



MISSIONARY OF THE HOLY FACE

BLESSED MARIA PIERINA DE MICHELI

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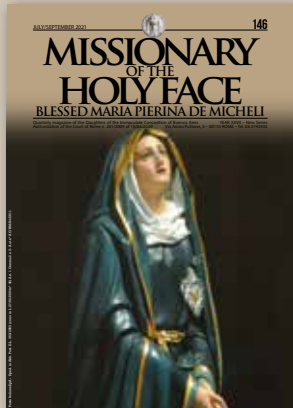


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Each year, since 2001, 11 September is unfortunately linked to a tragedy of enormous proportions, the attack against New York's Twin Towers. For devout followers of Mother Maria Pierina, instead, 11 September is an important day because it is her Liturgical Feast Day. It was celebrated for the first time on 11 September 2010, a few months after her beatification which took place on 30 May of that year in the Papal Basilica of Saint Mary Major in Rome.

Prayer can give rise to hope for a better future as well as the certainty that evil never has the last word. The Holy Face of Jesus is the balm for our times, marked not only by hatred and violence, but also by the Covid-19 pandemic that is undermining our entire social structure and raising questions and challenges that are not easily resolved. Celebrating the Blessed thus becomes an important moment in which to reaffirm our trust in God who holds the reins of history and to remind people that there is a reality that goes beyond the present time and looks to eternity.

How can we not recall the great zeal of the Mother in spreading devotion to the Holy Face as well as her firm wish to make known the treasures and the promises of Jesus. We know that the Blessed did not waste any opportunity to announce to her brothers and sisters that there is an abundance of graces waiting to be distributed, in the Holy Face. It is up to each individual faithful to take advantage of all this, trustingly going to that Face that is ready to pour forth His mercy on humanity. In addition to having been an apostle of the Holy Face of Christ, the merit of the Mother is that of having offered trust to the world, pointing out that in all times, but especially in our time, we are not abandoned and alone and that the gaze of God is upon us.

Thus, invoking the intercession of Mother Maria Pierina is an opportunity to entrust ourselves to the Lord as well as an invitation to hope so that no one will feel alone, but rather included in a cycle of love that is based on the Communion of Saints.

The Editorial Staff



YOU ARE THE CHRIST

The following is a homily by Father Luca Di Girolamo of the Order of the Servants of Mary, delivered on the occasion of the Liturgical Feast of Blessed Maria Pierina De Micheli, on Saturday afternoon, 11 September, in the Basilica of Saint Anselm on the Aventine, XXIV Sunday per Annum.

The eleventh of September is the Feast Day of Blessed Maria Pierina De Micheli which this year also coincides with the 24th Sunday in Ordinary Time. However, this does not prevent us from remembering this sister of ours, allowing ourselves to be led by the Gospel that we will hear which reveals the true identity of the Lord and His plan for salvation. Our Mother Pierina fixed her heart, her gaze and her mind to this identity. Let us therefore pause to ask the Lord for the forgiveness of our sins, entrusting ourselves to the intercession of our Blessed sister.



The Reading from the evangelist Mark which we have just heard narrates a trip of Jesus with his disciples. During this trip, He asks his disciples two precise questions: a general question and a specific question. Both touch upon a single theme: His identity. Who is this Jesus of Nazareth who lives and belongs to a people and to people?

It is a question addressed first of all in general, in order to hear what the people say: they give different answers, and then the same question is asked to the disciples: “WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM”? This question demands a firm reply and it is the one offered by Peter – on behalf of the Church – and it is systematic and dense “YOU ARE THE CHRIST”: A precise answer, we could say, but it was not enough: it was a great recognition that Peter





manifested to Jesus. Mother Pierina confirmed this recognition made of words, not only with words, but by meditating and loving Jesus' whole life: listening to the Word, drawing near to Communion by performing acts of charity. Mother Pierina not only knew who Jesus was, but she loved him deeply and the famous episode of the adoration on Good Friday, when she gave Christ on the Cross a determined kiss, proves this. The gesture provoked a strong reaction from her mother who scolded her.

It is Jesus with the Holy Face, that is, the Face of Jesus on the Cross, and it is the same Jesus who explains his entire life to the disciples, everything that awaited Him: the trial, death and resurrection. It is the plan and the mission that the Father had decided for Him: to bring salvation to all of humanity. A salvation that includes death, the total offering

of Himself and it is an offer that we renew each time that we attend Mass: take this and eat – take this and drink: this is the continuous giving of self of Jesus and consequently we understand why Mass is important.

The self-giving of Jesus remains a painful event before which He did not retreat. He did not back out from what awaited Him. But here then was Saint Peter who did not want to accept this whole program, and Jesus admonished him because of this way of conceiving God, that we could describe as a biased God: The Lord not only gives us life, but sometimes He makes us go through difficulties to make us mature. We cannot accept only the comforting and joyful part of the Lord, but rather welcome everything: in the Cross as in difficulties in the same way with which we know how to thank Him when we receive His gifts.

The Christian, all Christians, should be balanced people because they are enlivened by faith and Mother Pierina is a perfect example of this. By fixing

her heart and mind on the Holy Face of the Lord, entrusting herself to Him, she was able to emerge victorious from her confrontation with the evil one who violently proposed easy paths to her. Mother Pierina's life differed from Peter's attitude. Whereas the Apostle dodged, Mother Pierina was present. Rejecting suffering and the Cross, choosing instead to welcome only glory, which is the most attractive and joyful aspect, as Peter did, means welcoming half of the message, in addition to distorting the reality of salvation. But salvation from what? From everything that makes humans poor and does not achieve fulfillment but rather leaves them in weakness. The Cross and the Resurrection are there precisely for this reason. We cannot put any obstacles like Peter did! In one of the texts that our Blessed left us she writes: "Meditation on the Passion made me feel the need to cling to Jesus' Cross and share His suffering. I do not want to leave him alone!". Being with Jesus as Mother Pierina wished, for us means not only saying

the words "You are the Christ", but the complete offering of our life.

And essentially, not leaving Jesus alone means for us, believing until the end that He carries out our salvation not only with the Resurrection, but also by gathering our failures and difficulties that are integrated in the passion and death of which Peter did not want to hear about. We thus have in Mother Pierina a true example of tenacious seeking of God even in life's greatest difficulties. Only by joining one's life to Christ is it possible to see the fruits on this earth and, in a certain way, what awaits us in heaven, in a condition of complete and open relationship between us and the Lord and with our other brothers and sisters. Thus, being like Mother Pierina, people of the Resurrection, means showing this event within us, not in a superficial and theoretical way





as Saint James described in the Second Reading, but practically. In another meditation, Mother Pierina was very direct: “Vocation of love, but of practical love that can be reduced to just one term: give, give continuously, give generously, give everything”. This is the evangelical life of Blessed Mother Pierina, who was blessed because she gave, was generous in difficult times and for this reason, even though she never sought it, the Lord rewarded her.



IN LOVE WITH JESUS

Part six of the biography of Blessed Maria Pierina De Micheli, entitled “Innamorata di Gesù” (In Love with Jesus), written by Paolo Riso. The following are three chapters from the biography:

A House in the “Urbe”

The Congregation to which Mother Pierina De Micheli belonged, the Daughters of the Immaculate Conception of Buenos Aires, continued to grow with the arrival of new vocations. It had a Cardinal Protector -- as was customary at the time - of great value: Msgr. Eugenio Pacelli, former Nuncio in Berlin and then Secretary of State, who was well known throughout the world. From him came light and encouragement to look to Jesus in each instant, and to grow in holiness and joy, for Him alone.

The Mother General in charge, Sister Maria Filomena Bragonzi, trusting in God, gave way to the beginning of construction work for the new house in Rome, thus fulfilling the desire of the previous Mother General, Sister Stanislaa, to build a branch of the Congregation in Rome.

The house would be built according to the designs of Msgr. Spirito Maria Chiappetta who worked as an engineer in the Vatican

and as a close collaborator of Cardinal Pacelli and Msgr. Tardini.

This precious employee of Pope Pius XI was a close friend of the Congregation. Some Jesuit Fathers, among them Father Giuseppe Marini, offered their advice and encouragement to the project.

Mother Pierina was called to go to Rome often, to help the Mother General. She would leave from Milan, even when she had a temperature of 39. She often suffered from sudden fevers caused by her “illnesses”, which were unexplainable to





those who were close to her. She was so joyful and cheerful – her joy came from Jesus alone, from his beautiful Face, with Which she was hopelessly in love --- that she was able to keep Mother Filomena happy despite the difficulties.

She could get no relief from the life that she led, with sacrifice, between the house in Milan and the one in Rome, indeed she was exhausted: “The days go by with such activity that it wears me out in every sense if I did not have the night to recover before the Tabernacle, I would not be able to hold on”, she wrote.

“It is a life that burdens me because I am always roaming, especially since the Mother is not in the house for even one moment”.

Out of love for Jesus, more than ever she had a great thirst for souls. Even in Rome she was a tireless apostle. One day she met a street cleaner and advised him to have confession and receive Communion on the occasion of Easter. He replied that his First Communion had also been

his last. Upon saying this, his eyes filled with tears and he confided to her that the year before he had gone to confession but, since the priest had treated him with bitterness, he had left the Church without receiving absolution.

Mother Pierina realized that he was an unhappy man: “After all, he is a soul who desires to find again the Jesus of his First Communion. I do not want him to get lost. I want him to be in Heaven ... May souls like these always find in the heart of the priest, a heart filled with charity, the same Heart as Jesus’ that attracts the lost lambs to the sheep pen. She prayed, offered sacrifices and worked for the salvation of souls.

Despite travelling and often staying in Rome, Mother Pierina continued to kindly and firmly guide her sisters who had remained in Milan.

“My dearest daughters”, she wrote to them on 27 November 1938, “the Mother General is well and remembers you with great affection. The construction is growing quickly, in artistic, elegant beauty almost as if to say to the Daughters of the Immaculate: Onwards in perfection, praise and glorify the Lord! We will glorify him in the hiddenness of our shared life, in the perfection of small things that are yet filled with

love, in generously sacrificing ourselves to the Will of God” ... We will attract the gaze of the Face of Jesus, we will penetrate his Heart and make his Eucharistic Kingdom of love and peace triumph over the entire world’ Whatever we do for love of God remains for Eternity. Be well, cheerful in a holy way, as a spouse of Jesus should be”.

As anyone can see, she had a unique balance, was maternal and righteous.

“It will be Pius XII”

One morning, as she came down the stairs of the Church of Saint Saba to re-enter into the house on Via Annia Faustina in Rome, Mother Pierina fell and could not lift herself up. Suddenly she saw beside her a young girl who helped her up by offering her, her arm and accompanied her home. Mother Filomena upon opening the door, saw Mother Pierina, who exhausted, was holding on to her kind companion. She thanked her and was about to invite her in when she disappeared.

Who was she? Perhaps Saint Theresa of the Child Jesus who had protected her other times? Mother Pierina would always be grateful to her and moved by what had happened. She allowed herself to be cared for, but the leg which had been sprained in the fall,

struggled to heal. She stayed in Rome longer than usual and when she returned to Milan, she was forced to support herself with the use of a crutch for some time. It was not just her leg that caused her to suffer, but also the sudden arrival of many illnesses for which the sisters could find no explanation.

A sister from Milan asked her: “How come last night you were flourishing with health and today you look like a corpse? What happened to you”? She smiled and went away without answering. The Mother General noted: “Remember that Mother Pierina has seven spirits”. She only retired to her bed when she could no longer stand.

Her life was filled with mortifications. She decided to no longer eat fruit in order to still have something to offer to Jesus. It was a contribution she made for the sanctification of priests, for the salvation of souls. The Mother General wanted to test her obedience and offered her some fruit. Mother Pierina obeyed but her stomach soon refused: “Jesus”, she explained, “changes relief into suffering. I am happy because I am so gluttonous that I would have let myself get carried away”.

Jesus granted her the ability to read souls, to know the future. One day in November 1938, a Sister, upon meeting her, asked her why she was so sad. The Mother replied: “Sister ... you have left our Institute... If I had been there... You let the demon win!” . “Who told you Mother?”, the Sister asked, and Mother Pierina replied: “I received the news this morning, during Communion”.



She broke out in tears over her Sister's "defection". "Who knows how much pain the Mother General will feel when she hears about it!". It was not the only time that, when asked how she knew certain things, she said: "Jesus told me this morning at Communion". The other sisters by now knew that she had a very unique relationship with Jesus who spoke to her like a Groom speaks to his faithful wife.

On 10 February 1939, Pope Pius XI died suddenly. Pierina was in bed, unwell. A sister entered her room to help her with what she needed. The Mother asked, "Do you know who will be the next Pope? Dalla Costa? Schuster?".

"No! It will be our Cardinal Protector, Eugenio Pacelli! And he will be called Pius XII!".



"Why do you say it with such certainty?"

And she answered: "I saw him tonight in the Garden of Olives and an Angel made him wear the white garment, saying to him: "You will be called Pius".

On 2 March 1939, the entire community in Milan was gathered around the radio to hear the name of the new Pope. Many sisters were awaiting the confirmation of the prophecy of Mother Pierina. The Cardinal Protodeacon made the following announcement from the Loggia of Saint Peter:

"Habemus Papam! Eminentissimum ac reverendissimum dominum Eugenium, Sanctae Romanae Ecclesiae Cardinalem Pacelli, qui sibi nomen imposuit Pium XII".

It was precisely him: yes, Eugenio Pacelli, Pius XII. The sisters looked at Mother Pierina pleased by the election of "our Cardinal", who would become "Pastor Angelicus", and by the prophecy that had come true.

Mother Pierina would later narrate "the vision" she had had to Pius XII in person, during a private audience with him and the Mother General. Mother Pierina's filial relationship with Pius XII would be very intense.

In Roma

The house in Rome on the Aventine was by now almost completed: beautiful, elegant and modern. It would become a place of encounter with Jesus for all: sisters, students, anyone who came to seek the Lord there. The Superior General called the first three sisters from Milan to organize the rooms. Who would become the Superior of the house in Rome?

In September 1939, Mother Pierina was appointed Superior “General” of the house in Rome and Regional Delegate of the houses of the Congregation throughout Italy. The sisters from Milan felt honoured by the promotion of their Mother, but they suffered. She would explain to them with simplicity: “Holiness is doing God’s will integrally, accepting it with love. Let us thus accept every event, every trial, every sacrifice as we receive the holy Host in Communion: let us forget the differences and concentrate all our love and adoration on Jesus, present within us to sanctify ourselves ...Let us welcome this “Host” of Providence with care and respect”.

On the evening of 9 October 1939, Mother Pierina, now Superior of Italy, left for Rome, accompanied by a young

religious. During her trip, she prayed, but she often spoke with her sister, showing her cities and towns from the train, trying to make her happy. She was unable to hide her soul’s sadness: “*My daughter*”, she said, “*I am suffering a great deal about leaving Milan and my sisters. I go where the Lord leads me*”. She was worried about the “new” things that awaited her and the fact that she did not yet know who the new spiritual guide would be. Meanwhile she heard Jesus saying to her: “*Do not be afraid, I am here as your guide*”.

The sisters in Rome welcomed her festively. Taking advantage of the fact that there was still much work to do to complete the house, she led her sisters to visit the catacombs, the basilicas, the monuments of Rome, strengthening their faith with knowledge of the glorious history of the Church. On Sundays, she accompanied her “Daughters” to Mass and Vespers in the Benedictine Church of Saint Anselm on the Aventine. She was enlivened by the Gregorian chants that dozens of young monks in love with God, lifted up in adoration and praise to the only Love in life, having left behind human love and wealth.

“The sisters noticed her constant simple and collected attitude. After participating in the Holy Sacrament at Mass, offering herself with Jesus on the altar, she joined intimately with Him in Holy Communion. They were moments of Paradise in which she often forgot she was on this earth”.

With a mother’s heart, as Christmas 1939 approached – a Christmas of wartime for poor Europe with the German invasion of Poland – she prepared small gifts for her sisters in Milan and Rome, accompanied by her good wishes expressed in verse.

At midnight Mass in the chapel of the house, beautiful hymns were lifted up to God. At table, she was then asked: “Mother, did you like the hymns”? She replied slightly confused: “Truthfully, I was distracted”. It was only a very modest excuse to hide the fact that her union with Jesus had been so intense that nothing else existed for her: “But do not fear: in Heaven, I too will sing praises with the Angels”.

Meanwhile, the Mother General left again for Argentina. In Rome too, Jesus continued to reveal himself to Mother Pierina: “I want my Holy Face to be honoured in a special way on Tuesdays”. The Mother asked her “Daughters” to visit the Most Blessed Sacrament every Tuesday, in reparation for the offenses Jesus had received during his Passion and continues to receive every day in the Eucharist. She would dedicate the entire day to Eucharistic Adoration and prayer.

Jesus was preparing her ever more for her mission.



FEAST DAY OF BLESSED MARIA PIERINA DE MICHELI IN THE HOUSES OF THE CONGREGATION ARGENTINA



FEAST DAY OF BLESSED MARIA PIERINA DE MICHELI IN THE HOUSES OF THE CONGREGATION INDIA



FEAST DAY OF BLESSED MARIA PIERINA DE MICHELI IN THE HOUSES OF THE CONGREGATION MILAN



FEAST DAY OF BLESSED MARIA PIERINA DE MICHELI IN THE HOUSES OF THE CONGREGATION CENTONARA D'ARTÒ



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