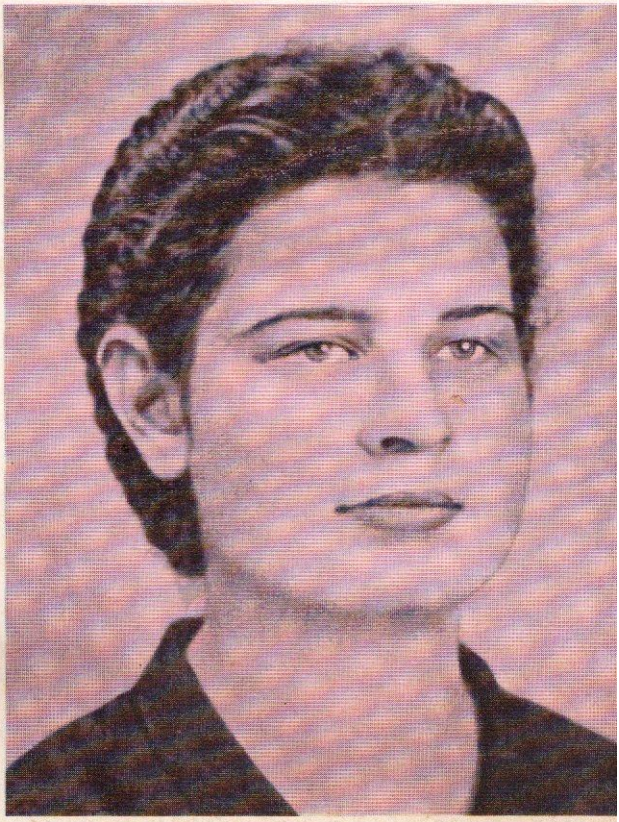
PIERINA MOROSINI

ATHOS CARRARA



COLLANA EROI

38

ELLE DI CI
TORINO-LEUMANN

The Living Houses

To travel through Italy on foot, region by region, town by town: I dreamed of it all my life. I had to limit myself to my own region, with the help of my little car. For the other regions I had to resort to the train, which in any case I always preferred, because it does not isolate you as a car does, and on certain branch and local railway lines people quickly become friends: at once, we are like a family.

Which is the most beautiful region? They are all beautiful; one need only know how to discover their beauty. When someone tells me that he has been to Paris, London, Istanbul, New Delhi, but knows little more of Italy than its principal cities, it saddens me, because this is not merely a question of loving one's own land, but of good taste and balance. People come from all over the world to be enchanted by our beauties, and not only our artistic ones, while those who have them at home ignore them.

For my part, I hope that from Paradise - where we must all hope to arrive - I shall obtain permission now and then to return unseen and get to know my Italy better than through hurried television sequences.

Meanwhile, let us stop together in the province of Bergamo, so beautiful and varied, with its people who waste little time in chatter and do everything seriously.

We are in the Seriana Valley, where the Serio River makes its way through the narrow, striking valley before running more freely to cast itself into the arms of the Adda.

To its left, thirteen kilometres from Bergamo, rises Mount Misma, clothed in the deep green of chestnut trees and reaching the respectable height of 1,160 metres.

At its foot lies the industrious town of Albino, and on the slope the hamlet of Fiobbio, also inhabited by people who do not sit with idle hands. From Fiobbio, paths climb among the chestnut trees to reach the scattered farmhouses.

Along one of these paths we come to Cedrina Alta, an entirely pink house full of life. Rocco and Sara Morosini live there, and it is a living house because there are fifteen children inside. They are not all Morosinis... Only nine are their own children - as though that were few - but for Mamma Sara it must indeed have seemed too few, since during the day she also acted as mother to six other children from Fiobbio. Their fathers and mothers worked and entrusted them to her, because at that time Fiobbio had neither nurseries nor kindergartens.

For Mamma Sara this brought in a small income to add to that of her husband, a man rich in goodwill but less rich in health, who was forced to work as a night watchman because he could not withstand heavy labour.

After looking at the mother, the eyes of anyone entering the house turn to the eldest daughter, Pierina. She draws the gaze with her bright dark eyes and enchanting round face, while her gentleness reveals an intelligence and strength of will that are not often found.

Pierina is a second little mother to her brothers, sisters, and the other children. They crowd around her and play every kind of trick on her, yet she never loses patience and never stops

smiling, even when she is tired. It is her mother who reproaches her for being so yielding:

"Can't you see they toss you about like a rag in a puppy's mouth?"

Emerging from among all those heads, she answers:

"They keep me a little busy; they are having fun" - and she smiles.

And when she wants to calm them, she knows how.

She has already completed primary school with top marks and wants to become a teacher - not in Fiobbio or Albino, however, but far away. She wants to become a missionary teacher.

For the time being she makes do with those little rascals. She gathers them together and tells them a beautiful story about the saints, and there they remain, open-mouthed and finally silent.

The Looms

Pierina had been born on 7 January 1931 and was now twelve years old. Mamma Sara taught her children to pray before they learned to speak, and she was not displeased that her eldest daughter wished to become a teacher and then a missionary nun.

But she considered all those mouths which, even on bread and polenta more often than on anything to go with them, she could not always feed as she wished. She placed her hopes in her eldest daughter, whom she saw growing sturdy and willing, and

Pierina had to accept the lot of eldest children in large, poor families.

In such families, the eldest child cannot take the path of education, which means expense, but must choose work, which means earnings, so as later to help the others study if they wish. Indeed, her brother Santo, two years younger than she, became a teacher.

Her mother spoke plainly to Pierina so that she would harbour no illusions:

"We are poor; you can see that yourself. For the present, we cannot speak of study for you, but of work."

Pierina was already firm in her intentions, but she was not stubborn. She preferred obedience - and not merely obedience to her mother, for she had already promised herself to Jesus and wished to obey Jesus. So she answered simply:

"As the Lord wills."

While waiting until she was fifteen, the age for entering the factory, Mamma Sara sent her to Albino to learn a trade much sought after at the time: dressmaking.

A year later, at thirteen, her mother testified that Pierina was already making the clothing needed by the whole family. By fifteen she was a fully trained dressmaker, but the family needed a regular wage, so Pierina had to move from the small dressmaker's shop to what was, for her, the great Honegger cotton mill in Albino: from needle and thread to twelve looms in frantic motion, which she had to tend while remaining on her feet throughout the working day so that they would not jam. Yet

Pierina showed no sign of feeling lost. Whoever does everything with love - and moreover for love of family and of Jesus - does not lose heart. The leap from the little chair in the sewing room to the kilometres walked each day between one loom and another did not trouble her.

Nor was she intimidated by meeting new people, not always easy to deal with as can happen in a factory, though she had been accustomed to the solitude of the mountain.

Quiet by nature because she was thoughtful, she worked in silence without being unfriendly, and her fellow workers soon grew fond of her, while her supervisors came to esteem her.

She brought her pay packet home intact, keeping nothing for herself - though not always. Sometimes she made it lighter in order to buy lengths of cloth available at a good price in the factory. She took them home and herself made sheets, pillowcases, and towels for the family: she had learned a skill and had no intention of setting it aside.

The Lit Lantern

At the Honegger cotton mill, as in most factories, the workers followed two shifts: the first ran from six in the morning until two in the afternoon, and the second from two until ten at night. They exchanged shifts each week.

When she was on the first shift, Pierina did not rise at five like her fellow workers; she rose an hour earlier, at four.

On the day of her First Communion, at the age of seven, she had received from Jesus the invitation to that encounter as often as

possible, until it became daily; whoever receives the grace to reach that point can no longer do without it.

And so Pierina, at an age when bed is especially attractive in the morning, asked her mother to wake her at that hour so that, before entering the factory, she would have time to go to church and receive Communion.

When someone remarked that this was unreasonable, she answered with a smile and great conviction:

"I cannot spend a day without Jesus, who is my strength."

That holy mother accompanied her with a lit lantern along the path that, by a shortcut, led directly to the road to Albino without passing through Fiobbio; together they said their morning prayers.

Then Pierina walked alone for two kilometres along the Serio to Albino. She waited in front of the church for it to open and had time to receive Jesus - though not always to attend Mass - and still be punctual at the factory entrance at six.

At nine the looms stopped for half an hour so that the workers could have breakfast. Pierina sat on a little bench and ate her mountain girl's breakfast: bread and cheese, a small bottle of milk, and an apple. Sometimes she went without the apple so that she could take it home to her brothers and sisters.

Before three she was already home, and after a quick meal she immediately resumed the household tasks, with that expression of joy printed on her face which never faded.

But her mother feared for her and urged her:

"Oh, daughter, you will make yourself ill this way. Rest a little."

Pierina always had an answer ready:

"You think I am tired, but I am not." Or:

"Did you not teach me to pray? Work is prayer."

At another time, seriously:

"Time is worth more than gold; we cannot waste it."

And her mother, defeated and convinced, left her in peace.

During the week of the second shift, after her mother had come to meet her on the path with the lantern, and after supper and the chores, though she went to bed late at night she did not take advantage of it to rise when the sun was high. She still got up early to go with her mother every morning to Mass in Fiobbio, sometimes barefoot as country people did to save their clogs, holding hands, praying, and singing.

Today Is a Feast Day

Sunday was not invented by man, for he would not have been capable of imagining a day different from all the others, even though he liked it so much that he sought to prolong it by making it begin on Saturday.

Sunday is a gift from God. It is God who said to man:

"For six days you have worked, laboured, and grown tired; come and rest and be refreshed beside me. For six days you have provided for your body; today provide for your spirit, for your soul. Renew yourself, rejoice, regain your strength."

Indeed, the Italian name for Sunday, *domenica*, comes from Latin and means "the Lord's day," and among all peoples, even pagan and primitive peoples, it has a religious meaning.

This is why the Church awaits us at Mass on Sunday: nowhere are we closer to God than at Mass, where the Sacrifice and Resurrection of Jesus are celebrated and renewed for us. Thus every Sunday renews Easter, and at the Consecration renews the institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper. At every Mass it is Jesus who returns to offer himself in sacrifice and to give us his own Body as a gift, becoming the food of the soul and restoring its strength.

When we leave Mass nourished by the Eucharist, we feel truly renewed and full of joy. Then each person celebrates according to taste and means, because Sunday is also the feast of the family. Outings to the countryside together are beautiful, even gathered around a cloth spread on the grass instead of a table in a fashionable restaurant.

Those who live in the country need no such outings and celebrate around the table at home. On Sunday the tablecloth is laid, even where it is not used on other days, and people eat soup and sometimes meat, which have no place on weekdays, as in a popular chant that began: "Today is a feast, we eat soup..." This is what happened in Pierina's home after everyone had attended Mass in Fiobbio. Pierina returned there in the afternoon to spend the feast in the best possible way.

She went to visit the sick and the elderly, bringing packets of sugar she had managed to collect during the week, sometimes by taking it from her own share. She went to rejoice in giving joy,

and she collected clothing to wash, iron, and mend, climbing back toward her home laden with those poor garments.

Nor was this her only reason for going down to the village. The girls of Catholic Action, of which she had become a leader, waited for her joyfully; after listening to her words, they helped her distribute the Catholic press.

One of the women she assisted said:

"She did not seem to me a girl like all the others; she was my angel, who came to visit me on Sundays."

And some of those girls, now grown:

"How many of us owe our salvation and our joy in living to her example, her teaching, and her love."

Crumpled Booklet

Pierina, who was orderly in everything, owned only one dog-eared booklet: she had worn it out by reading it. She never tired of it. It was the life of Maria Goretti, who died a martyr at Nettuno at the age of twelve because she refused to yield to the desires of a young man whom her farming family had welcomed into their home.

Pierina thought at length about Maria Goretti and wished to resemble her. She asked Jesus for the strength to die rather than commit a sin - not only for love of virginity, but for love of him, so as not to betray him or cause him sorrow.

Perhaps there was a presentiment; perhaps there was a desire to offer her life in a total and final offering.

Pierina was sixteen when the Women's Youth section of Catholic Action in Bergamo received news that Pope Pius XII would beatify Maria Goretti on the coming 17 April 1947. The girls met, discussed, and made arrangements: they were organising a pilgrimage to Rome.

Only Pierina, who loved Maria Goretti so dearly, seemed absent from it, as though unconvinced and without joy.

Pierina was not one to weep in public, and in any case no one had ever seen her cry, not even at home. Yet tears welled up in her heart: who would give her the money to join the pilgrimage?

Only Mamma Sara perceived those tears. Knowing she could not manage by herself, she asked Our Lady, who was one of the family in the Morosini household. That evening, as they prayed the Rosary together as they did every evening, Sara, from one mother to another Mother, repeated her request to Our Lady to make their daughter happy.

By the end of the Rosary, Mamma Sara had already received her instructions.

She set to work, and in two or three days managed to borrow the necessary money and receive as a gift a light-coloured dress to replace the dark one Pierina wore, as well as a pair of sandals so that she would not go to Rome in clogs.

Thus she could tell her daughter, with the spareness of words typical of mountain people:

"You will go to Rome."

It was the journey she desired above all - Maria Goretti, Rome, the Pope, the tombs of the Apostles, the basilicas - and it proved to be the longest journey of her brief life.

A venerable priest testified to her state of mind in those days:

"One day I met Pierina. We usually did no more than greet one another. That day she indicated that she wished to speak to me. 'Do you know,' she said, 'that I am going to Rome for Goretti's beatification?' I was struck by the emphasis with which she expressed her joy, which clearly could not be contained. I met her again after her return from Rome, burning with enthusiasm. She did not speak to me about the Pope or the solemn rites, but only about the little martyr of purity. Her radiant figure in the glory of the altar remained engraved in Pierina's mind and heart."

Rome

The girls left Bergamo two days before the beatification and remained in Rome for four days. The programme also included a papal audience.

Pierina was the youngest and looked like a child. On the train, a lady travelling with them called her the little angel of the group because of her angelic smile.

The solemn proclamation in St Peter's of Maria Goretti's heroism transported Pierina to heaven. She broke her customary silence and said to that lady, a friend of her mother's:

"I would like to resemble Maria Goretti; I would like to be like her."

She stayed with the other girls at the Sisters of Charity in Via Pompeo Magno. We all know how being together gives rise to merriment, with jokes that often come at the expense of the simplest and kindest. Pierina endured them without losing her smile, taking them as signs of affection, until a priest, struck by her patience, warned the girls not to make fun of her but to admire her.

Maria Goretti's mother was present at the papal audience. Pierina took her eyes from the hieratic figure of Pius XII and turned them toward the simplicity of that peasant mother, so fortunate in Pierina's eyes, and unexpectedly said aloud, certainly without realising it:

"Oh, Mamma Goretti! What joy to die as Goretti did!"

During visits to the basilicas she admired their solemn beauty, then withdrew into prayer; she "prayed like an angel and seemed to be in ecstasy," the same lady testified.

One evening she arrived alone at the convent after the others. Absorbed in prayer in a church, she had not noticed that the others had left, nor had the girls noticed her absence. They asked why she was late, and she answered with a smile.

Souvenirs: who, visiting any place for the first time, does not seek them out and buy them? In the evening, the girls from Bergamo showed one another their purchases in the dormitory. They asked Pierina to show hers, and she answered simply:

"I have little money."

She merely showed them a packet of small pictures of Goretti to distribute to the girls in Fiobbio. They insisted:

"And for yourself?"

She replied:

"I keep my memories here in my heart."

To impress the journey to Rome more deeply on her memory, she kept a diary in a notebook. Yet she continued to think of a far longer journey, toward the missions, which she never lost hope of joining.

She confided this in Bergamo to an aunt who was a nun, adding:

"Even if I were to die a martyr on the first day after my arrival, I would still go."

Always that fixed thought, that living desire to die a martyr for love of Jesus.

Recently, a priest visiting Maria Goretti's house in Nettuno touched the little frame in which Goretti's hair is kept, and from behind it fell a picture of Pierina bearing the words: "Pierina - Maria Goretti, form a beautiful circle of pure souls among us young people of today! Laura of Rome."

The Sack on Her Shoulders

In the seminary of Bergamo, as in many seminaries, there is a Vocations Association: one might call it the support service of the priesthood, providing the indispensable services so that the front line, formed by the seminarians, may be well supplied with young men and resources. In Bergamo this association is called the San Gregorio Barbarigo Association, after the holy bishop of Bergamo who, in the seventeenth century, when elected

cardinal, spoke ill of himself to all the other cardinals so that he would not be elected pope, toward which his reputation for holiness and wisdom seemed to be leading him.

In Fiobbio the Association relied on five or six members of the Women's Youth section and reaped an abundant harvest from them. Led by Pierina, the girls went from house to house collecting the poor person's offering, always of great value even when made up of small coins, as well as food - so many chestnuts! - and speaking of the seminarians as the hope of the world.

Pierina was happy. Jesus did not want her in the seminary, because he had made her a woman; he did not want her to be a nun, at least not immediately, because he had caused her to be born poor; he did not want her to be a missionary, because he had caused her to be born into a family that was already a mission. And so she knocked at doors as the sister of all priests, the nun of all convents, and the missionary of all missions.

At the factory she worked and prayed for priests, nuns, and missionaries; in the Barbarigo Association this took a more direct form. With the collection sack on her shoulders and the coins jingling in her pocket, Pierina succeeded in passing her joy on to the other girls.

Today it is the Opera Barbarigo of Bergamo (Via Ghislanzoni 38) that spreads knowledge of her throughout the world, through publications translated abroad and booklets prepared by the Friends of Pierina.

It seemed that, reserved as she was, Pierina had few friends. Instead it turned out that many loved her - everyone who knew her - and their number has multiplied.

Happy Days

Without practice one learns nothing: neither a science, an art, a trade, a sport - nothing at all. We remain like uncultivated ground, at the mercy of weeds.

You will find people who tell you that study is useless and effort serves no purpose. Send them to the devil, who is their adviser; and if you do not wish to send anyone to the devil, as it is better not to do so, then do not listen to them. If you observe them carefully, you will see that they are people of little merit who seek consolation by diminishing the merit of others.

But exercise of body and mind is not enough. We also need exercise of the heart and soul if we wish to grow into complete and balanced human beings - and when we say men, we also mean women.

Exercise of the heart requires at least one good deed each day. A child or young person who acquires this happy habit will keep it throughout life and feel enriched by it.

But the most important exercise remains that of the spirit, of the soul: the exercise that unites us with God, and therefore prayer.

Prayer may also be brief, provided it is undistracted, so that it truly nourishes us.

A quick example is the Our Father, the prayer taught by Jesus. Everything is in it, yet we never finish exploring it. Let us take

one verse: "Thy kingdom come." Come where? On earth, of course, as it is already in heaven. Come how? Through our personal commitment: first within ourselves, desiring it and striving to live it; then around us, through generous and joyful conduct.

There are also books that help us discover the depths of our soul, and spiritual retreats lasting one or more days.

Pierina devoted one day each month to a spiritual retreat in her room, spending the day in silence and prayer. Even that was not enough for her: she went to spend her holidays on retreat in a convent, which for her was her seaside, her mountains, her tourism, and more still, her earthly paradise. These were her happiest days.

A priest described her in these words:

"What can one say of Pierina? She felt and saw God as a child does: God, the inspiration and guide of every action. It was not her body but her soul that sang. Her soul flew in a hymn of glory to God, and the tired, cold, hungry body had to follow obediently. Hers was the soul of one who had never known the smallest deliberate fault."

A Free Young Woman

At home, in the factory, in Fiobbio, Albino, and Bergamo, beginning with her mother, no one could remember an act of disobedience by Pierina. Her mother said:

"She always obeyed, even when she was dead tired."

Her factory supervisors, fellow workers, and friends all confirmed it.

She obeyed even when immersed in suffering. At Albino hospital, where she was admitted twice for surgery, everyone was amazed: no complaints, and serene obedience amid suffering.

Pierina obeyed because she was a free young woman. There are political and civil freedoms, which are very important; even today many people in many countries give their lives, while others endure torture and long imprisonment to obtain them. But personal freedom is a personal conquest and depends on us. Free is the person who can act freely because he is not a slave to selfishness, misguided ambitions, unruly passions, laziness, or an improperly formed conscience. Free is the person who is free from evil. And from true evil - moral and spiritual evil - human beings cannot free us; only God can make us free from it.

Pierina, who had God as "the inspiration and guide of every action," obeyed God in other people. Thus she obeyed eagerly and joyfully, because she obeyed love, goodness, and freedom.

A nun recalled that, when she and Pierina were sweeping the church, she deliberately tested Pierina's patience by scattering sawdust again where Pierina had already swept and then reproaching her for her carelessness. Pierina answered with a smile: "How clumsy I am!" - and began sweeping again.

A friend said: "Pierina had a special influence over the girls, who esteemed her highly and eagerly sought her company and advice. The parish priest himself made use of her help, and Pierina was always available for any activity requested of her."

The person who does whatever comes into his head - often a very stubborn head, with who knows what weeds inside mistaken for fragrant herbs - is not free. Free is the person who has learned to sweep within with the diligence Pierina brought to sweeping the church.

Conquerors and Saints

Why is it, one wonders, that in school they teach history as one long succession of wars, invasions, destructions, and empires rising upon the ruins of fallen empires, only to collapse in turn, while they do not teach - or teach far less - that civilisation is not made by wars, even if wars can become its vehicle, but by peace; not by conquerors, but by explorers, scientists, poets, and saints?

Even Manzoni, moved by the death of that "great man" on 5 May 1821, wrote a hymn to Napoleon and hoped that neither of them would die in human memory - neither Napoleon nor his ode. Yet wisely, with regard to Napoleon, he voiced a doubt: "Was it true glory?" He left the answer to posterity, which seems more inclined to say no than yes.

Napoleon possessed great gifts, and not merely as a military leader. He encouraged the rebirth of peoples and was a wise administrator, but how much blood, how many ruins, how much sorrow! To extend his rule he imprisoned two popes: Pius VI, who died of hardship in exile, and the gentle Benedictine Pius VII, who took his revenge by asking the English, who held Napoleon prisoner on Saint Helena, to treat him more humanely.

We have spoken of Napoleon in order to speak of all the great conquerors of history, down to our own day. But why does history not place the saints beside them for comparison?

On another plane, who is greater: Marco Polo, the great explorer and even missionary, but above all a merchant, or Saint Francis Xavier, who travelled as far and perhaps farther, because from Rome he reached India, from India Japan, and then died at the gateway to China - not to buy and sell merchandise, but to bring peoples the civilisation of Christ?

Forgive us if, in speaking about Pierina, we have summoned no less than Napoleon, two popes, Marco Polo, and a missionary saint to discuss a young factory worker who was not known by many and had not travelled far. Yet she is travelling and will continue to travel, and whoever wishes to speak of civilisation will have to take an interest in her too.

She is travelling through the greater universe, that of the spirit. Listen to this sentence found among her notes, taken from Saint Teresa: "Virginity is a profound silence of all the things of earth."

It is a sentence that explains why Pierina avoided useless words and preferred silence. Silence was her window thrown open upon creation and the Creator.

Virginity understood in its true meaning - not only in its physical aspect, which is important but is not everything, but as purity of heart - transports the soul into the luminous vision of God. Before it all the noises of earth, which envelop us and draw us away from this blessedness, fall silent and cease to exist.

A corrupting culture leads girls to believe that virginity is not a value, a fragrance, or an inner light, and succeeds in convincing

those poorest in spiritual values and even in intelligence. Yet virginity remains a factor of civilisation higher than other, more loudly proclaimed achievements.

Who contributes more to civilisation and enjoys life more: girls pure of heart, rich in life and joy, or girls who have lost the freshness of heart and body and seek entertainment in vain because they are restless within and already old at twenty? Poor indeed would be a civilisation that relied on those unhappy defeats rather than on the others, whose lives are a hymn to life.

But purity of heart can always be regained, and with a pure heart everything becomes pure again. He who called the pure of heart blessed is always ready to restore this blessedness.

4 April 1957

Pierina had spoken of it only to one sister:

"The brother of your friend from work keeps pursuing me, but I told him that I want to become a nun."

He was a young man who had already lost one job because it seemed too hard, but he did not appear violent by nature, and Pierina did not seem worried about his reactions.

That day she was at the factory for the first shift. Normally, unless she had errands to run, she was home punctually at about three.

Her brother Santo, then a student at teacher-training college, was alone at home studying at that hour.

When the hour passed and Pierina did not arrive, he grew uneasy and decided to go and meet her. Five hundred metres down the path, he found her lying on the ground. He thought she was resting and called her, but Pierina did not answer.

He came closer and she seemed asleep, but her face was bloody and her breathing slow and laboured. He lifted her head and his hands were smeared with blood and fragments of flesh: her skull had been crushed, and his fingers sank into it. Pierina did not respond to his calls or open her eyes.

Santo began calling for help. He covered his sister with his jacket and sent for the doctor and the parish priest. A few metres farther down the path he saw traces of blood on the stones, and not far away a hammer-shaped stone stained with blood and fragments of flesh.

Then he understood that Pierina had been attacked and, when she resisted, struck with the intention of stunning her. She must have slipped from the attacker's grasp and fallen unconscious a little higher up.

Around her lay her clogs, stockings, handbag, and Rosary beads, arranged neatly, with the scarf she had worn around her neck placed over her legs.

It was the murderer himself, identified and arrested, who tearfully reconstructed what had happened at the trial.

When Pierina saw him before her in an aggressive attitude, she tried to persuade him through religious appeals and words intended to enlighten his conscience.

She did not succeed. Then, after attempting to flee, she fell invoking the names of Jesus and Our Lady. It was the attacker who arranged her body there and placed her belongings around her in an attempt to conceal the crime.

She was taken to the hospital in Bergamo, where she remained in a coma for two days without regaining consciousness.

The surgeon who cared for her with such devotion said:

"We have a new Maria Goretti here!"

Journey Toward Life

Her brother Santo relates:

"I shall not describe what our family nest had become; not a word was spoken without being accompanied by an outburst of weeping. Mamma, Papa, and the older children tried to encourage the little ones, who in turn tried to do the same for the older ones. We wanted to seek a little relief in sleep, but sleeping was impossible. Nor was I the only one keeping watch in anguish, for from both Papa's room and my sisters' room I heard, from time to time, scarcely suppressed sobs.

"What was Pierina to us? Another mother - affectionate, thoughtful, humble, and understanding - who until that day had surrounded us with tenderness and warm affection. She had lavished her whole self upon us: the wealth of love in her youthful heart, her intelligence, her entire wage, and her time, never asking anything for herself, satisfied merely to be the strongest support of our large family. The thought of losing her, and losing her forever, made us still more anguished."

Her body was taken to the Cedrina Bassa farmhouse, where her grandmother lived and where Pierina had so often stayed to keep her company. The funeral took place the following day, Tuesday 9 April, and the *Corriere della Sera* described it in these words: "More than an expression of grief, it became a unanimous exaltation of the sacrifice of the young weaver from Fiobbio, felled by the blows of a brute who had rushed upon her to strike and shamefully violate her. Nearly all the factories of the Seriana Valley, through their workers' delegations, had sent wreaths of flowers."

From the farmhouse to the church and cemetery, along the paths, the coffin was carried by young men and her friends, preceded by twenty priests and followed, together with the family and relatives, by the mayor of Albino, the owners and managers of the Honegger cotton mill, and an immense crowd. They walked in moving silence, marked by prayer. And there were so many, many flowers.

Quiet People

Journalists went to interview her parents. Her father answered:

"I feel my Pierina closer now, as though she were here beside me. In the family she was everyone's consolation. At the hospital, before her dead body, shattered by anguish, I gave free rein to my tears. I approached the bed and kissed her, saying, 'Piera, help me!' From that moment I felt relieved; the weight of

my grief no longer oppressed me. I remember that the following morning, Sunday, as I went down to church with my wife, I felt happy, as though I wanted to sing. My Pierina had taken away the oppression of the tragedy that had struck me. And on Monday evening, when I went down to the village to await the arrival of her body from Bergamo, Pierina gave me such strength that I could almost believe she was not dead."

And her mother:

"I would always be weeping for her, and I suffer more because of the death they made her die. Before, she did everything in the house; after her death the other daughters will learn. She was such a help to me at home that once I said to her, 'What would I do if you were not here?' Pierina answered, 'Mamma, when a pope is lost, they elect another.' When I was near my Pierina, I felt happy. I counted the minutes she spent away from home; throughout her eight hours of work I thought of her continually and did not forget her for a single moment."

The journalists asked the parents:

"Had you realised that you had an exceptional daughter?"

They answered:

"Yes, but we said nothing."

Simple and quiet people themselves.

And a priest who knew Pierina said:

"I told her father that he had a saint. It was my personal opinion, which I have always held and still maintain regarding Pierina, the fruit of observing her entire life, from which clear signs of

holiness emerge. I hope that my opinion will become reality as soon as possible, and that, if it pleases the Lord, will be one of the happiest days of my life. I add that, as a priest, I learned much from her, especially from the qualities that formed her life: a life of devotion, work, humility, and reserve."

A Celebration of Young People

Cedrina Alta, Fiobbio, Albino: a house, a village, a municipality where people live, work, love, and suffer, and where love conquers suffering and hardship, as in a thousand, a hundred thousand places in this incomparable Italy of ours, places unknown to most Italians.

Then suddenly a municipality, a village, and a house leap onto the pages of the newspapers: something exceptional has happened there, bringing them to wider and lasting attention.

The little village of Fiobbio will remain known, with its small cemetery, a gravestone and the face of a smiling girl, and a path on Mount Misma interrupted by a marble cross and a memorial stone marking the two ends of the martyrdom: the place where the stone crushed a young skull and the place where she fell.

The pilgrimage continues and grows. The cemetery caretaker says:

"How many visitors come here to Pierina's tomb, alone or by coach, even from far away and from abroad."

Every day there are fresh flowers at the memorial stone on the path. Young men and women bring them in an age that says it

rejects purity, saying so with a constricted heart and an intimate, unconfessed need to find it again.

Her aged mother also continues to go there every day to place flowers. Summer and winter, in sun, rain, and frost, she goes to pray and speak with her Pierina at the place of her martyrdom.

On 7 April 1980, on the anniversary of Pierina's true and final birth, the Diocese of Bergamo opened the diocesan process in Fiobbio to collect testimony and writings and carefully study Pierina's entire life.

Fiobbio could not contain the participation and enthusiasm of the young people on a day aptly described as a splendid celebration of youth.

Several thousand young people and persons of all ages - estimated at 12,500 - came to Fiobbio from the ninety parishes of Bergamo and also from Milan, Pavia, and Cremona. Led by Bishop Giulio Oggioni, they climbed, singing and praying, to Pierina's home, where they were received by the aged Mamma Sara, now widowed, and by her brother Santo and another brother. Religious and civil authorities were also present: the prefect, representatives of the municipality of Bergamo, members of parliament, and an ambassador.

The beatification process would follow two paths: that of martyrdom and that of virtue. In Pierina there was love of purity, but also love of work, prayer, silence, family, and the Church, all within her immense love for Jesus and Our Lady.

In 1981 her body would be exhumed from the cemetery and placed in the parish church of Fiobbio. The young woman whom her first biographer, Monsignor Verzeroli, recalled during the

pilgrimage to Rome, all alone praying in a corner of the church of the people of Bergamo, would no longer be able to choose to remain alone.

The Daily Programme

Those who live from day to day without making a plan usually accomplish little. It is wise to make a small plan, at least in general outline, and resolve to carry it out.

Pierina had made what she called a "Little Daily Rule." It did not concern her duties, because obedience was enough for those; it concerned her soul. She called it little, but for some it may be all too great. Each person may take the part he thinks suitable, and it is better to do a little and remain faithful to it, then grow, than to begin enthusiastically and end up out of breath - spiritually speaking.

Here is the Little Rule:

1. I shall rise in good time, without lying abed, and while dressing modestly I shall offer my day to Jesus through the hands of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary.

2. Morning prayer, Holy Mass, and, if possible, daily Communion.

3. Meditation for at least fifteen minutes; recollection, love, and practical resolutions for the day.

4. At home I shall attend to my household duties and my work with the greatest fidelity and serenity.

5. At the striking of every hour I shall think of Jesus and Mary, with a short aspiration and a loving glance.

6. I shall perform every action in union with Mary, and in adversities I shall abandon myself like a child upon her maternal Heart, invoking her help and that of my dear Guardian Angel.

7. I shall say the Rosary, or at least one chaplet, according to my possibilities.

8. Every day I shall strive to offer the Most Blessed Virgin Mary some fragrant and hidden flower: a mortification of speech, sight, appetite, and above all of my will.

9. I shall never sit down at table without saying a short prayer, nor rise without having practised some mortification of appetite.

10. I shall strive always to smile at everyone and, with gentleness, to accept the judgement of others, especially my parents and superiors.

11. I shall take the greatest care over modesty in dress, while sitting, and while walking; with no one shall I permit myself frivolity in words or gestures.

12. Before going to bed, as circumstances permit, I shall do a little spiritual reading and write an account of my examination of conscience. Then, after saying my evening prayers, I shall fall asleep thinking of the Communion of the following day or of something good.

There followed the programme for her monthly retreat and the act of consecration to Jesus through Mary.

To Mary she entrusted her whole self, asking for the grace that her prayers, labours, and sufferings might make the apostolate of priests and missionaries holy and fruitful, especially that of those most persecuted.

As a pledge and seal of her consecration, with the approval of her confessor, she made a vow of virginity to God.

She concluded: "I shall strive to preserve peace in the family. When tiredness has overcome me, I shall always appear cheerful. I shall show the greatest respect toward Mamma: I shall obey her and shall not answer rudely. I shall take no delicacy for myself. I shall keep myself in the presence of God through spiritual communions. I shall not seek to know other people's affairs. I shall never say a word in my own praise and shall try to remain hidden from human eyes."

Her mother and everyone who knew her testified that they never caught her being unfaithful to her resolutions.

Testimony

Among the many testimonies, we reproduce the written account of a friend. Here it is: "In my life I had the happy fortune of sharing with Pierina Morosini a singular friendship, not only for reasons of work - we worked in the same Honegger factory in Albino and travelled the same road to and from home together - but also because of the particularly close ties between my family and hers. I therefore believe it appropriate to make known several incidents of which I have personal knowledge.

"I recall first, because I consider it essential, that Pierina was a soul of great prayer. Most often we made the journey while

praying, and when we, less spiritual than Pierina, expressed our tiredness, she encouraged us and added: "'I love praying so much; I would never stop.'

"On many mornings, before going to work, she went down alone at four o'clock to the parish church in Albino, four kilometres from Fiobbio, to receive Holy Communion. She travelled on foot, heedless of the cold and discomfort, and when I urged her to rest in the morning she replied: "'Without Holy Communion, the day seems empty to me!'

"Her faith in God was so firm that nothing could destroy it. The very people who had assumed spiritual responsibility for her soul, though receiving her deep gratitude, were for her merely instruments of God's goodness and nothing more.

"When our curate, a most worthy priest, was transferred, there was great discontent in the village, but Pierina calmed everyone by saying: "'Priests are all ministers of God, and to each he gives the gifts that we need. What matters is that we respond to them.' "She often spoke of Paradise, expressing her intense desire to go there soon, and urged us to take advantage of every opportunity to make it more beautiful. Prayer nourished in her an exquisite sense of charity which, through great modesty of manner, led her simply but concretely to draw near to all who suffered or needed help, anticipating their very wish.

"For seven years my mother remained bedridden and ill. Every month Pierina came to visit her, never leaving without first giving her something, although she herself was not well off, and my mother drew great comfort from her visits.

"One day, when I met Pierina, I remarked that the following day I would have nothing to prepare for my brother to eat. Opening her apron, she showed me a fine mushroom she had just picked and said: "'Take it, and with a few peas you can make a good stew.' "I conclude with a very significant incident. One Sunday afternoon Pierina invited me to her home. On one wall she had hung a picture of Saint Maria Goretti, to whom she was deeply devoted. Looking at it, she said to me: "'How dear this picture is to me, and what joy if I could meet the same end.'

"When I observed that she would then be killed, Pierina, with evident joy and a gentle smile on her lips, answered at once: 'Yes, it is true, but then there is Paradise.'

"Another incident that deserves to be remembered, revealing Pierina's profound faith and Marian devotion, occurred when I was inconsolable after my mother's death. Pierina comforted me, saying: "'You still have another mother, Our Lady, who is close to you.'"

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