

THE FRUITS OF MEDJUGORJE

Leukaemia, an Angel, and a family saved by Mary

ECCLESIA

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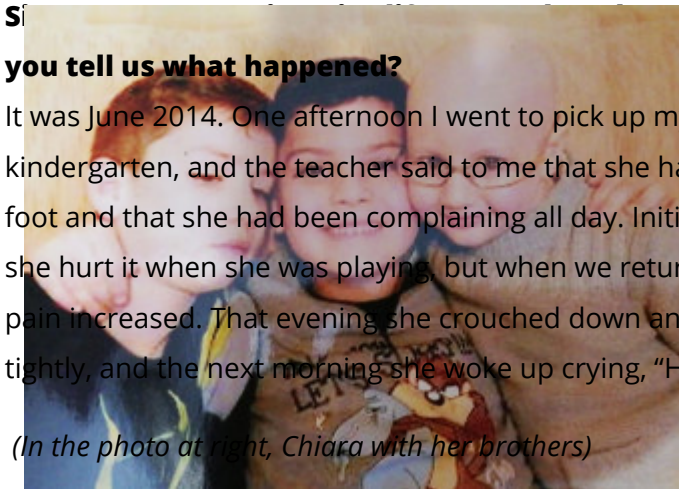
Simona gushes uncontrollably, with a considerable dose of sympathy. In the course of the interview, she bursts out laughing several times, despite the fact that what she is discussing is punctuated with moments of overwhelming suffering. But Simona's humor is contagious and wins people over, just like the incredible story of healing and conversion which happened to her and her entire family.

And in fact, the dramatic past of her family, the serious leukaemia that struck her youngest daughter and her anger against heaven, counted as nothing in the face of the Celestial Mother who chose Simona and led her along the path of love for Her Son Jesus, along with her entire family.

It is the story of a real Triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in a simple family from Rome, but which took place along a very specific path: the Way of the Cross, which Simona had to walk to the very end before seeing the light and being reborn to a new life.

Si **really cruel joke on you...can**
you tell us what happened?

It was June 2014. One afternoon I went to pick up my third daughter, Chiara, from kindergarten, and the teacher said to me that she had a sharp pain on the insole of her foot and that she had been complaining all day. Initially, I thought it was a sprain or that she hurt it when she was playing, but when we returned home, I noticed that Chiara's pain increased. That evening she crouched down and asked me to squeeze her foot tightly, and the next morning she woke up crying, "Help me! Take me to a doctor!"



(In the photo at night, Chiara with her brothers)

What happened next, Simona?

We went straight to the Umberto I Hospital in Rome, and the doctors began to carry out a series of increasingly in-depth tests on Chiara, but they did not succeed in reaching a diagnosis. Meanwhile, Chiara kept getting worse, and over time she lost the use of her lower limbs, which dangled as if they were dead. Also, despite her severe pain, the doctors could not give her any medicine, because they did not want to alter the results of the testing that was underway.

When did they reach a diagnosis?

After about five days in hospital, the head doctor called us and told us: "I hope that your

daughter has leukaemia, because then I would know how to treat her. Otherwise, with the analysis that I am holding, I would have to discharge you without a cure because I have never seen anything like this." In a few moments, my life was turned totally upside down: I found myself sitting on a hospital bed hoping that my three-year-old daughter, whom I had believed was perfectly healthy, would have leukaemia. And so she did: there wasn't even the time to extract the bone marrow before the diagnosis was clear. In the tragedy, however, there was also the first great grace...

What was that?

Although we were facing a leukaemia that had spread rapidly without manifesting any symptoms, so much so that even blood tests did not find it, the first tests revealed that the vital organs had not yet been compromised. The oncologist told us that if we had come a month later it would have been disastrous. From that moment we began a true lockdown that lasted for two years; during the first one we couldn't even leave the hospital.

Simona, you were given news that no mother ever wants to hear: what was your reaction?

My first reaction was rebellion and total rage, the pain was overwhelming, also because I was only just recovering from a very difficult situation with my own family that had psychologically destroyed me. I became really angry with God and remained in this state for a long time.

Until...?

In the meantime, one thing must be said: as soon as Chiara got sick, I learned that a lot of people had begun to pray, offer Masses, and fast for her.

Did you feel any spiritual movement?

Not at all ... at that moment I was the furthest away that I could have possibly been from a life of faith.

(In the photo on the left, Chiara on Krizevac in her father's arms)

So who prayed for Chiara?

My husband's closest friend was part of a Marian prayer group, and when he heard the news he had everyone pray for our daughter. It didn't really make a difference to me – I thought, if they want to pray, let them pray. But I did not know then that was only the beginning...

What do you mean?



After a short time, my husband began to say to me that as soon as the doctors gave permission we were going to go to Medjugorje: the prayer group wanted to take Chiara to Krizevac [the mountain in Medjugorje where the White Cross is]. I recall that at that time, if I heard talk of places like Lourdes, Fatima, or Medjugorje itself, it made me so agitated that my hair would stand on end. Furthermore, Chiara was still under going cycles of chemotherapy, so for me it was out of the question: we would never go on a pilgrimage to Medjugorje, period.

What made you change your mind?

When the registration opened, some people began to insist that we go and even offered to pay for the entire pilgrimage, including all travel expenses.

And how did you react to this?

I picked up the phone and called this man [making the offer], who at that time lived in a far-off country, and I told him bluntly that we would never go on this pilgrimage.

And so what did he say?

With a peace that was totally disarming, he smiled and said to me: "But Simona, it's not I who am inviting you, it's the Blessed Mother. We will see you in Medjugorje." Then he hung up. I was so angry I could hardly think, and I told my husband that only irresponsible people would think of taking a 3½-year-old girl with leukaemia to a remote place, with all the therapies that had to be administered and the grave risk of infection, etc., etc....I even went to the oncologists to reinforce my argument with their medical opinion because I was sure they would agree with me. But instead...

Instead?

Instead the oncologists gave their approval: "The girl can leave for the pilgrimage to Medjugorje," they said. I couldn't believe it.

What happened in Medjugorje?

My anger grew: everywhere they went they spoke only of the Cross, about how to accept the Cross, about how to love the Cross. On the other hand, I could not even understand what was happening to Chiara: when she had her chemotherapy it was as if she was drinking fresh water, and she climbed the mountains as if she was a mountain goat; she was truly happy and often singing! Only some time later did I realise that a seed had been sown in me, too. Today I can say that pilgrimage to Medjugorje worked slowly and untiringly within me, without ever missing a beat. In fact from that time on, Medjugorje became like a second home; we go there every year, and the Blessed Mother became the true Queen of our family.

Simona, when did you realize that Mary had conquered you?

The Blessed Mother had great patience with me; it was a journey made with tiny steps that continues today. However, there were two determining things that happened. The first happened a few months after our return from Medjugorje, when Chiara was just a step away from death.

What happened?

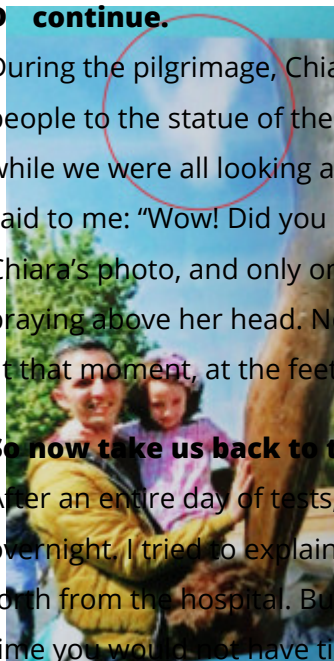
After the first year in the hospital, Chiara began a second year of chemotherapy at home, along with a guided re-entry into society. One day, although she looked fine, I discovered she had a fever of over 100 degrees. I immediately called the oncologists, who told me to bring her to the hospital. At this point however, we need to go back and talk about something important that had happened in Medjugorje.

D continue.

During the pilgrimage, Chiara and my husband Ambrogio went with a small group of people to the statue of the Risen Christ, but I stayed at the hotel. That same evening, while we were all looking at the photos from the day together, a woman from our group said to me: "Wow! Did you see what's there in the photo with your daughter?" Well, on Chiara's photo, and only on hers, there is the silhouette of an Angel with open wings praying above her head. None of the other photos taken by the people who were there at that moment, at the feet of the statue of the Risen Lord, show this angelic figure.

So now take us back to the hospital...

After an entire day of tests, the oncologist said to me that we also needed to stay overnight. I tried to explain that we live nearby and that we are used to going back and forth from the hospital. But the oncologist interrupted me right away: "No, madam, this time you would not have time to get back." I insisted on going home, but at that point



the doctor made me freeze in my tracks: "Madam, your daughter is dying! The tests I am looking at are a disaster, all of the counts for white blood cells, red blood cells, and plasma are almost zero, and the girl may have a haemorrhage at any moment." The tests seemed to unambiguously indicate that the leukaemia had reached a very serious and irreversible stage. I completely lost my sanity; I felt the world crumbling around me, and for the first time I started to cry in front of Chiara. At that point I did something I had never done before...

What was that?

I called "the prayer group" and asked them to pray for our daughter.

And then?

The next morning, despite the fact that it was her day off, the oncologist returned to the hospital to immediately carry out a bone marrow examination on Chiara. In the meantime, they had started doing an immunoglobulin treatment on her that made her feel terribly ill: she could not stand up, she was constantly vomiting, and she looked like a ghost in her bed. Well, when the bone marrow test was done, I heard the woman doctor in the hallway shouting: Madam! Madam! That Angel saved your daughter!" At first I did not understand, indeed, I was baffled by the fact that a medical doctor like her, all of a sudden, started speaking to me like this. Whereupon I learned that some time previously, my husband had shown her the photo from Medjugorje, and so she explained to me, "Madam, believe me, the Angel in that photo saved your daughter, because the bone marrow exam results are perfect." There was no fatal worsening of the leukaemia, only one-fifth of the disease was in the acute phase and it was cured within a few days.

And what is the second thing that happened?

The second time I met "the angel" in the pharmacy.

Tell us.

One day, when Chiara was already in the remissive phase of the illness [the child has been well now for three years], I went to the chemist because Chiara had a sore throat. I met a doctor there who, after explaining to me what medicines I should give to my daughter, said to me: "And finally I recommend that you do the most important thing! Understood?" I was very perplexed. Then I saw a rosary sticking out from under his gown, and, as we spoke, I discovered that he had been converted at Medjugorje some time earlier. He was asking me to pray, and by praying to entrust myself completely to

the Will of God.

Simona, why did this encounter change your life?

That man looked at me, and without knowing almost anything about me, my family, my life, he said to me: "Your little daughter is sick. She is the altar; she is the doorway to your conversion. What is happening to you is a grace, it is a gift for your salvation."

These words were like a slap in my face; for a whole day I was stunned, and at the same time I felt that they deeply touched my heart. It was as if my heart was waiting for those exact words. Believe me, I don't even know how to explain why, but for the first time in my life, from that moment on, I began to feel a deep gratitude within me for everything that had happened to us, for our story, for our whole life.