

"In the Lord's Work there is room for everyone".
Pierina's Diary 14/02/1970

Let me introduce myself quickly: I am a mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother, born and raised in Montichiari. I always attended the oratory, church, and catechism. In my youth, the events surrounding Pierina, while not unknown to me, held no particular interest. Only around 1970, when Pierina, after a long stay in Brescia, secluded in a Franciscan convent, was allowed to return to live in her hometown, did old memories of events I'd heard as a child, such as beautiful stories of apparitions and miracles, reawaken.

It was common to encounter Pierina at services in the cathedral and see her quickly run away afterward to avoid being stopped. Immediately, the town began to buzz with murmurs, comments, gossip, and criticism about this woman who, from 1947 to 1969, had lived almost continuously away from her hometown.

After some hesitation, my husband and I agreed to arrange a meeting with Pierina through a mutual acquaintance. She welcomed us simply, showed us the statue of Our Lady and invited us to recite a "Hail Mary" with her. She asked about our family, especially our children. It was a very simple meeting: although we greatly desired to hear firsthand about the Virgin Mary, and what it felt like to see her, we didn't dare ask. I felt like I was experiencing a special, exceptional moment, on the threshold of a mystery before which our curiosity vanished, leaving only a sense of relaxation and peace. Who was I to allow myself to enter this abyss of Mystery!? Our conversation focused on the need for prayer, on the awareness that the Lord truly loves us individually, that he gave us His Mother so that through Her and with Her we can collaborate in His plans for us. Also present at a subsequent meeting was Monsignor Francesco Rossi, Parish Priest Abbot of Montichiari since 1949. He always held this new devotion dear and, thanks to his love for Mystical Rose, in the 1950s, with the collaboration of many generous people, succeeded in replacing the old statue of the Virgin Mary in the Montichiari cathedral with a beautiful wooden one carved by a craftsman, kneeling and in a spirit of prayer, like Russian icons. This statue depicts the heart of Mary, the heart that Mystical Rose showed to Pierina on December 8, 1947, throbbing with love for humanity, and on the heart are three small roses: white = prayer, red = sacrifice, yellow = penance.

At this meeting, we are told some words spoken by Our Lady:

"I brought all my love to Montichiari.

"Behold my love that embraces the entire world, through you, little creature, I have given and I still give you my love to pass on to souls! Communicate love!"

What greater action than this? Love is charity, it is prayer rising to the Lord, it is the gift of ourselves, it is everything!

"Suffer for love, give in silence, and speak through prayer."

"Generous hearts are listening to my invitation!"

"In the work of the Lord, there is room for everyone."

These words: "Generous hearts are listening to my invitation! In the work of the Lord, there is room for everyone" remained etched in my heart and would have often been an occasion for reflection over the years. In that same conversation, we learned that Pierina felt a strong desire to have a medal like the one Our Lady showed her: on one side, the Virgin "**Mystical Rose**," on the other, the **Church of Montichiari** and the inscription - **Mother of the Church** - that acts as a halo. "*The medal of my maternal love is the sign that my children will always have me with them.*"

We joyfully minted the medal, according to Pierina's description.

I fondly remember one evening (a May evening in 1970) when Monsignor Rossi, Pierina, and I went to Fontanelle, where the Monsignor blessed the first newly minted medals by immersing them in water.

"Generous hearts listen to my invitation!" "There is room for everyone in the Lord's Work." These words lived in our hearts, happy to be able to participate in this motherly request, and we will never forget them.

On that occasion, we were struck by the desolate situation of Fontanelle, and my husband, with the enthusiasm of his youth (he was 37 at the time), consulted and commissioned an architectural firm to prepare a project for the fountain's restoration.

At the request of a priest from Montichiari, we were summoned by Bishop Morstabilini of Brescia, who invited us and, with his authority, dissuaded us from proceeding. Obediently, though deeply displeased, we abandoned the task. Other words came to mind: **"Communicate love! Transmit it to souls. Suffer for love, give in silence, and speak with prayer."** These words came back to our mind and we tried to bring them to life and live them in the spirit that Our Lady desired of us. And we would never forget them: our relationship with Pierina suffered some apparent interruptions, but in our hearts this encounter has dug a furrow that we would never abandon: we wanted our hearts to be generous towards the Lord's wishes. We never asked Pierina for anything special, our relationship until the end was one of mutual esteem in the most absolute respect for her relationship with Our Lady. We could no longer collaborate directly for the Work of the Mystical Rose, but did not forget Our Lady's invitation to be "generous hearts".

"Communicate love! Pass it on to souls. Suffer for love, give in silence, and speak through prayer."

Pierina wrote to thank us for what we had done and, though saddened, she understood and shared the importance of obedience.

During this period, the 1970s and 1980s, pilgrimages to Montichiari became frequent, especially from German countries and countries beyond the Iron Curtain. The pilgrims, who were of very modest means, demonstrated great faith. It was moving to see them pray with such concentration and advance on their knees from the back of the church to the altar where Mass was celebrated, or to the altar of Our Lady. Sometimes they were accompanied by priests, other times by lay people. We parishioners, in awe of such devotion, were saddened to see our priests' rather dismissive behavior toward them.

Pierina maintained a very reserved demeanour, always attending the first Mass of the morning and immediately sneaking home, avoiding any approach. We didn't see her during that period, obedient to the Bishop's invitation. As soon as I could, I went to Fontanelle for a prayer, to participate in the processions organized by many groups of the faithful. In 1975, thanks to Bishop Dino Foglio and the teacher Margherita Buti, the spiritual movement "The Renewal in the Holy Spirit," which began in America, flourished in Brescia. We enthusiastically frequented it under the guidance of Bishop Foglio, and the rediscovered certainties of faith gave new spiritual impetus to our lives. Soon, a love for Mystical Rose, never forgotten, reawakened in our hearts. And we resumed visiting and praying at Fontanelle, observing with greater interest the pilgrims who arrived there, and occasionally visiting Pierina. Over the years, within the Renewal in the Spirit, we came into contact with many people, both consecrated and lay, who were devotees of Mystical Rose, and this encouraged us to deepen our understanding of the Marian call transmitted to us through Pierina Gilli.

Also significant was the closeness shown to Pierina by **Don Orione's Congregation** (all very well described in Lucia's diary). In those years, it is necessary to remember several people who volunteered for the needs of the area, especially the Terlera sisters and Mr. Angeloni from Carpenedolo, Mr. Giuseppe Magoni and Mr. Amos Tonoli for their expert assistance in the management, and Angelo Mor for his prayers, who always kept watch with seriousness, preventing the infiltration of false devotees or pseudo-seers; our friend Mariateresa; and the good Lorenzo, always available for any need. We cannot fail to mention Father Laux, a Salvatorian who came every month from Austria to visit his brothers living in the Congregation's house in Lonato. He knew Pierina and believed in the Marian message she was the custodian of; he spent a long time praying at Fontanelle and spread the message. The Church authorities intervened and prevented him. He obeyed, no longer speaking, and entrusted his voice to Our Lady, whose statues he began to send to the missionaries. Truly, the Madonna was welcomed and venerated with love everywhere, and she responded to this devotion by manifesting graces of every kind. Father Laux's message was welcomed and significantly spread throughout the world by Mr. Horst Mehring, who continued it with admirable perseverance. He founded a prayer group dedicated to Rosa Mystica in his hometown of Essen, and every month, with a group of devotees, he came on a pilgrimage to Montichiari with a large number of statues, which he immersed in the waters of Fontanelle, where they remained for a long time in prayer. These statues were then sent all over the world. This Work continued its mission as a pilgrim and propagator, through the statues, of the message received from Pierina throughout the world for 42 years until 2017, when a higher order imposed its closure.

My husband and I had no official commitments, but we lived—I in particular—with assiduous attendance at the life of Fontanelle, and we learned of many extraordinary events, healings, conversions, and extraordinary

manifestations that deserved to be remembered and preserved. It was also necessary to collect and preserve the statements of early witnesses. In Brescia, we met Father Bonomini, who was the curate and acting parish priest in Montichiari in the 1940s and 1950s, while the incumbent, Monsignor Quaranta, was very elderly. He was a direct witness to many important events and described the unspeakable suffering Pierina endured, especially in 1947 and 1948. She endured very severe physical ordeals, with sudden and very serious illnesses that brought her to the brink of death twice, followed by sudden healings. This gave rise to rumours about her mental and moral well-being. Furthermore, for over a month, she was severely tested spiritually by diabolical manifestations that greatly frightened even the aforementioned priest. He was old when we met and he deemed it appropriate to entrust us with his writings. It was a long report describing the daily situation of the aforementioned years and which deeply moved us due to the suffering Pierina had to endure: mistreated, despised, considered a maniac who invented unreal situations, who mocked authority. With the permission of the Mother General of the Handmaids of Charity, Mother Menni, we travelled to Udine where Mother Luigia Romanin was living. In 1947, she was Superior of the Handmaids of Charity in the hospital in Montichiari, where there were many extraordinary manifestations centered on Pierina. We had her lucid and fully positive account of the events of those years, confirming what we already knew from Father Bonomini. We also had the name of the child healed in the Cathedral during the apparition of December 8, 1947: Ugo Seneci. We got in touch and had a meeting at our home in Montichiari. The words of the Madonna, reported to us by Pierina when we were interested in the minting of the medal, were still alive within us. *"Generous hearts are listening to My invitation!" In the Lord's Work there is room for everyone."*

During that period, our acquaintance with Monsignor Enrico Rodolfo Galbiati, then Prefect of the Ambrosian Library in Milan, became crucial. We first met him at the Casa della Sapienza in Lozio, a small village in the Camonica Valley. He was a man of immense culture, fluent in twenty or more modern and especially ancient languages, including local Palestinian idioms through which he could correctly interpret Sacred Scripture, and at the same time endowed with great humility and charity. To him, who resided in Milan, I submitted every month the newsletter "Rosa Mystical's voice," launched in 1987 by Angelo Mor, on which I collaborated, to avoid doctrinal errors, which would have been grounds for its suppression. In those years, after much discussion and opposition, we reached the decision to establish an association called Mystical Rose-Fontanelle. In those same days, while the rules of the Association have been defined, in the presence of the Notary Angelo Vanoli, Pierina, in very poor health, with serious blood circulation problems, unexpectedly gave me and my husband her diaries. Meeting Monsignor Galbiati proved very helpful, and I asked him to read Pierina's diaries to gain his opinion. Always available, without ever overstating his authority, Monsignor Galbiati came several times to pray at Fontanelle and, at least once, celebrated Mass in the Montichiari Cathedral. We introduced Pierina to him, who had serious health problems in those years and was by then wheelchair-bound. Thanks to the same Monsignor, we came into contact with Abbé Laurentin (see attached documents) and on February 4, 1990 (Monsignor Galbiati's birthday, 76 years old), we all met, Pierina included, at our home in Montichiari. Abbé Laurentin, deeply involved in the study of other Marian manifestations and having great esteem for Monsignor Galbiati, with whom he had fraternally met during the work of the Second Vatican Council, encouraged Monsignor Galbiati to undertake a study of the Marian appeal of Montichiari.

The 1990s were very challenging for the Association, due to the many confrontations and various difficulties with the ecclesiastical authorities in the diocese, who were always very cautious and at times a bit hostile toward us.

Meanwhile, from all over the world, especially from Latin America, we received testimonies of extraordinary events: healings and conversions that resulted in the birth of other very lively and heartfelt prayer groups.

Pierina's health deteriorated in her later years. Sister Menni, Superior General of the Handmaids of Charity, was always close to her and for a time hosted her in one of the Handmaids' homes for the elderly in the city. Pierina stayed there for a short time, then expressed her gratitude. She longed to return home. Her earthly ordeal ended there on January 12, 1911. I was present with my husband, and the parish priest, Monsignor Bertoni, was also present. Pierina was in agony and suffered like everyone else, no different from her other brothers and sisters. She passed away around 11:00 p.m. The next morning, her sister Angela received a telephone call from Renato Baron, a seer from "The Queen of Love" in Schio. Without allowing her to speak,

he asked if Pierina had died during the night. When she answered in the affirmative, he added that he had received the news from Our Lady with the following words:

“ ... I will soon bring with me the one who helped me to save many souls and accepted, for Jesus and for the coming triumph of my immaculate heart, the Cross, heavy as yours. But with many generous souls, you have proclaimed new life to the world. May the Lord bless all who will be able to make his praise resound. May the Lord bless all of you, along with Pierina. (through Father Ilario Moratti)

Father Ilario, who succeeded Father Giustino Carpin as Pierina's spiritual director, upon her death, handed over to us all the documents in his possession and the confessors' reports regarding Pierina. My husband and I felt the great responsibility we were invested with, and we suffered from the emptiness and silence of the local authorities. With great serenity, certainly supported and comforted by the opinions of so many holy souls, we continued our commitment. We were aware of the many wonderful works accomplished by Maria Mystical Rose throughout the world, but our relationship with the local ecclesiastical authorities remained difficult: we were still considered lacking in credibility and almost "fanatics" for this Marian devotion. It was very important for us to be able to reveal to the authorities what was happening in the world, well aware that the Lord does not desire division, disobedience, or separation, but collaboration among His devoted children. It was a suffering on a spiritual level rather than a human, visible one. We must acknowledge, with great gratitude to the Lord, that in the most difficult and tense moments, we received help that we would not even have dared to hope for (The Renewal in the Spirit, Monsignor Galbiati and Abbé Laurentin, Cardinal Deskur, Prefect of the Pontifical Academy of the Immaculate, with a letter that moved us, and many others, both known and unknown). On that occasion, it was the faithful of Schio who invited us to participate in the meetings of the Marian groups that were held periodically in Rome, and we attended them with pleasure, and in the meantime, we met many generous souls who prayed and offered in silence. The relationship with the Curia was always difficult; we had to wait until 2001, following a meeting with the Bishop of Brescia, Monsignor Sanguineti, and a subsequent discussion with the Congregation for Divine Worship, for Marian worship to be authorized at Fontanelle, entrusted to the responsibility of a priest, who, however, was advised not to speak of the Mystical Rose.

They came from all over the world, they found the statue of Rosa Mystica, they told us lay people of the wonders the Mystical Rose had accomplished in their hearts and in their countries, but there, where the Holy Virgin has manifested the mercy of the Lord, she could not be named!

We were in contact with missionaries who invited us to various mission countries to share the spread of the cult throughout the world. In 2000, with our friends from the Magoni family, we travelled to Brazil to participate in the solemn celebration in honour of Mystical Rose and to meet some of the groups that had arisen in Her name. In the town of Jambegro, we found an entire hill dedicated to Maria Mystical Rose and Mother of the Church, with several buildings dedicated to charitable works and a beautiful church whose frescoes depicted episodes from Pierina's life and her conversations with Our Lady. But the most surprising news was learning that the founder of this Marian devotion was a Japanese priest, Father José Sazami Kumangawa (1920-1997). (The following words came to mind: *In the Lord's work there is room for everyone... generous hearts heed the invitation...*).

The following year, 2001, we accepted an invitation to participate to the inauguration of a complex dedicated to Maria Mystical Rose, Mother of the Church in China. It was an unimaginable revelation! We never thought we would find such devotion to Rosa Mystica in that country, so far away in so many ways. And the great, wonderful surprise was the sanctuary of Mystical Rose on the hill of Mary in the province of Foujian in south eastern China. In December 2004, the Association received an invitation to participate in the community prayer to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, which would be held on June 4th, the anniversary of the aforementioned celebration, in Vatican. We accepted with great enthusiasm, and it is easy to imagine the emotion we felt in carrying the statue of Mystical Rose to St. Peter's Basilica and in the prayers of the faithful during the Eucharistic celebration, presided over by Cardinal Ruini, hearing one of us proclaiming, at the prayers of the faithful, the central message entrusted to Pierina: prayer for vocations to special consecration.

In 2005, another event astonished the entire country: the pilgrimage from the U.S.A. of more than 100 priests, including two bishops, a large group of nuns, and several families.

In 2007, a study commission was formed including Dr. Riccardo Caniato and the beloved Dr. Rosanna Bricchetti Messori.

Fortunately, things began to change for the better starting in 2013 especially in the relationship with the Bishop of Brescia and the authority of the Church; the participation of Monsignor. Marco Alba, episcopal delegate, in an international conference in Panama City marked the transition to an important reopening of diocesan studies relating to Pierina Gilli and her mystical experiences, as well as the celebration of the Marian cult of the Mystical Rose. This period, as we know, culminated last year with the recognition of the "*nihil obstat*" by the Holy See.

Meeting Pierina was a reawakening of faith for my husband and I. For this, we owe great gratitude to Pierina, who was the means, and above all to the Lord, who showed us such mercy.

Those words that so many years ago lit a flame in our hearts are still alive in us. Now we see the Church's welcome, and all our work becomes more peaceful, and the glimmer of light becomes ever more evident.

Our grateful thoughts go to all those people who, in silence, perseverance, and anonymity, through their prayers and sacrifices, have broken through hardened hearts, allowing the Lord's grace to penetrate, illuminating and warming them. And grant us, Lord, the grace to always feel like that rag, which, when it has finished its service in beautifying a marvellous palace, is thrown away, as You showed Pierina in a dream.