

INTERVIEW TO SISTER GIOVANNINA (FRANCESCA CAPOZZA) A PERSONAL WITNESS AND A LITTLE FRIEND OF LUISA PICCARRETA

The interview was made in 1994, in the Convent of the Sisters of the Divine Zeal of Monza (near Milan), where Sister Giovannina lives.

Sister Giovannina has contributed a great deal, with love and with her innocent childlike spirit, in providing information and personal witnessing on the figure of Luisa, for the Cause of Beatification.

She is one of the young girls (trainees) who used to go daily to Luisa's home in order to learn how to work with the "Tombolo"...But her contact with Luisa produced in her (as in many others) infinitely greater spiritual fruits.

Note:

The following text is the English translation of a video interview from Italian. Some repetitions and technical pauses in the original flow of the interview are not reported here, for the sake of conciseness.

Legenda:

Interviewer: Father John Brown = **FJ**

Sister Giovannina = **SG**

FJ - Well. Sister Giovannina, we are happy for the opportunity you gave us to speak with you, as we've done other times, about the personality of Luisa. Luisa is very important for both of us...

SG - Yes, certainly!

FJ - ...and we can say that our vocations came from her inspiration...

SG - ...I really escaped from there...

FJ - Yes, Suor Giovannina escaped from Luisa's home. So, it is true that she is important. We would like to start, this morning, talking about Luisa, and I would like you to tell us how you met Luisa. We know that it was around 1914 or 1915, when you were 7-8 years old and you used to go to her house. Tell us a little bit about it. How did it happen?

SG - My mother wanted me to learn how to work with the "tombolo". So she said: 'Well, I'll go and ask Luisa.' She went and Luisa said: 'Yes, let her come.' So I started. But I couldn't stay on Luisa's bed to learn the first "points." So, Rosaria got a little nervous and scolded me. Luisa said to her: 'Why did you do that?' And Rosaria: 'Because she doesn't pay attention!' Luisa defended me: 'But she started only two days ago... How can you say that she is not attentive? It takes time. It took you fifteen days, so please don't scold her... And then, if her father comes and sees that she has cried, who knows what happens!' So Rosaria remained quiet. Then, when Rosaria wasn't there, Luisa told me: 'Come here. Learn.' And in three days I learned the "merletto."

FJ - So, you learned in three days!... Luisa loved you very much, didn't she?

SG - Yes, very much!

FJ - Didn't Luisa belong to your same Parish?

SG - Yes, Santa Maria Greca.

FJ - ...Where she is now buried.

SG - Yes. Once she said: 'Why are you going away?' And I: 'Luisa, I want to be a nun,...before I get old!' Luisa replied with: 'Oh, Jesus, Jesus!' Then, one day, when Father Palma thought it was the right moment... I had prepared some extra linens, for I couldn't show my Mama that I was ready to go... It was the day of the Most Holy Virgin Assumed into Heaven,...in March. I was at home and the grandmother...

FJ - Who?...Your grandmother?

SG - Yes, my grandma who loved me so much. My mother asked me why I wasn't eating... I went to my room, took a few linens, and said that I was going to eat at Luisa's place. I said, 'Arrivederci!'...and I closed the door. Around 9 o'clock at night, my father was worried not seeing me back. So he went and knocked at Luisa's door. But Luisa didn't open. My father asked where I was, and Luisa answered: 'Your daughter went to become a nun!' My father: 'And where about?' And Luisa: 'She didn't tell me!'

FJ - Hadn't you gone with Father Palma?

SG - I had already spoken with the Founder...

FJ - ...Father Annibale?

SG - Yes, yes, yes...

FJ - Can you remember when Father Annibale used to come to Luisa's home?

SG - Yes, yes, I remember.

FJ - ...and he celebrated Mass in Luisa's room...

SG - ...yes, They locked themselves in, to talk and write. He corrected the writings. If Luisa made some mistakes, he would correct them...

FJ - Did he ever spend the night at Luisa's place?

SG - No. One night it was raining and Luisa wanted him to remain. But he said he would rather go,...as soon as the rain would stop.

FJ - What did Father Annibale say when you told him that you wanted to become a nun?

SG - He turned to Luisa's crucifix and said: 'Oh Lord, she is still too young!' But I replied: 'No, no. I am "grown up"'

FJ - Sometimes Father Annibale would come to Luisa with other Priests - holy Priests! Do you remember Father Braccali, the Jesuit? *[Please note: I think that Father Gennaro Braccali is the Priest to whom Jesus speaks through Luisa about the Houses of Reunion of Priest (Vol 10), and also the Priest mentioned ("Father G") in Volume 11, who offers himself to Jesus as victim, through Luisa].*

SG - Yes, yes. He loved me very much. I would bring him coffee or water when he was talking with Luisa....

FJ - ...and did you meet Father Montemurro?

SG - Yes, yes, but he was...more serious.

FJ - Who? Father Montemurro?

SG - Yes.

FJ - Tell me what happened when he celebrated Mass in Luisa's room. Tell us that story!

SG - [*She laughs, and then uses her hands to describe Luisa's room*]... Luisa's bed was here. Here the chair... and here, the altar. Rosaria was jealous and didn't want me to be there. But Luisa said: 'Shhh! Let her alone!'

FJ - ...and what happened that time when Father Braccali was celebrating Mass?

SG - Yes, he started to levitate...

FJ - Did you see him?

SG - Yes, and I said to Luisa: 'Luisa, Father is going to fall! I'm calling Angelina! ... But Luisa made a sign... 'don't worry!'...

FJ - And then, what happened to Father Braccali?

SG - He came down by himself.. and then he continued to say Mass.. 'Dominus Vobiscum..!'

FJ - Didn't Father Annibale "give him the obedience" to come down?

SG - No, no. He remained suspended...like this...from the ground. I remember it well. But I cried, fearing that he might fall and leave us..... And Luisa said: 'Shhhhh!'

FJ - Were you scared?

SG - Yes. Then, around 11 o'clock - Mass was at 9:30 - Luisa told me: 'There's no need to be afraid. They are saints. They rise up a little bit, and then Jesus makes them come down again..!'

FJ - So, after Mass Luisa prayed...

SG - She prayed.... and she worked...

FJ - ...and she also suffered the Passion, true?...

SG - Yes, yes. At the beginning she had stigmata, but then she said: 'Lord, I have to work...and not only this... I can't...I don't want to show this to people..' So, Jesus made her content, and the following morning the visible wounds disappeared.

FJ - Did you ever touch Luisa's hands?

SG - Yes! Many times!

FJ - ...Were they sensitive?..

SG - Oh yes! Once she said: ‘Ahh Ahhh!’ And I: ‘Luisa, I haven’t done anything. I only kissed them!’

And Luisa: ‘Yes, but do it a little more gently’

FJ - What could you see through Luisa’s hands?

SG - They were illuminated!

FJ - Could you also see the stigmata...the holes in the middle?

SG - After a while the skin was fine, but one could still see the holes inside.

FJ - But, how could Luisa work at the “tombolo” with such pain. Wasn’t it hard to do that?

SG - She would give the difficult parts to me. Sometimes, she called me and ask for my help. So I left my “tombolo” and took Luisa’s “tombolo.” She continued my “merletto” for a while, which was easier... and I did her work.....

FJ - Why did Luisa work?

SG - She had lost her parents. There was Angelina, Rosaria, myself, and one other girl. Her name was Francesca, the sister of one of our nuns. It happened that her father was very ill, about to die. So one day, during Mass, Francesca came upstairs crying and said to Luisa: ‘Luisa, my daddy is dying! Please tell Jesus that I want to die in his place!’ Luisa looked at the Crucifix, and then lowered her head.... Within eight days, Francesca died..... Oh! how much I cried! We were friends..... When my mother gave me some food, I always asked for two - for me and for her - ‘cause they were very poor, and I didn’t want her to have to watch me while I was eating. And my mother put double portion, so we could eat together.

FJ - Luisa had always her Crucifix in front of her and spoke with Him. Did you see this?

SG - Yes. Once I saw His lips moving and I said to Luisa: ‘Luisa, Jesus is crying and His mouth is open!’ Luisa didn’t say anything.... and He stopped after a while.

FJ - ...And what about the Baby Jesus in the glass bell, near Luisa’s bed?

SG - He moved as well!

FJ - Didn’t you think that these things were a little strange?

SG - Yes. We could not hear but we could see the lips moving. Luisa would remain with the “fuselli” in her hands... and they talked.... Yes, they talked... Luisa trusted me very much. When she needed something, she called me and asked me: ‘Please, do this and that...’

FJ - She loved you very much...

SG - Yes, she did... My mother helped too... I said to her: ‘Mamma, Luisa’s bed sheets are dirty. I will bring them tonight, since you have to do laundry...And she said ‘Yes, bring them’...

FJ - Every night Luisa lost her senses. What happened that night when you and Francesca entered her room?

SG - Yes, we entered the room and we touched and lifted Luisa's hands....Then we were worried for we didn't know what to tell her. Francesca said: 'Don't worry, Luisa is not going to say anything.' But then Luisa: 'You,... don't take advantage of me, please.'

FJ - Tell us about your vocation. Did your parents agree?

SG - Noooo. What did they not do!

FJ - ...when Father Palma brought you to Trani?...

SG - Yes, he brought me to Trani... When my father came to pick me up, they had closed the doors,...and when he asked where I was, Angelina answered: 'She went to Trani.... but we don't know who she went with!'

FJ - So, where did you actually go?

SG - First to Trani. But when Angelina called saying that my father was looking for me, that same night, we left for Rome.... There I became a novice.....I was still very little.

FJ - Tell us about how Luisa ate.

SG - She ate whatever they gave to her... sometimes, a little "semolino"...but only a couple of little spoons, otherwise she would start to bring up everything...

FJ - Why did she vomit?

SG - ...Who knows...Maybe the Lord said: 'This is enough for you..'

FJ - When you were there, what kind of prayers did you say?

SG - The Rosary...Yes, all together... and the Hours of the Passion...'My Sorrowful Mother, I see that You are now ready for the last Sacrifice....' [*Here Sister Giovannina begins to recite the 24th Hour by Heart!*] We always prayed this, with Luisa. I used to know it by heart, now I need the book to refresh it!

FJ - How was the face and expression of Luisa?

SG - Always smiling. Even when she was persecuted... Father Annibale had brought the books of the Hours of the Passion, and someone informed the city's authorities...They came and took all the books away.

FJ - Was Luisa saddened by this?

SG - Yes, she was! Then Father Annibale brought some more of them.

FJ - Tell us about the Cimadomo sisters. They were the ones who donated the land on which the Convent was built. Did they often come to visit Luisa?

SG - Every day! Not the ones who are still alive. I mean the one who died. Their name were Giuseppina, Lina and...I can't remember the name of the other one. They were three sisters.

FJ - What did they do with Luisa, did they pray?

SG - Yes. Especially... ‘O Sorrowful Mother, I see that You are now ready for the last Sacrifice...’

[Again, she begins the 24th Hour by heart!]

FJ - How was Angelina, Luisa’s sister?

SG - Sometimes she was nervous, for she had to wash the floors and everything else...

FJ - Did she protect Luisa?

SG - Yes, she did.

FJ - And what about Rosaria?

SG - Rosaria...Rosaria was a little.... She also had to work.

FJ - What did they do with Luisa, did they serve her?

SG - Yes

FJ - What else can you remember about Luisa?

SG - All these things...for example during the Holy Week of the Passion she didn’t touch food at all.....to the extent that, in seeing Luisa, neither I wanted to eat...

FJ - If Luisa wasn’t eating, you didn’t want to eat....

SG - No, I didn’t want.

FJ - Can you remember when she died?

SG - I wasn’t there....Listen. I was at “Giardini Messina”...It was about 5 o’clock in the morning and I got up to take one of the girls to the bathroom. As I went back to sleep Luisa appeared in front of me calling me ... like this... And I cried: ‘Luisa, did you die? No, please do not leave!’ Very loud, so much so, that the little girls heard me. They asked me if it was a dream. I said ‘yes, yes, I was dreaming’ but then I cried all day. The Mother Superior didn’t let me go to Corato...You know, I had to suffer a little, because I wanted to see Luisa. But Luisa came to me. She caressed me and made me understand that she was praying for me. She was all in white....

FJ - And then, you knew that she had died...

SG - ...Yes, they sent me a telegram... After Mass, the Mother noticed that I had cried during the whole Mass. Then, after I accompanied my forty little girls to the refectory, she called me and ask me why I was crying. I said: ‘No, no. You will tell me that I am “fixated.” I don’t want to tell you’...She insisted so much that I had to tell her, and I said: ‘See, don’t you tell me “fixated” now? But as I was saying this, a telegram arrived, addressed to me: ‘Luisa died.’ I started to cry even more. The Mother asked me what was the telegram about; I showed it to her and she said: ‘You were right.’

FJ - Tell us about the relationship between Luisa and the Blessed Mother - with Mary. Did Mary visit Luisa?

SG - We couldn't see it. Luisa remained with the "fuselli" in her hands, and she moved her lips as if she were speaking. But she didn't want to tell us. One evening I said: 'Luisa, I will spend the night here tonight. Please, tell me something. What did the Blessed Mother say? And she said: 'Lord, what should I do with this little girl?' Then, little by little, she told me.

FJ - In your opinion, is Luisa a saint?

SG - Yes.

FJ - For which reason?

SG - First of all, she never rebelled against anything. Even when they came to take the books away. Father Annibale had brought them. Who knows how much he had spent. There were about 50 copies of the Hours of the Passions and there were also the ones of the Blessed Mother. They came and took them away... Just the other day I was thinking: 'Who knows if they still have them...'

FJ - Tell me about Father Annibale. Why did you choose Father Annibale and his Congregation? Or maybe Father Palma chose you.

SG - No. Nobody spoke to me. I said to the Founder...

FJ - Father Annibale?

SG - Yes, I said: 'Father, I want to become a nun.' And he said: 'But you are still too little' I said: 'No, Father, I am ten years old!' And he: 'Well, there are still four years!'

FJ - What did Father Annibale think about Luisa? Can you tell me?

SG - Yes

FJ - What did he think of Luisa?

SG - The Father?

FJ - Yes

SG - He believed that she was a saint....He said that Luisa had converted me.

He said that one day in Corato he heard that there was a saint. That day he didn't go upstairs, but after fifteen days he started to go to her... everybody knew that..

FJ - Did he often visit Luisa?

SG - Yes, yes. Not at the beginning, because he didn't know. Then, he heard that in Corato there was a chosen soul..from Father Benedetto, I believe.

FJ - Tell me a Father Benedetto Calvi

SG - Oh, Don Benedetto....He loved me so much

FJ - He too was very close to Luisa, wasn't he?

SG - Yes, he was. Not at the beginning. At the beginning there was Don Clemente. Don Clemente was very strict. Once, I went to Confession to him... and he reproached me...

FJ - Can you remember when the remains of Luisa were transferred from the Cemetery to Santa Maria Greca?

SG - Yes, I remember. I said to Father: 'Don't put her in the ground, otherwise people will tread on her'

FJ - Is there anything else you can tell us about Father Annibale? Do you remember when he died?

SG - Yes, I remember. There was a mobilization in the entire Messina. They venerated him. He was really a saint. His pockets were always full.

FJ - Of what?

SG - Of food....to give it to the poor...

FJ - After you became a nun, did he talk to you about Luisa?

SG - Yes, yes. He always talked to me about her.

FJ - Do you know that he called the Convent in Corato "House of the Divine Will?"

SG - Yes, yes, yes. But, see then..what the sisters did...

FJ - What did they do?

SG - They sent Luisa away...

FJ - For what reason.....do you know?

SG - Who knows....We couldn't say anything. And then, since I was considered as the "favorite" of Luisa...I had to be silent... Yes, they called me the like this... But it was true.

FJ - Tell me about that time when you said that you wanted to see Luisa, but before entering the room your feet remained "glued" [*stuck*] to the floor and you couldn't walk...Do you remember?

SG - One day we went - myself and my friend Francesca, the girl who died... - to visit Luisa to see whether she was moving or not. And we said: 'Luisa is dead...why isn't she moving?'

FJ - But you said that your feet remained stuck...

SG - Yes, the other one...Francesca!...had to help me to walk...

FJ - You were scared....

SG - Yes. That was the last time I did it.

FJ - How did you learn how to work with the "tombolo"? Was it hard?

SG - No, because Luisa loved me...

FJ - And then you did it all your life...

SG - Yes

FJ - ...And what do you do now in the Convent. Tell me about your life of today.

SG - I work with the "tombolo"! When there something else to do, I do it.

FJ - Do you still work with the children?

SG - Not any more...but I spent 15 years with the orphans!...

FJ - Did you like that experience?

SG - Yes! I loved the children, and they loved me too.

FJ - Did you talk to them about Luisa?

SG - Yes, sometimes. They also asked me about her...yes, about Luisa

FJ - And now, are you praying a lot for vocations?

SG - Yes,.. we are praying for vocations...

FJ - Tell me about your parents. What were their names?

SG - My mother's name was 'Grazia'. My father was 'Savino' Capozza

FJ - ..And your brothers and sisters?

SG - I had three sisters, Gemma, Nunziatina and Giuseppina. Giuseppina was a friend of Luisa. When Gemma was baptized, we brought her to Luisa, and she said: 'Gemma, Gemma, you are pretty, but you belong to Heaven, not to the earth!' And I: 'No, Luisa! Don't let her die!' And she said: 'Be quiet... You cannot understand!' In fact, Gemma died when she was fifteen. Pretty, pretty Gemma!

[The end]