

## **Montichiari, 11<sup>th</sup> October 2025 – 1st International conference**

*Montichiari's Mariophany in the Church's judgment.  
The discernment process that led to the recognition of the Nihil obstat.*

### **Introduction**

- The birth of the Mystical Rose - Mother of the Church Shrine in 2019, and the granting of the *Nihil Obstat* in 2024, were the result of a long process of revision that began in 2001: it concerned both the way of welcoming and managing the Marian cult at Fontanelle in Montichiari (which objectively was becoming increasingly significant across the five continents), and the human and spiritual figure of Pierina Gilli, the alleged seer who gave rise to the spread of the cult of the Mystical Rose.

- This path was undertaken confidentially by the will of the three Bishops who have succeeded one another in the Diocese of Brescia since 2001 (Sanguineti, Monari and Tremolada), in constant agreement with the indications of the Holy See (Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith – hereinafter DDF – and Dicastery for Divine Worship): the cult of the Mystical Rose is in fact widespread throughout the world (particularly South and Central America, India, Sri Lanka, Africa) and this situation by its very nature immediately required a sort of constant 'supervision' by the Holy See.

- The Holy See's procedure in such cases, even before the publication of the new Norms on Supernatural Phenomena (May 2024), has followed the same practice for some years: recognition of the cult and its regulation entrusted to the diocesan bishop or a papal commissioner. This is accompanied, if necessary, by a theological study of the mystical phenomena of the alleged seers and a canonical investigation into their existence, in view of the correct discernment of the entire spiritual experience in progress.

### **THE TWO PHASES OF THE DISCERNMENT PROCESS**

**FIRST PHASE (2013-2018): review of the diocesan canonical investigation about Pierina Gilli from 1947 to 1949.**

**In 2013, Bishop Monari made several important decisions**, following a confidential letter from the DDF in November 2012 regarding the Fontanelle issue, which specifically invited the local Ordinary to manage the phenomenon in all its complexity—that is, on the pastoral, cultic, legal, and disciplinary levels. In July 2013, the Bishop issued a new Directory for Worship and entrusted me with the office of Episcopal Delegate for Marian devotion. **In October 2013, I was authorized to participate** to an international conference in Panama City organized by prayer groups from South and Central America related to Mystical Rose. The report I gave to the Bishop on that occasion was highly impactful. In the Americas, the spread of the cult of the Mystical Rose and the fruits it yielded, are truly impressive. The following month, **in November 2013, I was appointed by the Bishop to initiate a review of the only canonical trial held in the Diocese in 1948** against Pierina Gilli, consulting the preliminary investigation documents preserved in the secret archives of the Chancery, which had been reorganized and catalogued at the initiative of Bishop Sanguineti.

This process developed in three distinct areas: **canonical-procedural, psychological, and pharmacological.**

With regard to **the canonical-procedural area**, all possible official documents from that period were found, to evaluate the formal quality not only of the procedural documents, but also the investigative method of the diocesan commission, drawing on the various available sources (depositions, testimonies, reports, expert opinions, correspondence). From this documentation, documents were selected relating to the period

from 6<sup>th</sup> November 1947, the date the Commission began its activities, to 13<sup>th</sup> April 1949, the date on which Pierina Gilli signed a declaration that effectively marked the end of the investigations.

I feel it is necessary, in this area of investigation, to open a brief historical parenthesis, which has proven to be quite important in light of the new studies submitted to the Holy See.

**His Excellency Bishop Tredici was the bishop under whose regency the alleged private revelations began and, consequently, the diocesan investigation about Pierina Gilli** launched in 1947. He was the one who had to make some initial decisions regarding Pierina herself and the initial emergence of a widespread Marian cult, linked to the Mystical Rose, in the Parish of Montichiari, following the first cycle of alleged Marian apparitions (1947-1949). Bishop Tredici's pronouncements, based on the documentation in our diocesan historical archive, were as follows:

- there has never been a formal final act by Bishop Tredici that authoritatively sanctioned the outcome of the diocesan investigations, neither at the end of the investigations (April 1949), nor later;
- Bishop Tredici, after about a year and a half of silence during which a **personal suspensive judgment** seems to prevail (as evidenced by the letter to Cardinal Schuster in January 1950 and the absence of official pronouncements following the diocesan process) he decides to intervene only in **November 1951**, probably prompted by the contingent fact of being on a pastoral visit to the Parish of Montichiari;
- Bishop Tredici's intervention in November 1951—of a negative/suspensive nature—lacked the typical formal and authoritative character with which he himself had judged and defined similar phenomena in those same months or years in the Diocese of Brescia (Bienno, October 1951; Cossirano in 1954; Trenzano and Castrezzato in 1958 and 1960). In fact, Tredici limited himself to a **public oral intervention** in the parish church of Montichiari, during a sermon on the occasion of his pastoral visit, and to a **subsequent private letter** to the parish priest of Montichiari, Msgr. Rossi. In this letter on November 7, 1951, he asked the parish priest to "avoid any form of public worship" and added: "I say there are insufficient reasons to believe that the apparitions actually occurred and are of a supernatural nature." Nothing is stated regarding the conclusions of the investigations about Pierina Gilli.
- **Subsequently, no episcopal decree was ever issued, nor was the publication of the declaration made at the Parish of Montichiari in the Diocesan Journal of the Bishop's official acts ordered.** In fact, Bishop Tredici formally made his position known only to the parish community of Montichiari.

Regarding the **psychological aspect**, forensic psychology experts conducted a "super-expertise," critically examining and evaluating the two reports drafted during the diocesan trial (clearly discordant with each other), in order to obtain a current opinion on Pierina's psychological profile, also in relation to the possible influence of the dosage of the painkillers she was taking.

As regards the **pharmacological aspect**, the drug that Pierina was taking (Simesalgin) was examined, especially in the acute phases of the illnesses from which she suffered greatly, illustrating possible toxicological effects on her psyche, on her cognitive abilities, and examining the duration of such possible effects over time.

**In September 2016**, a **confidential dossier** containing the conclusions of this complex review process was submitted to the DDF; in the DDF's opinion, the dossier offered new and important elements for study from a legal-procedural, psychopathological, and pharmacological perspective.

The extensively argued conclusions reached by the appointed **scholars were clearly opposite to those of the 1947 diocesan investigation. Unanimously, on the basis of the new studies undertaken, Pierina Gilli's character was finally re-evaluated, on a character, psychological, and mystical-spiritual level.** Pierina was described as a "*normal, humble, non-histrionic person, well-oriented in time and space,*" in whom the alleged apparitions "*were not the result of trauma or a pathological condition but, on the contrary, a demonstration of her capacity for resilience (i.e., resistance to pain).*" Furthermore, regarding her medication intake, "*there is no correlation between the intake of Simesalgina (the drug administered to her from June to September 1947) and the apparitions.*"

## **SECOND PHASE (2018-2023): theological study of Pierina Gilli's mystical experience and the content of her messages.**

**In July 2018**, upon indication of the DDF, a diocesan theological study of the entire collection of messages contained in the *Diaries of Pierina Gilli* (published in full on the initiative of Ares Publishing House, Milan, in 2016) was initiated. Previous studies in this area, in fact, had only briefly focused on the alleged apparitions of the first phase of Pierina's life (from 1947 to 1960), without ever comparing them with those of the second phase of her spiritual experience, which began in 1966 with the alleged apparitions that began in Fontanelle di Montichiari.

The first in-depth study was entrusted **in 2019** by Bishop Tremolada to Mariologist Father Gian Matteo Roggio, professor at the Pontifical Theological Faculty *Marianum*. His presentation, which paved the way for further theological and historical explorations, significantly re-evaluated the value and spiritual intensity of Pierina Gilli's mystical experiences, raising important questions regarding their possible classification as "apparitions," in light of the Church's magisterium in this field of study.

It is important to remember that in the meantime, given the new studies sent by the Bishop of Brescia to Rome, **in January 2019** the DDF and the Dicastery for Divine Worship authorized the establishment of a diocesan shrine and the construction of a shrine church; on December 7, 2019, by episcopal decree, the new diocesan shrine of Mystical Rose -Mother of the Church was erected.

**In July 2022**, following the sad interlude of Covid, the Bishop entrusted an eight-member **International Theological Commission** with the task of initiating a new phase of doctrinal study. The commission was tasked with completing and deepening the analysis of Pierina's entire collection of writings. This included considering not only the content of the alleged Marian apparitions, but also those—never studied—directly referring to Jesus and several saints (St. Crocefissa di Rosa and the shepherd children of Fatima, Francisco and Jacinta). More specifically, the aim was to evaluate the internal coherence of Pierina's diaries, their spiritual content, and their conformity with sound theological doctrine and the Church's magisterium, in order to draft a final opinion that would summarize the opinions expressed up to that point. Among these, which deserve to be highlighted, there were also two very authoritative positive opinions, expressed by two true authorities on the matter, namely **Monsignor Enrico Rodolfo Galbiati** (a distinguished biblical scholar of the Diocese of Milan, who died in 2004) and **Father Stefano De Fiores** (an internationally renowned professor of Mariology, who died in 2014).

In July of the following year, that is, **on July 17, 2023**, having completed their studies from various theological and disciplinary perspectives, the members of the Commission delivered a completely positive opinion (*votum*) to the Bishop of Brescia, which is expressed in the following summary conclusions: *"The Commission expressed itself unanimously in favour of recognizing the extraordinary revelations that have characterized the earthly existence of the alleged seer since 1944, hoping that the authority of the Church up to its highest level will soon be able to publicly recognize these events as authentic initiatives of God, classifiable in different circumstances as interior locutions and intellectual visions, vivid spiritual visions and corporeal visions, also called apparitions. In particular, the Commission members attribute to the category of apparitions the two alleged cycles of Marian apparitions in the Cathedral of Montichiari in 1947 and at Fontanelle in 1966, in which the Virgin allegedly delivered messages and devotions to Pierina Gilli to be reported to the Pope, the Church, and the entire world. Finally, the Commission hopes that the authority of the diocesan Church will soon consider initiating a process of canonical verification of the sanctity of the alleged seer."*

**On September 13, 2023**, the Bishop of Brescia sent these conclusions to Rome, accompanying them with his own favourable opinion and urging the DDF's rapid intervention: *"I believe the time is ripe to reach a conclusive judgment regarding the discernment of these alleged apparitions, for the benefit of the spiritual well-being of many faithful of our local and universal Church. I therefore await your valuable guidance in this*

*regard, so that we can proceed in the most appropriate and fruitful manner, in agreement with the competent bodies of the Holy See, who have always accompanied us with solicitude and availability along this long path."*

### **The new DDF Rules and the granting of the NULLA OSTA in July 2024**

**On May 17, 2024**, the DDF issued important new *Norms for the discernment of alleged supernatural phenomena*. This is a long-awaited document, which has been extensively studied by the Holy See. It was necessary to update the very dated norms on the subject, dating back to 1974, in order to increasingly address and discern phenomena that are widespread in the universal Church. The primary purpose of these new Norms is to offer **a doctrinal and pastoral assessment** of these phenomena, postponing any formal declaration of supernatural origin to a later date, after a careful and patient evaluation of their spiritual fruits.

After approximately two months, our Bishop was notified from Rome that the DDF soon intended to comment on the Marian cult of the Mystical Rose, given its worldwide spread and the requests for clarification from many episcopates. **On July 5, 2024**, the Bishop of Brescia received a letter from the Prefect of the DDF, Cardinal Fernandez, countersigned *ex audientia* by Pope Francis. The letter officially announced that, based on the extensive dossier of new studies submitted since 2016, the long process of diocesan and Roman discernment could finally be considered complete. The judgment expressed in this letter is largely positive and authorizes the Bishop of Brescia to issue his own Nulla Osta, the first granted in agreement with the Holy See after the issuance of the new Norms: *"No elements are found in the messages widespread by Pierina that contradict the teaching of the Catholic Church on faith and morals. Nor are any negative moral aspects or other critical issues found in the facts connected to this spiritual experience. Several positive aspects can be identified that stand out from the messages as a whole, and others that deserve clarification to avoid misunderstandings."*

The positive aspects of this spiritual experience present in Pierina's writings and life can be summarised as follows:

- Pierina's diaries express a humble and complete trust in Mary's maternal action, which is why she displays no attitudes of vainglory, self-sufficiency, or vanity, but rather the awareness of having been freely blessed by the closeness of Mystical Rose and her beauty.
- This maternal action always leads to a personal encounter with the Lord Jesus: Pierina clearly recognizes that everything Mary does in us, directs us toward Jesus Christ and toward love for Him.
- Mystical Rose, as Mother of the Church, prevents this devotion from becoming confined to an individualistic experience, as she urges everyone to develop the community aspect of the Gospel message, ecclesial communion, and the proclamation of salvation to the whole world.

Two aspects of Pierina's writings need further clarification and exploration, especially from a doctrinal perspective, to fully appreciate the Virgin Mary's great role as a maternal intercessor in the action of sanctifying Grace: the understanding of Mary as a Mediator of grace in relation to the central role of Christ's saving power, the sole Redeemer and great mediator of the Father's Mercy; and the understanding of the three coordinates of Christian spirituality symbolized by the three roses (i.e., prayer, sacrifice, and penance), which should not be considered the central nucleus of the Christian message, but rather should always be included within the great evangelical message of charity, a synthesis of the entire New Testament.

**On July 8, 2024**, His Excellency Msgr. Bishop Tremolada published the episcopal decree of *Nihil obstat*, inviting all faithful to a solemn celebration of proclamation at the Shrine of Mystical Rose – Mother of the Church **on July 13, 2024**, the Mystical Rose Feast. This decree authoritatively declares the following fundamental aspects relating to the Marian cult of Mystical Rose and the content of Pierina's spiritual experiences:

- appreciation of the pastoral value of this spiritual program linked to Pierina and an invitation to promote its diffusion, including through pilgrimages;
- free access for all the faithful to participate in this Marian devotion and spiritual experience, which recognizes an authentic action of the Holy Spirit for the good of the faithful;
- the numerous fruits born from the devotion and cult of Mystical Rose, consistently reported from all over the world: conversions to the faith after long absences from spiritual journeys, rediscovery of sacramental practice, requests for adults to begin catechumenate courses, spiritual and physical healings, liberation from situations related to esotericism, spiritualism, or various forms of addiction, and even the unexpected gift of motherhood and the birth of vocations to the consecrated life and the priesthood, born and guided through the intercession of Maria Mystical Rose, as well as the founding of new diocesan female religious congregations.

**On Sunday, July 13, 2024**, during the solemn co- celebration in which the decree of *Nihil obstat* was announced to the people of God and all the faithful of the Mystical Rose worldwide, Bishop Tremolada concluded his homily with these important and far-reaching words, sealing the journey undertaken over the past 23 years: *"As bishop of the Diocese of Brescia, in whose territory this shrine stands, I would like to express in all sincerity the desire that today more than ever I feel alive and that I intend to entrust to the Blessed Virgin Mary venerated here. I would like this to be, first and foremost, a place of prayer, of silence, of communion with God, of listening to his Word, of contemplation; it may be a glimpse of heaven on earth. May it also be a place of intercession, where the Blessed Virgin is invoked for peace in the world, for justice among peoples, for the holiness of the Church, especially for consecrated persons. Again, may it be a place of conversion, where one encounters God's mercy, His forgiveness, His redemption, and experiences the joy of always being welcomed and recognized in one's dignity. Finally, may it be a place of consolation, where one finds peace of heart, the strength to overcome trials, the balm to heal wounds, the light to look truthfully at one's life. May the Mother of God, whom we venerate here as the Mystical Rose and Mother of the Church, help us to make this place a small oasis of faith, prayer, and peace, so that all who come here may, in the depths of their hearts, encounter God, who is beauty and goodness without end. May she, the Mystical Rose, who is, in the mystery of Christ, the first fruits and radiance of this beauty and goodness, enlighten and accompany us."*