



BLESSED CLARE BOSATTA
A Daughter of St. Mary of Providence

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FIRST BLOSSOM
1858-1887

Daughters of St. Mary of Providence
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With apostolic approval

INTRODUCTION

It gives me great pleasure to present this short biography of Blessed Clare Bosatta. She was born at Pianello Lario on the shores of Lake Como on May 27, 1858, and died in Pianello on April 20, 1887, at the early age of 29. On April 21, 1991, she was declared "Blessed" by Pope John Paul II.

The Church, who is the mother and teacher of all believers, by proclaiming her "Blessed" invites us to look to her as a model and witness along the personal path to sanctity.

Blessed Clare, a consecrated woman, his first spiritual daughter, made her own the charisma of the founder, Blessed Aloysius Guanella.

Sr. Clare lived more than a hundred years ago and today she would have nothing to tell us, if she had not responded to the grace of God to become holy. Certainly, she never imagined she would become a saint and be declared "Blessed." Her sanctity of yesterday is presented to the Church of today.

Her life's message and spirituality reaches us with all its freshness and vitality.

Reading this brief spiritual profile of her life, we may discover that the steps of her journey toward God were the small and great virtues practiced to the point of

heroism. Open to the light of the spirit, she knew how to value every day occurrences in her daily life to build a treasure of interior riches that would never fail.

I wish all who read the message that comes forth from the life of Blessed Clare an awareness of the baptismal commitment of striving toward perfection of charity, assuming its social and ecclesiastical responsibilities as your own to promote authentic Christian life according to one's state in life, placing oneself with a resolute soul, to follow the Lord wherever He should wish to lead us.

Sr. Elena Salarici
Superior General
of the Daughters of
St. Mary of Providence

Rome, February 2, 1991
Feast of the Presentation of the Lord

A Life Blossoms

The first view of the fantastic panorama of beautiful Lake Como toward Pianello Lario enfolds a simple, unaffected, smiling world. Entering into the surroundings we become aware that the people bear signs of weariness, having a seriousness of manner and a most candid simplicity. In this surrounding, Dina Bosatta was born on May 27, 1858, the eleventh child of Alexander and Rose Mazzucchi.

The locality is accepting, respectable, and above all, Christian. In this nest of love, the little one grew and lived her childhood. Contemporaries describe her as having a simple and natural beauty.

Dina received her First Communion at the age of eleven. This was exceptional because of the strict ecclesiastical laws of the time regarding the age of the reception of this Sacrament.

As an adolescent, although she had a frail and delicate appearance, Dina gave proof of possessing a tenacious will and strong qualities of character, willing and able to overcome all difficulties which prepared her to discover and make God her choice.

Dina had a gentle, but at the same time, strong character; these qualities would be very useful to her for her orientation toward a future not yet determined, but which would become clear along the path of her young life.

God would lead her toward the heights of love and heroism; Dina would be the light that would not remain in the shadows, but would be placed on a candelabra to shed light on the Church and on the world.

Dina's Sister, Marcellina

Dina was only three years old when great sorrow entered the Bosatta home, namely the death of her father. He left eleven children, all of whom were very young. Marcellina was the eldest and on her fell the heavy responsibility of assisting her mother in the care and education of her younger brothers and sisters.

Dina was Marcellina's favorite and she received special care. She would attend to her and guide her with the affection of a sister and a friend.

Marcellina had one wish for little Dina: that of having her obtain a diploma for teaching elementary school. It was an appealing endeavor for the two Bosatta sisters, especially for Dina who was now fourteen years old.

To reach this goal it was necessary to leave Pianello, to leave her mother, to leave everything, and to go to Gravedona, into the Academy of the Canossian Sisters.

Dina, Student and Worker

The dream of becoming a teacher was beautiful, but where would they find the money to pay her tuition? It was a problem which, although real, did not frighten the courageous older sister, who after much thought found the solution to the dilemma.

Dina would become a student and work at the Canossian Academy.

The Superiors accepted the proposal and Dina left for Gravedona with many dreams and great hope for the future.

First Defeat

The plan of God for Dina was not in perfect harmony with that of Marcellina. It is He who directs the history of every human being and guides them in moments of growth, hardship and hope.

The plans of Providence for young Dina were, in fact, different. She spent about six years in the academy of the Canossians - sufficient time for Dina to identify with the life of the Sisters and their work of charity. Above all, she was fascinated by their devotion toward the Sorrowful Virgin and the Crucifix.

The contact with these Sisters influenced and nurtured her desire to become one of them.

The Canossian Superiors, although edified by the conduct of their student, and above all by the piety that distinguished her clearly from her companions, remained concerned regarding her physical frailty and her withdrawn personality and did not consider her suitable to the mission of their Institute.

Dina received the decision with much sorrow and fear. She felt lost and asked: Why?

What about her future? For the moment the questions remained unanswered.

After the first shock of her loss, Dina suffered but found strength in prayer; she turned her attention inward, recognized her own "lack of correspondence" and blamed herself for being unfit to become a Canossian Sister.

However, her heart soon accepted God's plan for her, no longer seeing the refusal of admission into the Canossian Community as a defeat in her life but as a turning point, a new plan for whatever God wished. No one ever knew of the deep suffering she experienced in this period of growth.

A Painful Return

Dina returned to Pianello. She confronted her situation with clear knowledge and the gentle support of faith, content once more to obey. This virtue distinguished her as an authentic follower of Christ who was obedient even to the death of the cross (cf. Phil 2:8).

Adapting to new situations is always difficult. Young Dina uncovered a plan of God in every event which she surveyed in an attitude of love and faith. It was thus that she would find the key for every sacrifice that would be asked of her. The apparent defeat became "a welcomed time" and an opening toward new frontiers.

The pain of detachment transformed this girl, who appeared so weak and was instead so strong, and gave her the capacity to give of her life and love, and to lose herself in the needs of others.

The love-sorrow combination would bring out in her the highest expression of a woman's love and one can see it emerging in the various phases of this brief biography.

Father Coppini, the Beginning of the Work of Charity

Father Coppini was the pioneer of this extraordinary history. He, as the pastor of the little town of Pianello Lario, had great influence on the young Dina. As priest, he was rich in zeal and apostolic energy. He was impelled by courage, creativity and love toward the needy of his parish.

He gathered together from within his parish, a group of "good and virtuous" girls and invited them to attend to the needs of the poor in the town.

It was a time of emigration and misery but also a time of charity. Youth responded with enthusiasm and energy





to the invitation of the pastor. There began around the needy, almost spontaneously, the little community of the Daughters of Mary which the people of Pianello immediately called "The Institute of Pianello".

Among the women Marcellina Bosatta, Dina's sister, stood out. Her friends described her as young, courageous and beautiful, so that not a few young men looked at her as their probable future wife. To Marcellina Father Coppini entrusted the care of the "first house" of Providence, where space was insufficient, but charity abounded.

At first, children of parents working abroad were accepted, along with abandoned, aging persons, orphans, and neglected children. A real "Noah's Ark", our Dina would name it, and Father Coppini would

recognize it as a small endeavor but great because of Providence.

The little nucleus would become a vast field. Today the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence have sailed the oceans and flown to distant lands, carrying everywhere the message of Christ and reaching all people with their charism of charity.

A New Proposal for Dina

Marcellina, a capable, wise and generous woman, was placed at the helm of the "little flock" by Don Coppini. She knew the pain experienced by her sister Dina in leaving the Academy of Gravedona. She also was aware of her sensibility and her delicacy of soul. She was well informed of the natural instinctive repugnance of her sister toward the "Institute". Still she did not think twice and invited the young girl to share her experience of service to the poor.

How did Dina accept this proposal? Drawn toward contemplation and still suffering from her rejection by the Canossians and with no hope of returning, she remained loyal to them. The life of the Institute was not to her liking and, to be truthful, she was not in sympathy with "Noah's Ark".

She responded to her sister's invitation with a firm refusal.

To choose is always difficult, because it implies a loss on one hand, for a gain on the other. Nothing is

improvised and nothing is discounted in life. With the certainty that God always realized His own projects, against every human opposition, the young Dina tried to understand.

She did not count on herself, nor on her natural gifts. On the contrary she considered herself "insignificant", but counted on the grace of God which transforms everything for one who waits for His light with trust.

The Battle and the Victory

Dina knew how to wait, it is true, but the waiting weighed on her and often drained her strength, as she underwent uncertainty and conflict: an active life or a contemplative life? To give her life totally to Christ or to Him through His brothers and sisters?

Anxious to achieve her goal she burst into tears at the delay. Dina developed a responsive heart ready for battle and availability to God.

Although frail in appearance, the young woman of twenty possessed personality traits strong as granite. In this strong personality she mysteriously found the energy to overcome the conditions which prevented her from soaring toward the vast horizon of her spirit.

In the inner recesses of her soul, she discovered an heroic ascent that would be essential to her interior growth. Her pain was transformed into a strength of decision. Dina let herself become involved in the future

of her sister and entered the Institute of Pianello, to be "a contemplative in the heroic exercise of Charity".

Marcellina reached out to her with the love of a Mother and accepted her as her first faithful co-worker.

Dina Becomes Sister Clare

What young Dina experienced in her heart that morning, we shall probably never know. But we do know what her response to that divine call was - an irrevocable decision to put herself at the service of the "plan of God" and to bring it to completion with every fiber of her being.

Dina received the religious habit and took the name of Clare. She was the first fruit of the Institute; she was the seed cast into the fertile ground that would give a hundred fold. The young sister in the exuberance of that day of happiness, thus expressed herself:

"I am here and the Lord has placed me here. This Work is of God; if I should doubt it, I would be the first to reject it. May every thought of my mind, every affection of my heart, every fatigue of my body be for Him. I belong to God and to this Work which is just beginning. It is like a planted seed, it is necessary that all cultivate it; it needs a great heart, the heart of a mother . . . may God help me".

It is a magnificent excerpt and it speaks for itself. Sister Clare is the bee that is beneficial to the hive. Her

sister Marcellina would say of her: "She was the angel of charity that reinforced souls, brought hearts together and brought happiness to the house."

It seems we are reading the biblical eulogy of the woman of the book of Wisdom: Sister Clare is the strong woman, she will also be the "mystical spouse". The Lord takes her heart and prepares it to enter into the mystery of suffering and love, to immerse her into the happiness of ecstasy, of the Easter without end.

Young Sister Clare is preparing herself in simplicity to live this in her short existence, in discerning the plans of God with docile availability and to live and die to actualize them in herself.

The Seed That Seems to Die

On July 1, 1881, Father Charles Coppini, the zealous priest died rich in good works. His spiritual daughters were sad and somewhat lost. Marcellina saw a shadow descend on the "little house". What would become of those poor people? The fear that everything would crumble takes hold of the young mind. But she has, for her comfort, strong faith that supports her hope, she has trust in the words of the dying pastor: "After me will come one who will do much more than I." And his words were prophetic.

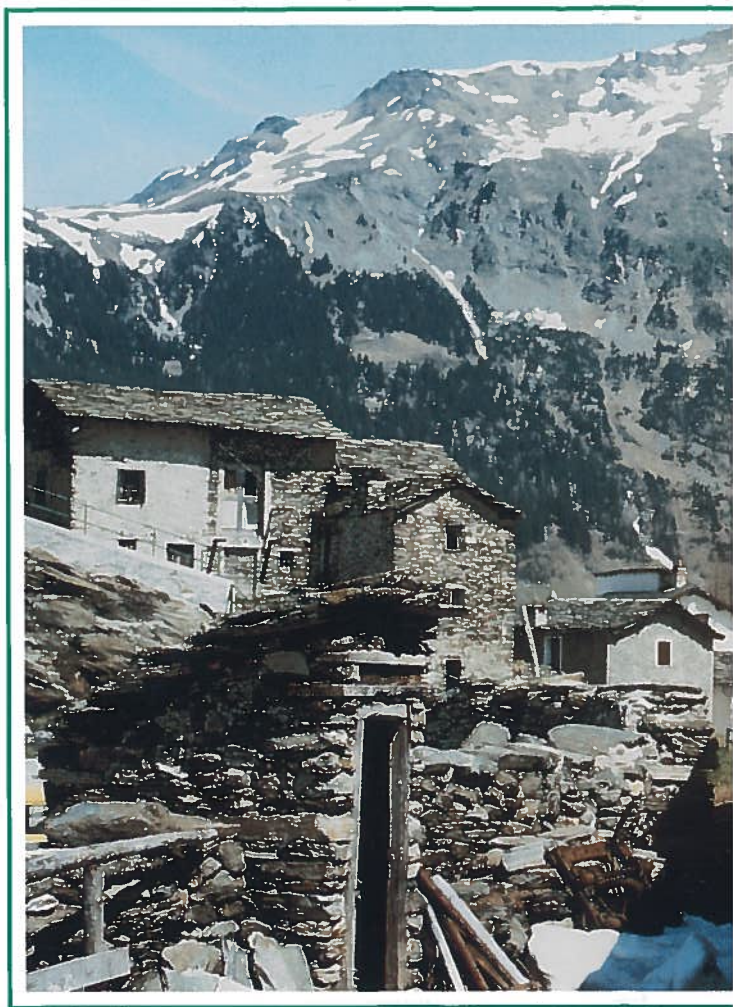
The questions, the tension, the uncertainties would be resolved soon in blessings and unhopd-for

possibilities. Marcellina, not withstanding everything had full confidence.

And what about Sister Clare? Still troubled by the events that she had experienced, she clung to her sister. She prayed much and felt that the evangelical grain of mustard seed that seemed dead, would mature and that the "little curtain" would be widened, by acquiring broader dimensions and that it would become a dwelling of charity and love for the most suffering part of humanity.

This faith and this hope supported the two sisters and stimulated them not to remain in fear: the future is always in the hands of God.







Father Guanella, the Mountaineer

Aloysius Guanella, labeled at the time as the “mad priest”, the hot head, utopian, succeeded Father Coppini. To him this parish, compared to the preceding places where he had been sent by his bishop, seemed to be a cathedral.

Guanella was mature and possessed the strength and courage of the mountain where he was born. He was used to storms and every inclemency. He had a “passion” for the poor, for the most miserable. His favorites were those rejected by society. He was attentive to every suffering and everywhere he discovered it, he attempted to relieve it.

This priest from the mountain who was misunderstood, opposed, and derided

because of his "foolishness" in creating places to shelter the miserable and the abandoned, had the reputation of being a fanatic.

Father Aloysius was not concerned with words. He passed on to facts and did not yield to trivialities. He trusted himself blindly to Providence which guided him to Pianello.

His trust was not deceived: his "dreams" would become reality. His faith would give meaning to his everyday life. He was sure that the seed cast into the earth would grow, especially where greater patience and fatigue were required.

This priest with a distinct character and a style for action, who did not know how to be passive or accept long postponements, became the preferred ground for the unfolding of the plan of God.

A Marvelous Discovery

The Bosatta sisters, after the first vague and distrustful confrontation due to gossip regarding the new pastor, discovered in the apostle of charity, a man seeking to free humanity from misery and to promote its advancement.

They recognized the man chosen by God to guide the little group of souls and, putting aside "human" prudence, entrusted their souls and their newly born work to the hot-headed priest.

Sister Clare did not delay in entrusting the direction of her spirit to Father Aloysius and he guided it with a

strong hand and the heart of a father, bringing forth its spiritual and human value.

Later Father Guanella would say of this "his" spiritual daughter: "Sister Clare generously pursued the path of Christian perfection in the practice of innocence and penance. She was perfectly grounded in true penance. She was perfectly grounded in true humility. God led her by the way of strong souls: a way 'bitter' and dangerous by itself, but He guided her so that she would not fall".

He could not have made a more beautiful eulogy. The Lord is always Providence for His children. Sister Clare would be Providence for all those who would live beside her during her very brief life.

Her example of sanctity must not remain obscure; it must be made known and presented to youth who wish to give meaning to their lives as a reachable goal even at the threshold of the year 2000.

Teacher at Dongo

In the last century, women for the most part, were illiterate and no one thought of educating them!

Father Coppini, aware of the problem, had opened a school for girls. At Dongo, a town a short distance from Pianello, the Manzi family operated a private school. The girls who attended this school desired to learn to read and write. However, due to the lack of education and the advanced age of the teachers, little progress was achieved.

Assessing the difficulty, Don Guanella remedied the situation by placing young Clare in charge.

Sister Clare accepted the position reluctantly and worked between Pianello and Dongo: in Winter and in Summer, with the sun and the rain. Had she not decided to fulfill every plan of God for her? Had she not promised her Jesus that she was available to His will? She would fulfill her vocation as a "contemplative in action".

The fatigue and the inconvenience experienced by Sister Clare were great as we know through her own words: "The hardest obedience was to go to Dongo; I left with sorrow in my heart". But she said again: "It was after that obedience that God began in me all those favors that I feel". This witness was marvelous, stupendous, which has us grasp the humanity of Sister Clare and at the same time her knowledge of being the object of a particular love on the part of God.

Who said Saints are born? They become Saints. Nothing is improvised; much less a Saint. Grace opens the path of the sublime, but it does not substitute for nature.

Sister Clare let herself be involved in the adventure of sanctity very early, placing her life in the hands of God, animated by an exceptional interior energy.

Facing Calumny

The efforts of the sisters to relieve the suffering of others, their attention toward the attainment of human values, their desire to solidify Christian love, and their response to the needs of the handicapped only brought out the adverseness of the enemies of the Church.

A certain "gentleman", assisted perhaps by the same Providence, went to the police to accuse the Sisters of abusing the orphan girls.

Young Clare was, therefore, called to court to defend herself from the calumny. With the dignity and firmness that distinguished her, Sister Clare responded to the Chief of Police who asked her if it were true that the Sisters abused the girls - "My companions and my Superiors heal wounds, but never do they abuse the girls in any way". Forgetful of herself, she was preoccupied in defending the others. She was sure of being in the truth and therefore she defied the poisonous bit of calumny.

The judge remained impressed by the gentleness and strength of that young consecrated woman, and hastened to close the case, because the deed was non-existent. He cited the name of the accuser and permitted the Sisters to leave.

Returning home, Sister Clare and the other Sisters met the "gentleman" who had accused them. He dared to ask them where they were coming from. Sister Clare answered without reserve that they had been called



into court because they were accused of abusing the orphans.

How great is the frailty and the unfaithfulness of man! That "gentleman" appeared surprised at the news and even had the audacity to ask: "Who was that man?"

Sister Clare without any evasiveness answered: "The judge told us that it was you". We can imagine the confusion of the "gentleman". Sister Clare was not indifferent to suffering and to human malice! She desired to redeem it with her holy life. Returning home, she invited the Sisters to pray and to pardon saying: "We are happy to have suffered for the crucified Lord." Such are the Saints!

Joyous Witness of Love

The intense piety, wisdom, and human charism of Sister Clare had solidified the traits of strength, bringing to maturation her fundamental vocation to Love.

She proposed to herself: "I will love all with equal LOVE. Yes, I will have some preferences, but they will be for the most suffering members: the sick, the abandoned, the poor."

The first to catch her zeal were her Sisters, who gave a lively response to her every proposal with generosity and enthusiasm.

Every time a need arose, Sister Clare responded. In hearing that at Naples an epidemic of cholera had

broken out, she offered to go herself. She did not fear a contagious disease; she did not know fear. Father Guanella had to restrain her generosity.

She had interest and concern for the orphans. They could confide all to Sister Clare. She was their confidant and truest friend. To Sister Clare they could not say no, they could not deny her anything. They did not resist her deep glance, her gentle manner, her sensibility, her persuasive smile.

Her's was an "active" charity. It was a charity refined by the trials of the spirit, proof that Sister Clare faced them with the gentle bond of faith. They can only be gathered in the chapters of her life.

It was evening. There was a knock on her door; it was a Sister who had with her a beautiful child. Who knows how and why she arrived there. Beds were scarce, in fact, there were no empty beds. The Sister was given Sister Clare's bed. And for the child? Sister Clare invited the girls to give up one of their own beds; she encountered resistance, but soon she conquered it and persuaded one girl - "If it were Our Lady asking for a bed, would you give it?" "For Our Lady I would give it," answered one little girl, "but not for that child." Sister Clare patiently answered: "It is the same, you know, it makes no difference; all that is done to the poor is as if done to Jesus and to Our Lady."

Clare's secret was Love, and Love is not indifference.

Sentinel in the Night

Like young Samuel who learned to answer God who called him in the night, so young Clare felt herself called to speak to her Spouse in “night vigils”. She felt the need and power of prayer. It meant more to her than food to the body.

She invented some excuse to obtain the keys from the Sacristan. For example, she had to finish some work . . . The Sacristan did not suspect that Clare would stay the entire night before the Tabernacle to adore - God made man. The model, the champion to imitate for this twenty year old woman was not Christ “super-star”, but the Christ of the Cross and of Love.

A “Saint” at times may appear weak and lost in herself. However, if we evaluate the actions we find strong men and women truly devoted, capable of giving themselves, and living deeply in their choice.

Pianello was for Sister Clare the field of her fatigues, her sacrifices, her renunciations: it was the gymnasium where she exercised herself in heroic virtues.

Her life was a crescendo of sanctity, a life spent in constant dialogue with the Father and in absolute fidelity to the mission received from Him. A life fulfilled at only twenty-nine years of age! It is for this that today we remember her 100 years later. She would have nothing to tell us, if it had not been like this.

Even today, with her life entirely spent, she speaks to youth: "Why do you not try the adventure of sanctity? If you will, you will be surprisingly capable of it too."

To Ardenno in Poverty and Joy

Ardenno, a little town lost among the majestic mountains of the verdant Valtellina, in the province of Sondrio, accepted the little group of Guanellian Sisters. The pastor of that church was the brother of Fr. Guanella, and it was he who requested the presence of the Sisters in his parish.

Three Sisters were destined for the mission of Ardenno, one of whom was Sister Clare. She accepted because the giving of herself is above all obedience. Ardenno would be a place of trial, poverty, privation, and self-denial.

She herself describes the situation for us. "Our only strength is trust in the Providence of God. Here everything is lacking. We eat only once a day, and that which is sufficient for one, suffices for three! It is cold, and for light a small wick of a lantern is enough. But among many privations, we feel happy to suffer something for our Lord and we do not give it a thought. The lack of means does not take away our joy."

There is a great field of work, children to educate and instruct, elderly persons to assist, church linens to wash and put in order, catechism to teach to young and old.

This is perfect joy!

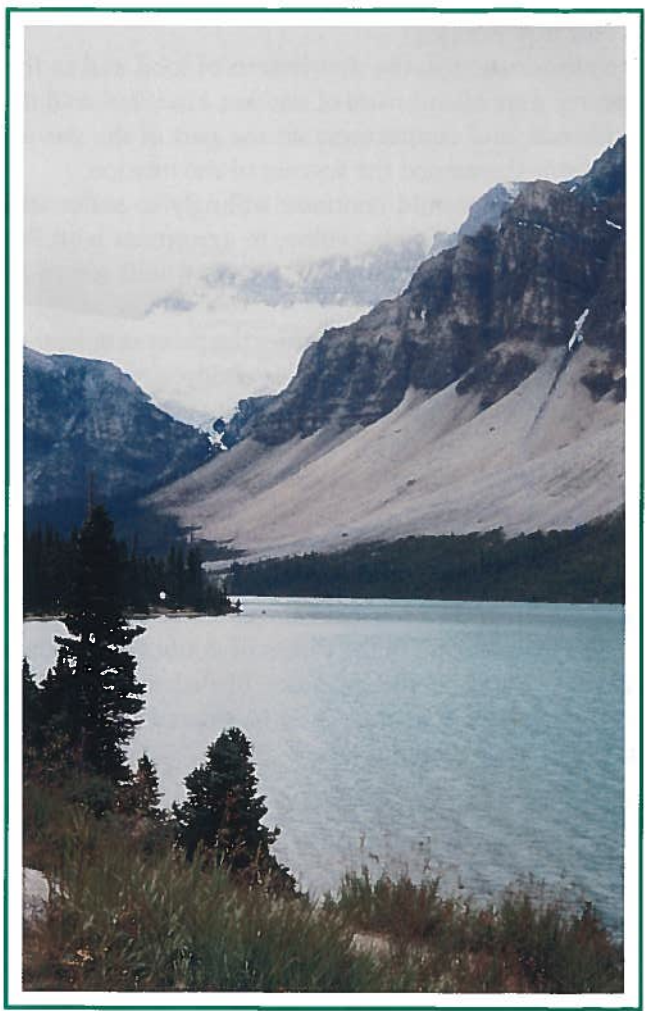
Unfortunately, to the deprivation of food and to the poverty were added trials of another kind: external interference, and contrariness on the part of the pastor. All of this threatened the success of the mission.

Sister Clare would continue willingly to suffer and be silent, but Sister Marcellina, in agreement with Father Guanella, agreed that the Sisters would return to Pianello.

Providence which accompanies the process of history and watches over the path of His children, would soon change the events. The Guanellian Sisters would return to the vast field of work, stronger than ever, and that fragile beginning would render more solid the foundation of the Work.

The style of Sister Clare would always be that of the gentle and obedient woman, reaching out toward the goal, which for her was God alone.

Her delicate soul, in the throes of doubt and anguish of spirit, found in the guidance of Father Guanella a profound interior peace, which permitted her to walk the road of sanctity and joy.



The Move to Como

The small Institute of Pianello, achieved its goal of service to men and women, and felt the need to move on and expand - broadening the borders of charity.

Questioning himself regarding his mission of charity, the mountaineer priest turned his eyes toward Como.

A difficult choice, because due to the current mentality of the lay-masonic society of his time which did not want to hear of "priests and nuns", it became a provocative challenge, made not of words but of life itself.

We go to Como, the city that Sister Clare would call "City of Sacrifice". It was a warm evening of Spring, 1886. A calm evening enveloped with the red light of sunset. On the lake is seen a little boat. Its passengers are six persons: two Sisters, four orphans and their luggage. The boatman attempts to arrange the load: there are not many packages, only a table lacking one leg, and a chair without straw. It seems that there was also a little goat, a package of rags and . . . in the heart an immense capacity for love. The group is really picturesque, worthy of the pen of the great Manzoni, because it is "the Lake of Como" of which we are treating.

From the heights of Lario in fact, to reach Como, we had to coast the lake where Manzoni had built his romance of love and faith. He immersed himself in this smiling and enchanting place of Lombardy, in this land

imbued with religion and talent, where the rhythm of life is dynamic and profound, where things done with perspiration and perseverance still have value, which we agree to recognize as a land of Saints.

In our little boat, there was not noisy shouting, but a subdued sound of prayer that created fascination and mystery. "Most Holy Providence of God, provide for us." The rhythm was fused with the rippling of the waves, as slow background music.

It was a faint departure apparently symbolic but with great confidence in the Providence of God who never abandons His creatures.

Sister Clare was only 28 years old, but she was already accustomed to sacrifice and detachment. The Founder, Don Guanella, really chose her as the guide of the "Little House"; she knew how to make herself loved, she succeeded in being compassionate to all and she possessed the charism of trust and spontaneity: all are qualities that characterized her as the most suitable to lead.

Although her superiors thought her capable, she did not think so. She did not deem herself capable of supporting the burden of the House; she considered herself unworthy.

Then her thoughts went beyond herself; she no longer belonged to herself, her life was given to Him forever. But how much that "yes" cost her. Nevertheless, she accepted as her own the responsibility, with docility and submission to the spiritual father of her soul and the Founder of the new Work.

That evening the Guanellian Institute laid the first stone on which other stones would be added to raise the living edifice of charity.

Strength in Weakness

Our Holy Father, John Paul II in his encyclical "The Dignity of Woman", no.31, declared, "The Church thanks you for all the manifestations of feminine 'talent' which has appeared in the course of history, in the midst of all peoples and nations . . . he thanks you for the fruits of feminine sanctity . . ."

Every life, even the most humble and weakest, is always a gift.

Sister Clare, in the frailty of her flesh, afflicted by the mystery of suffering with mystical trials, makes spring forth from the depth of her soul strength that attracts the attention of those who lived beside her.

Father Guanella, who profoundly knew her spirit, exclaims: "This woman who has the appearance of a lamb, has the strength of a lion!" In her defense, this statement presents a true image of the personality of this young Sister.

Not only what appears but what she is, is of value! What life hides in the folds of the human soul. They are the values of the spirit that characterize the person.

On her part Sister Clare renders visible in herself the action of grace and the little "seed", fallen on that "clod of earth", which according to the Gospel, loses life to

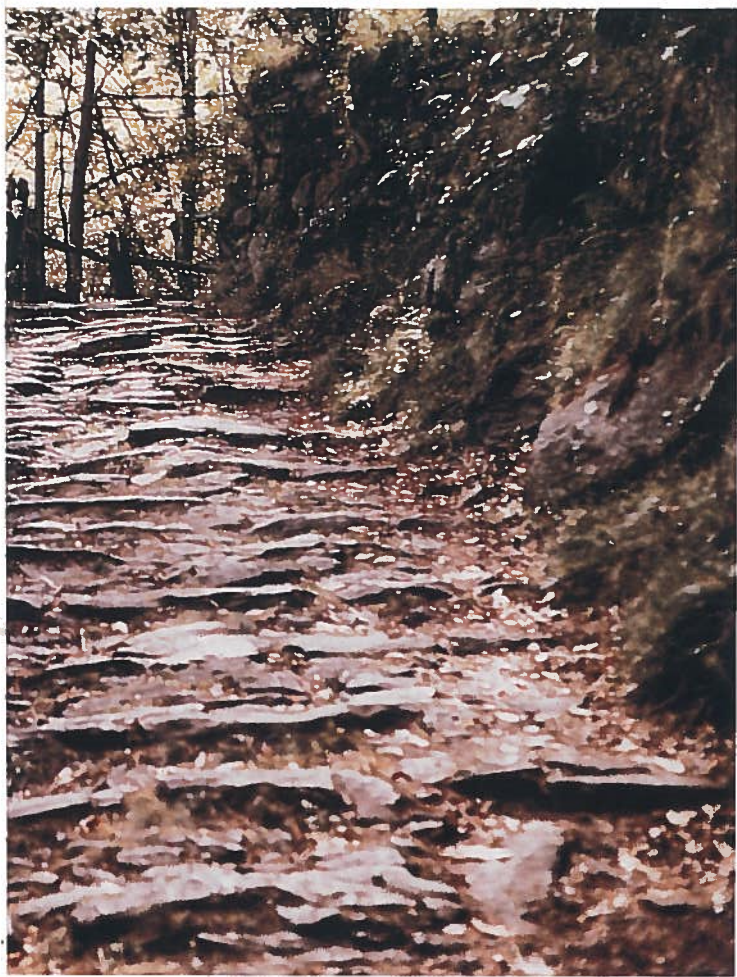
find it again, more fruitful than ever!

This "loss" and this suffering are for Sister Clare, "a source of peace", because it filters everything through the will of God which she accepts without reserve, because He is the "Provident Father" for His children. Sister Clare sacrifices herself and pledges herself to advance on the way of sanctity, so as to desire to be transformed into a "Living Host". Yes, she is ready to give her life for the development of the Institute that she sees as the event of Providence for the world of the poorest, through the concrete and daily actions of charity.

The Ascent

It is Autumn of 1886. On the dark horizon are the omen of approaching storms.





Como was revealing itself as "the City of Sacrifice". In six months much has passed from that evening in Spring. Sister Clare begins the path of her ascent.

The extreme poverty in which the Sisters found themselves contributed much to the situation. Sister Clare as Directress of the House, must make due with the means at her disposal coupled with the usual difficulties of all new beginnings.

To this there was added her delicate health which, because of the cold and hunger, was seriously compromised.

At the same time, she was aware with growing clearness, that the Work willed by Providence not withstanding everything, was prospering and expanding.

The heart of young Clare was held tight in the grip of physical suffering and still more of spiritual suffering.

She had no fear of her illness, and not withstanding the weakness of her body, she did not let herself be taken up by it. Her interior strength carried her beyond this point, and she remained solidly in contemplation of her Lord, who died to give life to men and women of every time and every age. There was the disposition to place herself always on the journey to obey God, her guide in the crucible of trial and the apparent failure that purified her soul.

The Sisters gathered around her in fear and were concerned, but Sister Clare extended herself toward "the others". Winter would be rigid, there were few blankets, and she deprived herself of the one she had

in order to cover the poor infirmed body of a resident. The orphans increased, the places were few. Sister Clare gave up her room and set herself up in the attic.

Thus she expressed the "love and suffering" which characterized her day - her giving to Christ and to her brothers and sisters.

It is also the richness of the femininity of Sister Clare, who exalted by grace, found the highest expression in the paradoxical dialectic of "dying to live."

The Last Transfer

The medical diagnosis arrived indicating tuberculosis in the advanced stage - an irreversible condition. The Founder was summoned at once. He arrived quickly at Como, and noting the gravity of the situation, with the approval of the doctor decided to return Sister Clare to Pianello with the hope that she would recuperate in her native air. But this thought was to be an illusion.

The plan was that Sister Clare would occupy the room near the parish house, to make it possible for her to receive the Eucharist often - this she greatly desired.

Once again, young Clare gathered her few belongings, gathered her frail strength and resigned herself for the hard obedience. She was convinced more than ever that the cross is the "preferential course" to reach Paradise with the greatest speed.

Father Aloysius arranged that her sister Marcellina and a nurse, Sister Agnes Morelli, would care for her.

Sister Marcellina, who had always remained in Pianello as the one responsible for the Institute, ran to her sick sister and set about assisting her with the love she always had.

They were exceptional moments for the two sisters who possessed a union beyond the fraternal - a "mystical" one. Both had the knowledge that a supernatural strength was passing into their souls and they felt united beyond the bonds of blood.

Light On the Candelabra

Sister Clare's room became the room of Christ Crucified and the Sorrowful Mother. They were the "two loves" that Clare contemplated in her intimate suffering. She realized her limit and her anguish; she felt consumed by the physical and spiritual passion. It may be that on the cross there is completed a history of love and that this history asks to be prolonged in the history of humanity, in their history.

Sister Clare was more than ever in the attitude of contemplating-praying-suffering; three words that always accompanied her on her earthly journey.

From her little room she heard the sound of the bell that signaled the moment of Elevation: she concentrated on it. She adored: she wept. She associated herself with the Sacrifice of Christ: she celebrated the liturgy of suffering and love.

Sister Clare was aware of her suffering as she lived

with the practicality of her consecration, so that it might become a mystery of grace. She was rich in interior beauty, and this reverberated also to the exterior and was communicated to those who surrounded her. In fact, it was as if she had within her a fire that burned and by consuming her produced light: "Thus may your light shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in Heaven." (cf. Matt 5:16)

She who lived beside her in those dramatic months affirms: "Her profound piety was reflected in her eyes, shining with fever; she did not let escape from her one complaint . . . She felt uneasiness in seeing herself the center of attention."

The thought of her misery and her human weakness made her deem herself unworthy of the privileges and concern that the Sisters had for her. The remembrance of her sins increased her suffering.

The saints always feel themselves sinners.

We know that Father Guanella, as the spiritual guide of Sister Clare, could affirm that she had never stained her soul with the least fault. But for her even the smallest failing was a reason for anguish and profound spiritual suffering.

If the Seed Does Not Die . . .

Father Aloysius Guanella, preoccupied because of the deterioration of her condition invited the community





to offer prayers for her cure. The Founder expected to be heard by the Lord.

Sister Clare was not only the teacher of novices and postulants, she was also the educator of orphans and the assistant of the aging; she was above all the point of reference, the example to follow, the model to imitate.

"It is not possible to lose her, Lord!" He prayed that she would remain. There was so much need of her presence. They turned to the Sorrowful Virgin, to whom Sister Clare was devoted and whom she had learned to love in the Academy at Gravedona by the unforgettable Canossian Sisters.

But the plans of Providence were otherwise. It is not given to us to control them. To us it is only granted to accept them. Maybe from those plans would arise a masterpiece that only God knew of.

The illness that had undermined her was about to take her from this earth. Clare renewed the offering of her youth so that the Work of Providence in favor of the poor might expand and produce good fruit.

As a prophetic vision, to the faithful nurse Sister Agnes Morelli, she said: "You will see that the House of Como will grow beyond every imagining and hope, and there will arise from it, as the plant of evangelical seed, many other 'houses.'"

A living stone, a cornerstone of the Guanellian Work, Sister Clare let herself be involved by that ideal of charity even to the end.

Still immersed in the contemplative dimension which was to her liking, she did not take her attention away from the precarious and difficult situations of the moment, still taking upon herself the problems and the needs of the House.

I Will Not See the Roses Bloom

Meanwhile, Winter came with all its rigor and the first significant signs of the illness getting worse would take place during these months. With greater frequency her breath became labored, her voice grew faint, and her strength declined, to the point where she would say to the people around her: "Soon I will go. I will not see the roses bloom, I will not last until Spring." Sister Clare intensified her living of the passion and the cross and

turned her glance to the crucifix and supplicated Him as in an ecstasy of love, to renew in her the most bitter agonies: "I desire them, I want them, I accept them."

Where did this strength come from?

She derived it from that same Christ whom she loved and received every day as Food and for whom she supported serenely the drought of thirst and the burning fever, so as not to break her fast from midnight on, according to the custom of the time.

The Last Hours

The illness now reached its last stage. In the town word spread that Sister Clare was dying. Everyone wanted to see her, to greet her. For the people of Pianello she was already a Saint.

A group of girls entered Sister's room. Clare gave them her smile, urging them to be persevering in good, then nodded for them to leave. Sister Clare knew well the nature of her illness and feared contagion. She always favored the good of others, forgetful of herself even to the end.

The young girls did not succeed in holding back their tears. They all knew that this young Sister had been consumed for love of the poor, of those rejected, of those abandoned, of all those who had asked for help at the "Little House of Providence".

In Sister Clare they had always found acceptance, attention, and true love. The Sisters, the orphans, the

aging residents feared to lose a mother, a sister, and a friend.

Sister Clare had animated their celebrations, brought joy to them, created peace in their hearts, and made their days less bitter.

They prayed incessantly, they did not resign themselves to the thought of losing her.

From hour to hour Clare's health failed. The young Guanellian Sister, as the first mature fruit to reach her goal, was about to touch the frontier of Heaven.

It was the dawn of Spring 1887. Nature was awakening, the bushes blossomed, the meadows were mantled with color, life continued its natural rhythm. Around the bed of Sister Clare there was the Founder, Father Aloysius Guanella, her beloved sister Marcellina and Sister Agnes Morelli, the diligent and concerned nurse. The other Sisters and residents were united in chapel before Jesus in the Eucharist, in prayer and silence.

Sister Clare, although at the peak of her suffering, continued to communicate love; her face was pale and tired, but her eyes were luminous and expressive and she spoke of what she had already contemplated.

"Paradise . . . Paradise" she repeated very softly. Her Spouse did not delay to come. The prudent virgin was ready with her lamp burning. Love immersed her in its immense and infinite Light. It was 6:00 p.m. on April 20, 1887. Sister Clare was only 29 years old.

Beyond the Silence of Death

News of the death of Sister Clare Bosatta rapidly reached every corner of the town. The people of Pianello were as if taken by surprise.

She, their friend, had lived a hidden life, but they did not ignore the fact that she had lived a life consecrated to Christ, a young life offered for the abandoned and lowly part of humanity.

She had fulfilled herself by giving herself. She made her own the program of the Founder Aloysius Guanella, and she lived "praying and suffering" without making noise, without publishing the good she did, because she knew the one who kept as done to Himself, all that she did for humanity.

The last farewell was simple and at the same time solemn. The participation was great, the poor were very visible. Marcellina wept over her death, feeling the loss of not only a sister, but a wise collaborator and a secure guide for the beginning Work. The Sisters with whom Clare had shared anxieties and hopes were also near her.

In the heart of each one there was the certainty that Sister Clare was watching over her Institute and that the message left by her would go beyond the silence of death.



She Lives in the Glory of God

The fame of the sanctity of Sister Clare Bosatta soon spread, first of all in the whole town and then beyond the confines of Lario.

The Saints are ignored in life and seldom understood. Their way of life keeps them apart from what is considered "normal". They die unexpectedly and arouse general attention. They accomplish great marvels that exceed the laws of nature and arouse amazement and awe.

As sanctity is essentially Love, God makes this Love burst forth from the heart of the Saints and reveal itself in graces and miracles.

The seed must fall and die to bear fruit. It is the Educational Process of God.

Sister Clare was therefore invoked. Some young women of Pianello had recourse to her. They wanted to imitate her and asked for the courage of detachment. Sister Clare accepted their prayers and heard their desires. These young people became part of that beginning Congregation which is dedicated to the poorest, also becoming the pioneers of charity.

Others asked for protection and comfort. They asked for cures from illness declared incurable. Sister Lena Casartelli, a young Guanellian Sister, asked Sister Clare for the cure of her illness.

Sister Lena was in fact ill with intestinal tuberculosis, with serious complications and continual high fever.

Having been cared for in a sanitarium, after intensive care, the doctors declared her incurable.

Superiors and the parents of Sister Lena were made aware of the serious condition. But the sick Sister did not give up. She had in her heart the certainty that Sister Clare would cure her. She prayed and prayed with great faith. To her own prayers were united the prayers of the Community.

It was late at night. The doctors and nurses were sure that Sister Lena would die and not reach the dawn of day. The therapists also were certain. Sister Lena, who had not slept for several nights, appeared drowsy. She felt someone touch her lightly. She thought it was the nurse and opened her eyes. Beside her bed stood Sister Clare, smiling. She said to her: "You are cured, you can get up. Thank Our Lady." She disappeared silently.

Words cannot describe this extraordinary event!

The "dying" Sister Lena leaped out of bed, called the nurse and told her that she was cured and that it had been Sister Clare. The nurse sought to calm her. She thought she was in delirium, but Sister Lena asked to eat. She had not touched food for several days.

Words cannot describe the amazement of the doctors and all the hospital personnel. The sick crowded into the room of the miraculously cured Sister Lena.

They cried with great emotion. Science stated that it was an instantaneous, complete cure, unexplainable on a medical level.

The Church ratified the miracle obtained through the intercession of Sister Clare, with legal power and glorified her by proclaiming her "Blessed".

The Congregation of the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence, founded by Blessed Aloysius Guanella, lives this hour with a heart full of happiness and gratitude to God and expresses to His Holiness John Paul II its immense gratitude for having glorified this small but mighty Sister. Sister Clare, first blossom of the great tree of the Guanellian Institute, continues from Heaven in her mission of charity. Many others, young and some not so young, but with much faith and love in their heart, continue to radiate the Charity of Christ in the world by serving the least of His brothers and sisters.

PRAYER TO OBTAIN GRACES
through the intercession of
Blessed Clare Bosatta.

O Jesus, Savior of the lowly, who made
BLESSED CLARE BOSATTA shine
through the spirit of sacrifice, by
rendering her an untiring apostle of
Your Gospel among the poor, teach us
her total abandonment in Divine
Providence, her love for prayer, her
patience in suffering, and her spirit
of dedication to the most needy.

Grant us, through her
intercession, the grace. . . .
that we ask you for trustingly.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen!

Our Father . . . Hail
Mary . . . Glory Be . . .

Blessed Clare, intercede for us!

(With apostolic approval)

For graces received and information on Blessed Clare
write to:

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