

"Pierina Gilli, Witness of the Kingdom. Analysis of some aspects of her spirituality"

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### "Analysis of Pierina Gilli's spirituality: testimonies and revelations"

Good evening, everyone, and thank you for welcoming me and asking me to present ***Pierina Gilli as a witness of the kingdom***, presenting an analysis of some aspects of her spirituality that have emerged throughout her life and have been compiled by the theological commission created by Monsignor Tremolada, bishop of this diocese. This commission has worked and still continues to explore the events that have accompanied Gilli's life, but above all the events following the apparitions.

#### Introduction

My reflection is based on the texts of the DIARIES that Pierina Gilli has given us, which represent perhaps the most important and most personal source on her life, at least according to the current compilation of the main sources received so far. Undoubtedly, they must be read together with the reports expressed about her person in order to understand the theological and doctrinal significance of the apparitions that took place in the cathedral of Montichiari (1947) and in Fontanelle (1966).

It is clear that my work proposes a detailed reading of part of the documentation, but in this report I will refer specifically to the first part of the Commission's work, which then led to the theological-spiritual and theological-historical position that the reading of the texts in our possession allows us to give on the events and the person of Pierina Gilli.

What can I attest to with my experience and knowledge of this documentation?

The authority and also the relevance with which we can consider the known events to be reliable and which, as private revelations, contain a clear message for the Church **of conversion and life for the kingdom**. In this sense, my intervention is divided into two main parts. In the first part, we will consider Pierina Gilli's adherence to the faith and her acceptance of God. Then, I will present the theological aspect and the evaluation of the coherence of the texts I have read. We will therefore talk about Pierina Gilli and her life through the reading of faith that she made in her diaries. Then, in the second part, we will look at her human profile and some features of her spirituality.

### 1. Adherence to the faith, to the acceptance of God who reveals himself

When examining the contents of Pierina Gilli's life through her diaries, we immediately realise that we are dealing with a personality with unusual characteristics. We also realise that we are faced with a mystery that must be accepted in faith towards a God who reveals himself to man — in the private revelation of himself — with those signs of truthfulness that we recognise as present in a series of events that have marked Pierina Gilli's life and which, at the same time, have permeated the life of this territory, of this diocesan Church.

We too approach these events with an attitude of reverence and docility towards the will of God, who has revealed himself and continues to manifest himself in our history, and has chosen to do so through the witness of faith of a Christian, Gilli, with the sole purpose of drawing man with his love and benevolence into the arms of his Mother, so that there might be a stronger adherence to Christian life.

In fact, the reason for the apparitions has achieved its goal, and today we can attest to this, recognising the numerous places where devotion to Mary Mystical Rose has spread and, above all, seeing the conversions and testimony of the pilgrims who come to Fontanelle di Montichiari to this day.

#### What were the criteria that inspired my research?

Reading the historical data in depth, I realised that the documents can be examined by considering Gilli's case as one already known to the leading theologians who have taken an interest in her life, have known it, have read about the events, as we are doing, and have written authoritative summaries. One of these, written by Monsignor Galbiati, or that of Professor De Fiores, who presented their positions with extreme caution, competence and positive affirmation.

I say this because the extraordinary phenomena that accompanied Pierina Gilli's life are particularly interesting and powerful. They can be analysed from different perspectives in a scientific analysis, but they cannot be easily categorised because they refer to peculiar supernatural aspects, typical of cases in the lives of mystics. These reports describe Pierina Gilli's life based on these truly extraordinary events. These are, in fact, circumstances that cannot be produced by human will, but which Gilli experienced and recognised as permitted by God and accepted with docility, despite the hostility that these events produced around her.

In fact, God works in man not by imposing himself, but with gentleness, that is, following the characteristic inclination of the person, and each one has his own disposition, his own openness and chooses according to that docility, welcoming and growing in the life of faith (in age, wisdom and grace).

Therefore, in order to understand the particular phenomena that happened to Gilli, it is important to identify what action of grace they had on her, guiding her constantly until the end of her life. They were imprinted on her heart, making her adhere to them in a coherent manner, with all her will, orienting her whole life towards God. And in this way, Pierina turned all those who met her towards the love of God.

Moreover, in accordance with the usual order of God's action, his divine action on Gilli's will guided her whole life, precisely through the adherence of her intelligence and the expression of all her love. In fact, both man's volitional action and man's loving action must be directed towards God and submitted to his will. And in contemplating such an example of adherence, we see the acceptance that Pierina gave in every extraordinary event she experienced, but above all in those contradictory events she lived through, precisely those in which faced the test of disbelief and marginalisation, of not being recognised in the truth.

There she knew how to "remain" in the trial (Jn 15:4: "Remain in me, and I will remain in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me"), confirming the truth of the Gospel message through her life. Just where words end, the witness of faith speaks through the lives of believers. This is what happened with Pierina Gilli!

The intellectual, emotional and physical (i.e., bodily) aspects that involve the whole of human life were involved in this existential adherence that Pierina Gilli made to God's will, which was manifested to her through seemingly inexplicable events. Following divine action, Pierina directed her intellect, her will, her imagination, and oriented her entire being towards God. This adherence characterised the form of expression of the phenomena that permeated her life and involved her ENTIRELY. This occurred both with those of a cognitive and affective nature and with those that also affected the body. In this sense, both the visions and the way in which they were represented and the way in which Pierina Gilli knew how to welcome them make us recognise that the only object of her attention was God himself.

In fact, it is evident that the visions themselves belong to the genre of gratuitous graces, given without compensation, attributable to what, according to the teaching of St. Paul, we call "free gifts" from God and which can be recognised with the gift of prophecy. In fact, we say that the grace that God gives through visions always has to do with the history of the person who experiences it, and it produces great good for the soul that experiences it. This grace also comes in abundance to the Church that welcomes it: the community that welcomes it opens itself to that sanctification and growth that allows for greater discernment of the events it is experiencing in its own history.

In the face of such particular events, because they are supernatural, discernment is required: they place man in difficulty by questioning him about the origin of the visions and private revelations he is receiving, they place him before something that may also have been the work of the counterfeiter (to whom they owe the discernment), but at the same time they give a very strong and fervent certainty of what God is doing, because only God can know the heart. Only God can elevate the human soul by granting the intellect and the will the capacity to respond to the good that man encounters.

From the mystical episodes described in the Diaries, it is clear that there were moments of discernment to which Pierina was called, discernment to which the diocesan Church in which Pierina lived was also called, not without the necessary time of waiting and prayer.

Therefore, one of the elements for discerning the visions that God had granted her was precisely to observe what fear her soul had, with what love God guided her, with what humility, with what gentleness, with what peace Pierina knew how to live.

Thus, despite all the difficulties and opposition she faced, Pierina Gilli wanted to live with all her strength in a spiritually rooted adherence to God and gave herself with ever-renewed strength and energy to a virtuous life, increasingly united to God, increasingly open to welcoming his saving action.

Pierina's soul was not troubled by remaining on the sidelines of the historical events of her time. She did not become proud and, with an attitude of humility, she knew how to live in sincere obedience to the Church, welcoming the will of God that she received through the guidance of her spiritual director.

## PART 2

### 2. The daily routine of a secluded life open to the proclamation of the kingdom

Pierina Gilli's life seems to be observed in two predominant contexts:

1. the time of secluded and solitary life in which she lived, maintaining a fixed desire for heaven, already totally oriented towards the kingdom; and
2. the time of her life dedicated to others, welcoming those she considered to be the recipients of the message contained in the revelations, revelations to which she felt increasingly determined and to which she devoted her entire life.

This dual characterisation of her daily life (solitude and witness to the revelation received), far from being a contradiction, shaped an existential path of profound spirituality and dedication. From reading the Diaries, it is clear that what marks the rhythm of Pierina's daily life are prayer, encounters and conversations that make her a witness to daily Christian asceticism, in welcoming the will of God revealed to her.

Due to the severity with which she was judged and the slow spread of the events of Fontanelle di Montichiari, she faced severe contradictions, in the most painful sufferings of the body, in overcoming the hostilities that surrounded her and in the harshness that was directed at her and that she encountered throughout her life. However, despite the adversities, her faith remained unshakeable, transforming every obstacle into an opportunity for spiritual growth and adherence to the divine will.

This is how Pierina Gilli is presented to us, as a woman determined by faith. As a strong woman: in fact, she had an unusual strength of character, expressed in her determination to make known what she had received in the apparitions of the Mother of God, which she confirmed with a radical willingness to follow Christ, living to intercede for the sick in body and spirit and, in particular, for 'religious souls'.

Her dedication to others and her unshakeable faith are at the heart of her mission and represent the key points around which her biography can be understood.

The consistency of the apparitions expresses the certainty of the truthfulness of the events described in the Diaries.

And Gilli's entire life bears witness to the spiritual fruits that gradually surrounded her life and are still felt today in the places where she lived and where devotion to Mary Mystical Rose, Mother of the Church, spread. It is precisely here that numerous conversions have taken place, testimonies of miraculous events, pilgrimages that have converted and transformed the lives of

many pilgrims: these are not insignificant aspects, which confirm the depth and authenticity of her mystical experience.

### 3. The spiritual tenor of the diaries and the conformity with the Catholic faith and ecclesiastical teaching

The dogmatic and spiritual theology of our Catholic tradition has always considered that every revelation, whether through a vision or a locution, presupposes a gift of prophecy that allows one to recognise and accept what has been received. Pierina Gilli's mystical experiences, therefore, fall within a well-defined theological framework. The revelations and messages that Pierina Gilli received, such as locutions or visions, must be considered private, but they can be considered authentic insofar as they correspond to Christian tradition and are orthodox in doctrine, precisely because they have been verified in the concrete history of this ecclesial community. This means that their content as private revelation is measured by whether it is in harmony with the teachings of the Church, whether it can be placed and corresponds to the context of the Church in which the Gospel was incarnated.

Furthermore, it must also be said that, because of the value of these revelations and the ecclesial impact they continue to have today on popular piety, they must be evaluated by the local Ordinary to see if [they belong to those that can be considered public revelations, which therefore] contain a fulfilled prophecy, received through visions, locutions...

This distinction is crucial for ecclesiastical discernment and is extremely decisive with regard to the judgement that is made about those who, like Pierina Gilli, have been its intermediaries.

It should be remembered that the content of the private revelations received by Pierina Gilli contains nothing contrary to the Catholic faith, nor anything foreign to what is revealed and contained in Sacred Scripture. This doctrinal conformity is a fundamental factor in the acceptance of her testimony, which is why we are here today.

### 4. Anthropological-spiritual profile of the seer

Pierina Gilli's life unfolded in ambivalence—the coexistence of two different but not necessarily contradictory motives or dynamic elements—of events of acceptance by the people around her, who knew how to welcome and care for her when she was ill; and other concomitant events in which Gilli experienced an explicit contrast with her surroundings, particularly with the more authoritarian figures.

This constant tension between support and opposition, acceptance and rejection, clearly shaped Pierina's personality, becoming a characteristic aspect of her life whose impact was reflected as a double reaction in the ecclesiastical circles that observed her.

In those she meets and to whom the message she proclaims is addressed, she provokes a decisive reaction: outright rejection or acceptance. Her figure left no one indifferent.

Therefore, it is not surprising that she lived her life with such steadfast constancy, exposed as she was to the pain of physical precariousness and, at the same time, to the suffering caused by the insecurity brought on by social hostility.

Strength of spirit was a distinctive feature of Pierina: she knew how to act consciously, reflecting on the only thing that was happening with the apparitions that accompanied her life. Her diaries show that her observation and analysis of events was absolutely free and devoid of exaggeration or emphasis.

She was not the centre of events, but God was.

**Such lucidity and humility bear witness to the profound integrity with which she lived. Her personality disappeared before the Mystery she contemplated.**

At the same time, Pierina Gilli was not indifferent to events and circumstances. Evaluating them, narrating them with precise descriptions, reflecting on their content to the point of questioning the meaning of the events themselves.

A contemplative and analytical attitude stood out in her discernment, to the point of making her a credible witness to Christ.

In this sense, she was a witness to the kingdom: among those who welcomed her, she lived on what she received from God, aware of the greatness of the gift she had received and of the task entrusted to her. She willingly submitted to the will of authority and chose the path of obedience, even though it was very painful to live it.

It was precisely obedience that was the sign of her authentic spirituality.

Let us consider some particular circumstances relating to the existence and nature of the events experienced.

These aspects reveal some of the personal qualities of Pierina Gilli, who had a special balance in knowing how to accept illness, the sufferings and trials of life; who knew how to remain anonymous, devoted in obedience to her superiors until the end of her life; who knew how to live honestly what she received in mystical manifestations and who submissively submitted to the authority of the Church.

These cardinal virtues outline a spiritual profile of rare depth.

Reading the Diaries presents us with a clear theological vision consistent with the era in which Gilli lived, with a spirituality marked by a dedication to reparation and penance, which is not limited to an exclusively personal reference to her own dialogue and trust in God, but opens up to communion with the ecclesial community and the whole world.

Her spirituality encompasses a universal dimension:

QUOTE:

In Pierina Gilli, we recognise a progress in spirituality with which she adhered ever more radically to the faith and grew in knowledge of the mystery she contemplated. Thus she had the strength to remain steadfast in the face of the disbelief of those who considered her mistaken and were hostile to her, clearly opposed to the mysterious events that were taking place in her life.

[A path of authentic and profound growth.](#)

There is also clear evidence of theological and spiritual growth, as Pierina Gilli lived under the spiritual guidance of God and the pastors she trusted: her increasingly clear awareness of God's will and the authority of her obedience make it credible that the teachings received through visions, spiritual locutions and private revelations — and all those special graces with which she was particularly favoured by God — were the moments of greatest integral growth of her whole person. Her whole life was a continuous path of spiritual perfection.

The testimonies of those who lived with her coincide on some points in particular:

- the fact that she suffered physically and morally for much of her life,
- that she offered everything she experienced to the Lord for the salvation of consecrated souls.
- Finally, the offering of herself, a central element of her spirituality. What she offered was requested of her by the Mother of God, who appeared to her on the night of 23-24 November 1946. This was a crucial moment that marked the beginning of a new stage in her life.

Perhaps today we can judge what happened with a certain superficiality: in fact, we are welcomed in places where Marian spirituality has shaped a territory.

But it was not always so: the places where Pierina Gilli claimed to have had the apparitions became places of grace, but they were not immediately recognised as such: the cathedral of Montichiari (1947) and Fontanelle (1966). Monsignor Francesco Rossi, parish priest of Montichiari for 22 years, recognised the greatness of these events of grace and bore witness to them.

Monsignor Giacinto Tredici already reported these wonders and declared in 1951 that inexplicable events had occurred.

For this reason, these places have become pilgrimage destinations and bear witness to the spiritual legacy left by Pierina Gilli.

A significant aspect of Pierina's spirituality was undoubtedly the apparitions and diabolical torments

On 7 May 1947, Gilli saw a nun dressed in black at night who then disappeared and said: "Instead of the nun, I saw a monstrous figure at the foot of the bed...". Gilli barely managed to utter the name of Jesus and, after making the sign of the cross, the figure disappeared. This episode marked the beginning of a period of intense spiritual trials.

After these visions, a large cross appeared to her and she heard a voice saying, "Penance, penance." A strong and clear call to conversion and sacrifice. These visions intensified in the following nights until they became moments of spiritual and physical confrontation with the demons that threatened her, threw her to the ground after grabbing her and pulling her out of bed, and beat her on the back and head. The diabolical torments were a tangible and painful reality in her life. She was frightened, lost consciousness and, fainting, found herself curled up in her room after having resisted exhausting struggles. Her resistance in these trials bears witness to her extraordinary faith.

The vision of hell made her experience the heat of the fire, the foul smell of sulphur, and a voice described the hordes of the damned to her. Pierina Gilli offered to do penance to prevent the condemnation of souls. From that moment on, she felt relief.

It was 1 June 1947, and these nightly torments had lasted more than twenty days. That day, upon waking in the morning, she had her first vision of the Virgin Mary, who showed her the three swords in her heart due to the infidelities of the nuns. This event marked a turning point, transforming her suffering into a continuous offering.

The requests of the Mother of God, accompanied by frequent visions of Saint Maria Crocifissa, are consistently related to the life choices made by Gilli; they are sufficient to consider that she wanted to carry out to the end what had been asked of her.

She lived devoutly, with a continuous sacramental life, faithful to daily communion, as attested by her diaries and those who lived with her; this fostered continuous dialogue with the Lord Jesus in prayer and contemplation of the divine mysteries.

Her life was a faithful implementation of the messages she received.

One aspect that could be considered controversial about the events related to Gilli was the evaluation of the presence of demonic actions alongside the visions and apparitions (of the Mother of God and Saint Maria Crocifissa).

But what dispels doubts about the veracity of the events are precisely the miracles.

In fact, both angels and demons can act on the imagination, can perform prodigious actions, but cannot perform true miracles, such as those that occurred here in Fontanelle di Montichiari.

### Conclusion

If we still have doubts about how Pierina Gilli lived, we can take Monsignor Galbiati's summary, who stated with extreme clarity that she lived "the acceptance of many sacrifices" and that this "stems from the vow of 'conformity to the will of the Lord'" (22.4.1951, II, p. 160; 16.11.51, II, p. 167), that is to say:

1. total abandonment to the will of God the Father;
2. docility and trust in her reverend spiritual father;
3. serenity in the face of humiliation and mockery;
4. love of suffering.

#### **In accordance with this vow, we find the heroic prayer**

of 6 February 1952, II, p. 174:

"Jesus, I offer you with all my heart and with all the strength of my soul the sacrifice of not being believed by my superiors, rather, help me to desire to be despised by men, as long as you are glorified and loved; direct, O merciful Jesus, your gaze upon my poor soul, sanctify it and make it a true instrument for your pleasure."

At the end of the same year, 1952, we also find the renunciation of being an instrument (31 December 1952, II, p. 243):

"Mother [Saint Crocifissa], I can ask Jesus for what he promised during the Virgin's visit to Montichiari, that he reveal himself to other souls [...], without me.

Moreover, let me die in humiliation, but let grace triumph [...].

Because I fear that with my wickedness, I will be the one to stumble over the triumph."

We can point out the repugnance Pierina felt at the idea of the publicity to which her task would expose her (22.11.47, I, p. 204; 16.5.51, II, p. 125; 28.5.51, II, p. 195).

She had no desire for the limelight!  
Christian hope has not yet been fulfilled.