

TRAITS OF THE SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE OF ST. VINCENZA

NARRATED DURING THE CELEBRATIONS FOR HER BEATIFICATION

(from Prevedello, Storia V, ch. XXVII)

1. GEROSA IS CONSTANT IN PRAYER

In her huge house, between the movement of business and the family works, she is very soon noted for her quiet, loving, reflective nature, for her common sense in her advices and in her decisions, for her fervour in piety and her dedication to the church.

Early in the morning and after the sunset in the evening, she habitually went to the St. Giorgio Church. Here she loved to dedicate herself wholly to the Lord; here she drew strength that made her serene throughout the day, in the various and pressing works, here she learns that humility, which makes her simple in her behaviours, ready to sacrifice. This lowly disposition of self, foundation of every virtue, becomes her inseparable companion. *I am good for nothing* – often she exclaimed – *if God, even only for his mercy, grants me a little corner in heaven, if he lets me inside the Door even that is too much for me.*

(Fr Giovanni Urbani)

2. GEROSA TAKES CHARGE OF THE NEEDS OF HER TIME

Unhappy and disastrous times demanded her work already when was young; and she, fed her faith with the oil of a generous charity by coming out of “her house”.

The French revolution had spread also in Italy bringing with it scepticism, new doctrines, atheism, corruption... She understood well the seriousness of the situation and, while she prayed with tears for many moral misfortunes, she opened her hand to the needy and helped them.

She would have given even the walls of her house in charity, say the testimonies.

She had already fixed well in her heart that certainty, which she would then communicate to the sisters at the outbreak of cholera: *Jesus presents himself in various ways, now he comes to meet us under the form of the cholera stricken.*

(Fr Giovanni Urbani)

3. GEROSA MOVES AMONG THE PEOPLE DOING GOOD

She seems to be made for humble duties, for immediate solution of simple difficulties. She does not feel capable of putting her hand into vast tasks bringing glory to God, nor has she resources at the level of character and education, yet she knew to pass through the world distributing bread and sowing peace; bread and peace in the name of Christ, to lead all back to him in the ways of faith and love.

She goes, walking through the world, fixing her eyes on the will of God and God manifests himself to her in the midst of darkness. She lets herself be led him...and feels happy of it.

The reward cannot be lacking. God makes her spiritual mother and fills the earth with her daughters. (Mgr Angelo Portaluppi)

4. GEROSA WORKS FOCUSING ON THE GOOD OF THE SOULS

She is gifted with a rich inheritance of common sense and faith and summarises her intentions in brief maxims that reveal her spirit and make known how the Lord chooses the things that are not to reduce to nothing things that are. Her simplicity touches the heart. Here lies the secret of the spiritual fruitfulness of her work.

The deep sentiment of humility that makes her lower herself ever more in her eyes, inspires her a greater and real confidence in God, invests her heart with the pure flame of charity that finds a way everywhere, even amidst the social turmoil; it is the vital sap that wells up from the divine source of grace, penetrates the souls. This humility is nourished by sacrifice.

(Mgr Pietro Raggi)

In the processes, Gerosa is pointed out as “great collaborator of Redemption”; she manifested actively through hard work that charity and in her various commitments, she had no other aim than that of the salvation of souls. (Mgr Giovanni Battista Bosio)

5. GEROSA DRAWS A LIVELY AND ACTIVE FAITH FROM THE CRUCIFIX

In the Crucifix, in the Son of God who offers himself to death for the humanity Sr. Vincenza draws that spirit of lively, charitable, active faith, which upholds her throughout her life, so as to make her own the words of the Apostle: “It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me”. Fruit of this faith is that charity extends with sweet fascination to all those

who suffer: poor, sick, orphans,....These are her three great loves, her three great preferences.

Although her life passes silently and humbly on the pleasant shores of the lake Iseo, she carried out such deeds of goodness and impressed on the entire Institute a similar style of apostolate to teach the disrupted world the way of social rebuilding, the secret of its wellbeing, and the priceless treasure of peace. (Fr Giovanni Urbani)

6. GEROSA WORKS WITH HER GAZE FIXED ON THE CRUCIFIED

Simple and humble soul, she is led by hand, by the Providence among the thorny paths of Calvary: from there she looks at the sins of men and women and cries for them; from below, she looks at Christ crucified for love of sinners and falls in love with his holy sacrifice. She looks at the human miseries inflicted by the Revolution and the war on the Church and the people, and she wants to help them and wants to rectify them as much as possible so that persons might be restored, minds corrected, costumes and unhappy situations changed and souls saved. She carries out this mission between the house and the church until she is transplanted in the mystical garden conceived by Bartolomea.

She merits therefore to be placed among the well deserving of the religious, moral, civil restoration, carried out on the ruins of a past crushed by errors and hate. (Fr Alessandro Tamborini)

7. GEROSA ENTERS INTO THE PROJECT OF BARTOLOMEA

The daring design of Bartolomea demanded that she joins herself with some companion to face together the unavoidable difficulties of a foundation. Bartolomea's discerning eyes fall on Caterina. The maturity of judgment, the perfume of virtues, the expressions of charity that surround her daily working hours, but above all her deep humility are all points to force Bartolomea to recognise in Gerosa a worthy helper. Bartolomea is like the voice of God's will, to which Caterina, not without battling with herself and with her relatives, ends up yielding. She puts an end to her internal struggle with these words: *If God wants thus, let his will be done.*

As both of them are different in their gifts and in their natural attitudes, they complete each other in a marvellous way: Bartolomea represents the mind of the new Family, while Gerosa is its heart and hand.

(Mgr Giovanni Jeremich)

8. GEROSA REMAINS THE PIVOTAL STONE

After Bartolomea's death, Gerosa remaining alone with a companion, feels more than everyone the pain of that loss and assesses its consequences. She would abandon that house, where she found peace and had started the work, if God did not encourage her through the providential counsel of priests who guide her, to whom she responds with humble obedience: *They want a great work: I do not see it, do not understand it; God will do. Here I am, let them do what they want.*

On her, the pivotal stone, the building begins to rise up. The vocations increase. Young girls of distinguished families, accustomed to comforts of life, knock at that door to sacrifice themselves to Jesus Crucified in the practice of charity.

To her daughters, Gerosa indicated this vivid program: *Be guided by the right intention of pleasing God and, to please him, have a deep humility, unalterable patience, unlimited charity.* A program that she preached with the example of daily life.

(Mgr Giovanni Jeremich)

9. GEROSA LIVES HER MISSION WITH A FILIAL SURRENDER TO GOD

Besides her humility shines her confidence in God. "*The Blood of Jesus is ours* - she exclaimed-; *the Lord will not let us perish. Let us allow him to do and let us be careful not to spoil the work with our self-love.*

With a smile on her lips she faces difficulties and distress, begins new works, for those times full of obstacles, diffidence, bias. As much diffident as she was of herself, so much was she confident in the Lord with a simple, filial surrender.

At the beginning of religious life, when Bartolomea died, she says to Maddalena Giudici: *God has taken away the one who was our hope because he wants to be the author of the work, he wants that we have confidence in him and not in human person. Let us go forward with trust and allow him to do. May his most holy will be done.*

In her, humility and faith were made more beautiful by her obedience.

(Fr Giovanni Urbani)