



Sassello, a small town of the Ligurian inland in the province of Savona within the Acqui (Piedmont) diocese, is a life-giving blend of nature: picturesque panoramas, scenic pathways, enchanted dawns, scented evenings. In this peaceful setting, in the sixties, Maria Teresa and Ruggero Badano are waiting for God's gift: a child.

They had been waiting for eleven long years. Ruggero invokes the grace with sincere and simple faith at the Shrine of Our Lady of the Rocks in Ovada (Alessandria). On 29th October 1971 the ray of sun, destined to warm up the hearts of these two parents, finally arrives: Chiara was born and entrusted with filial faith to the Virgin Mary.

A simple little child...

Limpid and large eyes, a sweet and expressive smile, Chiara is intelligent and strong-willed. Her parents enroll her in the town's kindergarten so that, being an only child, she can socialize with the other children and not made to feel being at the center of her family's attentions.

Her mother educates her, through the reading of the Gospel, to love Jesus and the Blessed Virgin, to be generous towards the "weaker ones", to uphold truth and justice. Not at all selfish or temperamental, she is described by the teacher nuns as the "life of the beautiful and happy meetings of the kindergarten".

She would like that all the children of the world could be happy as she is: "I dream about a day when the slaves' children and their masters' children will sit together at the table of brotherhood like Jesus with his apostles".

She chooses her newest and most beautiful toys for the poor children. She collects in a small box the pocket money that she receives and she sets it aside for the little African children: she loves them in a special way and dreams of being able to help them as a medic one day.

Chiara is a normal child but with something more: she loves.

She is docile to grace and God's design for her. From reading her elementary school notebooks, one can sense the joy and amazement at discovering life: she is a happy child. On the day of her first Communion she receives as a gift the book of the Gospels.

It will be for her a “wonderful book” and “an extraordinary message”.

At nine years old she discovers the Focolare movement, founded by Chiara Lubich. She will make it her ideal, involving her parents in this journey.

Love for our neighbor...

She grows up and reveals herself to be full of gifts but she does not try to show off. She chooses Love as the goal of her life: Jesus first of all.

At fourteen she will say: “I have rediscovered the Gospel under a new light: as it is easy for me to learn the alphabet, so it must be to live the Gospel”. She is always serene and joyous.

Moved by love for the weaker ones, the outcasts, the less pleasant (if we can call this way the mentally challenged, the homeless, the drug addicts), she cares for them in a selfless and devoted manner because in them she sees the face of Jesus.

Chiara lives in full her adolescence. To please Jesus she dresses in a clean and tidy way, without being flashy or ostentatious, because “what matters is to be beautiful inside”.

One day she will say to her mum, referring to the youth fallen down the tunnel of drug addiction: “you cannot judge them: they are today’s poor”

Illness as a gift...

In the summer of nineteen-ninety-eight, during a tennis match, a shooting pain to her left shoulder forces her to drop the racket to the ground. Clinical exams and medical tests reveal the dreadful diagnosis: an osteosarcoma.

After hearing the news and once back home, she tells her mum not to ask her any questions. Twenty-five minutes pass: it is her “Gethsemane garden”; Grace triumphs: “Now you can speak, mum” and her face shines again with her usual luminous smile. She pronounced her yes to Jesus, after which she never turned back.

Months go by. Never does she show any despondency but she often repeats her offer: “If you want it, Jesus, so do I”.

Her faith in God is unwavering and she is not afraid: “God loves me immensely!”. She is all gift, oblivious to herself and willing to welcome and listen to everyone who approaches her. In particular she sends a last message to the youth: “I would like to pass on the torch as at the Olympics, because we only have one life and it’s worth living it well”.

The final meeting...

She does not ask for the miracle and she turns to the Holy Virgin writing her a note: “Heavenly Mother, you know how much I desire to be healed but if it’s not God’s will I ask you for the strength never to give up. Humbly yours, Chiara”.

By now, as she had already often declared, she is only interested in “obeying God’s will out of love: playing His game!”.

She has complete trust in him and encourages her mom to do the same: “When I’m not here anymore, just trust in God and go on!”.

In the meantime she received from Chiara Lubich the “new name” of Luce (Light): “Because in your eyes I see the light of the Holy Spirit”; and by now for everyone she is “Chiara Luce”.

Time goes by inexorably: the end approaches and she is aware of it: “Medicine has laid down its weapons; now only God can” and adds “If now they asked me whether I want to walk, I would say no because this way I am closer to Jesus”.

In her there is a great desire for Paradise, where she will be “very, very happy”, and she gets ready for her “wedding”.

She asks to be dressed with a wedding dress: white, long and simple.

She arranges the liturgy of her Mass: she chooses the readings and the hymns.

The collection will have to be destined to the poor children in Africa.

No-one will have to cry but celebrate, because Chiara is meeting Jesus. On ten past four in the morning of 7th October 1990, feast of the Virgin of the Rosary,

Chiara – after saying goodbye to her mom: “Ciao, be happy, I am” – she joins her beloved “Bridegroom”.

Two days later, hundreds and hundreds of people, especially youths,

take part in the funeral celebrated by “her” bishop.

Even among the tears, the atmosphere is a joyous one; the hymns that rise up to God express the certitude that Chiara is now within the true Light.

(Source and more information at: www.chiaralucebadano.it)