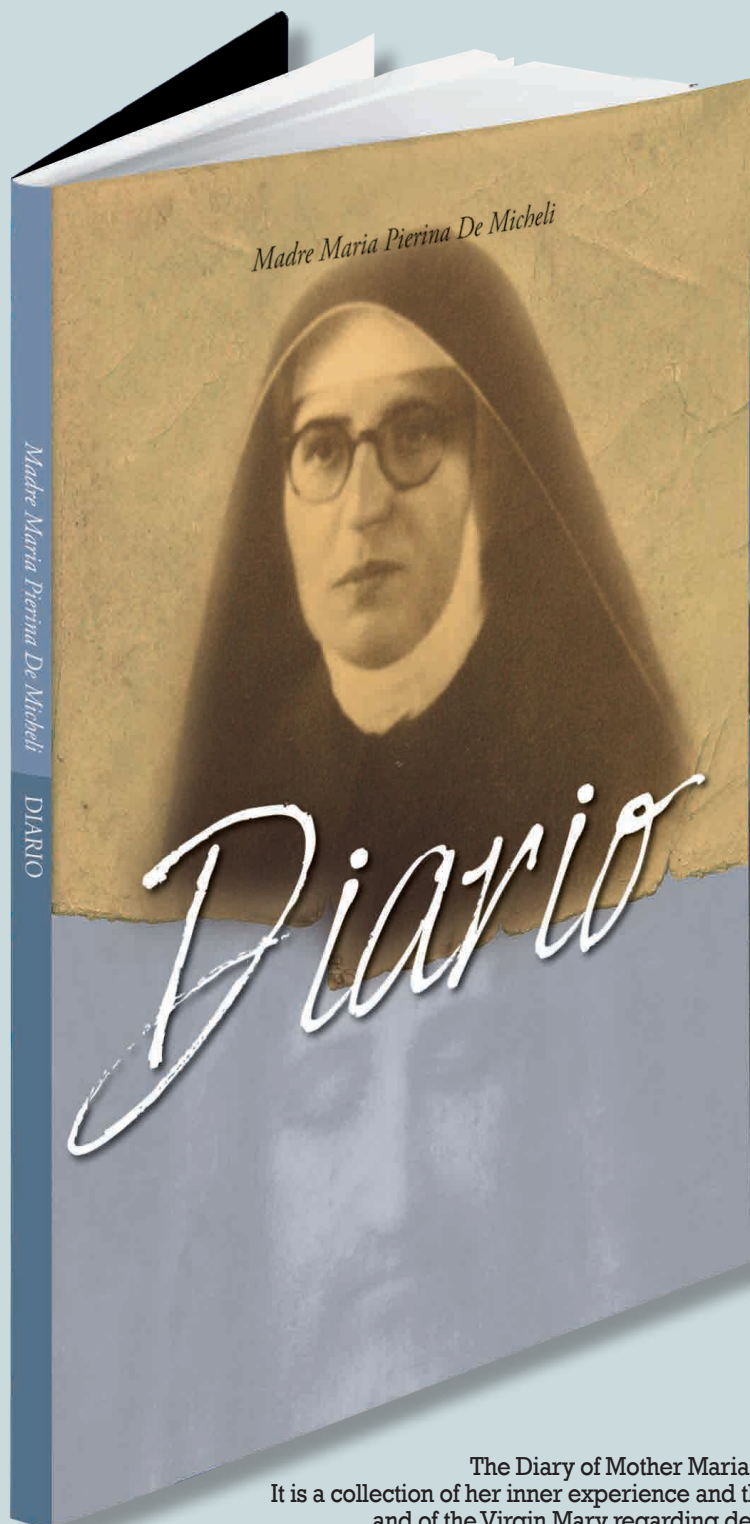
From the Diary of Blessed Maria Pierina De Micheli ***(24 July 1941)***

Closing of the Holy Exercises. Night-time exposition of the Most Holy Sacrament! What grace! In the hours spent before Jesus, there was struggle and impenetrable darkness. At the moment I went out I asked Jesus to forgive that I was unable to comfort Him and be with Him, loving Him. Jesus answered me: "If you knew how much love you have given me in this struggle, you would die of joy". Asking that He should always leave me this way, He said to me: "You comfort me and you want me to abstain from comforting you". Light and peace were made in my soul; I would have desired to remain, but obedience over all...

On the 26th of each month we gather to participate in the Holy Mass celebrated in the chapel of our Institute in memory of Blessed Maria Pierina De Micheli, on the anniversary of her death.

Those who have particular intentions may send them by mail to the following address: Istituto Santo Spirito – Via Asinio Pollione, 5 – 00153 Roma or by email: madrepierina@gmail.com

We will pray for you and place your supplications at the tomb of the Blessed.



Madre Maria Pierina De Micheli

Madre Maria Pierina De Micheli

DIARIO

Diario

NOTICE:

The Diary of Mother Maria Pierina was published.
It is a collection of her inner experience and the confidences of Jesus
and of the Virgin Mary regarding devotion to the Holy Face.
The new edition has undergone ample revision and is accompanied by an introduction.

Anyone interested can ask the volume to:
Istituto Spirito Santo - Via Asinio Pollione, 5 - 00153 Roma - Tel./fax: 06 57302430 - email: crfic@libero.it