

# Blessed Gianna Beretta Molla

Passages from the book RITRATTI DI SANTI by Antonio Sicari Ed. Jaca Book



We want to tell the story of a mother who both Popes and Bishops have pointed out as the example for the entire Christian race well before her beatification.

Pope Paul VI, in his Angelus of the 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1973, spoke of her as: “a mother from the dioceses of Milan who, in order to give life to her child, sacrificed her own with mediated immolation”. Recently Pope John Paul II and Cardinal Martini have spoken of her in the same way.

It is an event of our times, not only because we are speaking of a young woman who died not many years ago, but because it is an answer to an ever growing need of our times.

During the 2<sup>nd</sup> Ecumenical Vatican Council it was solemnly declared that “the Lord Jesus had preached to each of His Disciples, in whatever conditions, the sanctity of life” and so everyone “all believers, of whatever state or class, are called to live a full Christian life in the perfection of charity”, and that “in the various types of life and duty a unique holiness is cultivated by those who are moved by the Holy Spirit”.

It is now necessary to witness this conviction in the choice of those who are presented to the veneration and imitation of all believers.

Often people will ask: “How come that saints almost always belong to religious orders, or however are people who in some way have concluded their lives with some particular form of consecration to God?»

We notice the prerequisites that are proposed as models by saints who have lived their lives in the same manner of all common people, between work and family, with wives, husbands and children, everyday joys and worries.

If the question hides the idea that one can become a saint without totally and seriously giving themselves up to God, then we are highly mistaken.

The question is correct if it manifests the desire to make everything that is sanctity is part of daily living and existing, “to love God with all our heart and soul and all our strength”.

Gianna Beretta's husband, answering the question shortly after the death of his wife, simply says: “I did not realise that I was living with a saint”.

He himself makes it clear that this common persuasion was explained by the, once so widely diffused idea, that sanctity must be manifested with abundant quantities of extraordinary events (a sort of constant prodigious immersion).

Then, thinking of his wife's life, he realised that “sanctity is life lived daily in the light of God”.

Never the less the church does not relinquish that, in order to proclaim someone a saint, “the virtuousness of his courageousness” has to be proved.

Only that in the cases of laical sanctity, the courageousness remains hidden for a long time behind a proven faithfulness, made up of daily and simple facts, until the love of God and neighbour find an occasion to express themselves in all their strength and dazzling purity.

Let us return to her husband's testimony:

"Gianna was a wonderful woman, but absolutely normal. She was beautiful, intelligent, kind. She loved to smile. She was modern and elegant. She drove a car; she loved the mountains and was a very good skier. She loved flowers and music. For years we had a subscription for concerts at the Milan Conservatory. She loved travelling. I was often abroad for work, and when it was possible, I took her with me. We went to Holland, Germany, Sweden and almost everywhere in Europe..."



Gianna and her husband Pietro

However, it is right because we need that light which at a certain point illuminates the entire picture, that we begin from the period of maturing which lasted seven months, during which that "perfect Charity" filled the heart of this wife and mother.

At the beginning of the summer of 1961 Gianna Beretta and her husband Pietro Molla, an engineer, were a happy couple; she worked in a medical clinic for outpatients, he managed his factory, which had three thousand workers. The family was a happy one, blessed by three beautiful children, their ages ranged from the first-born who was five to the youngest who

was two.

For these parents, children were treasures, so much so that their wish was for a fourth, fruit of their love.

This we know from a letter written by Gianna: "I am happy with Pietro and our three magnificent children and thank God from my heart. My deepest wish is to have another 'bebè'".

In August her pregnancy is confirmed, but the joy of this new event is soon mixed with grievous anxiety; on the side of her womb a cyst is growing which requests urgent surgery.

Gianna knew immediately what was facing her. Science at the time offered two solutions, which were considered safe for the mother's life: a total laparotomy with the removal of both the cyst and womb, or the removal of the cyst with the interruption of the pregnancy.

A third solution, which consisted in the removal of the cyst without touching the baby, meant putting the mother's life at serious danger.

We read the following from the clinic chart of the time: "A suture on the womb in the first months of pregnancy often does not hold, with secondary tearing of the womb and immediate danger of death for the patient, towards the fourth or fifth month of pregnancy; a risk which Doctor Gianna is well aware of".

Furthermore, however things went in the following months, the risk would however represent itself at the moment of the birth

Before going into hospital, Doctor Beretta went to speak to the priest who usually heard her confessions, he exhorts her to hope and have courage.

"Yes, don Luigi – she answers him – I have prayed a lot in this period. With faith and hope I have confided in God, even contrary to the terrible words of medical science which told me.

'You must decide, the mother's life or the life of your child'. Yes, I confide in God, but now it is up to me to do my duty as a mother. I renew the offer of my life to God. I am ready to face what I must, in order to save my child's life".

She herself tells of her first meeting with the surgeon: "Before the operation the doctor told me: 'What will we do, will we save you or save the baby?'. 'First of all save the baby! was my immediate answer. 'Do not worry about me'. After the operation was over, he told me: "We saved the baby".

The surgeon who was Jewish, respected the patients will, even though he did not agree with her choice. Only him and Gianna knew the deep significance of that "We saved the baby". These words told the mother of the agony to be expected during the rest of the pregnancy.

When he sees her again, at the moment of the birth, the surgeon will say, in a mixture of admiration and discouragement: "Here is the Catholic mother!". A prophecy which only God knows how to bring forth from the mouth of unbelievers.

The first operation was a success: a heroic choice had been made, everything seemed to return to normal.

Gianna goes back to her work in her home and in the clinic for outpatients, she takes care of herself, of the sufferance's and discomforts of this dangerous pregnancy, without being a weight on anyone, keeping silent in order not to disturb the serenity of her children and husband.

She continued a normal life, even joyfully, without giving up hope.

Just a month before the birth of her baby, her husband was going to Paris on business, Gianna asked him to bring her back some fashion magazines. "If God keep me here – she says – I want to have some nice dresses" and in fact those magazines still exist with the signs she had traced beside the modals she liked.

When she becomes a saint, those magazines will also become relics. It is not a triviality; it is an invitation to become used to a new way of judging.

Every now and then she is tormented by the continuous danger, but she will bear it alone in order to spare her dear ones, in prayer and offering of her suffering, in full awareness. On the desk in her studio medical texts will be found, opened at the chapters on "risky pregnancies".

A testimony from her husband: " It kept coming back to my mind her wish that "the pregnancy be saved", but I dared not go further with the thought. I did not dare to speak of it with my wife. A short time after she will say to me: "Pietro, you have always been so loving to me, I need you to be even more so in this period, because these are tremendous months for me". I continued to see her at peace and tranquil. She was occupied as usual, lovingly looking after her children and her patients. Then one day I noticed that she was paying extra attention in tidying the house. In arranging the drawers, the wardrobes...it was as if she had to leave for a long journey...".

It was only to her brother who was a priest that Gianna showed her real state of mind: "The worst still has to come. You know nothing of these things. When the time comes it will be 'me or him'.

It was not a challenge; it was tenderness towards the creature she was carrying.

Let us return to her husband's recollection:

“About a month and a half before our baby was born a strange thing happened, a thing that left me in distraught. I was leaving to go to work and had put my coat on. Gianna – I can still see her – was leaning against a table in the hall in our house. She came close to me. She did not say. ‘sit down’, ‘stay here for a moment’, ‘let us talk’. Nothing. She came up close to me as you would when you have something difficult to say, that is troubling, but on which you have meditated, and yet you do not want to say’. She said. ‘Pietro, I beg you.., If you must decide between the baby and me, choose the baby, not me. I ask you this’: Just like that. I was unable to say a word. I knew my wife well, her generosity, and her spirit of sacrifice. I left the house without saying a word”.

She will repeat the same question again before the birth. Also to a friend. “I am going into hospital, but I do not know if I will return. My pregnancy is a difficult one; they will have to save either one or the other; I want the baby to live”.

“But you have three children, you worry about staying alive, instead”.

“No, no...I want the baby to live”.

To another friend she meets at the hairdressers she says: “Pray, pray you too! During this difficult pregnancy I have studied a lot and prayed for my new baby..Pray so that I will be ready to do Gods will”.

It was God’s will that her passion should start on Good Friday in 1962.

A nun at the hospitals tells:

“I met her as she was coming up the stairs on her way to the ward. She said: “Sister, here I am, I am here to die”, but she had a kind and serene look on her face. She added: “As long as the baby is alright I do not care about myself”.

The painful labour lasted all night: at eleven o’clock on Holy Saturday, after a caesarean operation, a beautiful and healthy baby girl was born, just at the moment – according to the Liturgical practice in use before the Concilio – when the bells began to toll and the celebrations of the Resurrection began.

The baby was brought to her when she woke from the anaesthesia. Her husband retells:

“She gazed in silence at the baby for a long time. She kept her beside her with infinite tenderness. She caressed her lightly without saying a word”.

Her passion continued for another never ending week, while a septic peritonitis was taking her to her grave, there was nothing that could be done to save her.

She spent her last days humbly offering her suffering, as if on an altar, praying and refusing pain medication because she wished to remain conscious, while evoking Crucified Jesus and her own mother to take her to heaven.

On theWednesday following Easter, she awoke from the coma and said to her husband: “Pietro, I am better. I was already on the other side and if you only knew what I saw! One day I will tell you. But since I was too happy, feeling too joyful with our marvellous children, full of health and grace, with all the blessings of heaven, they sent me back here to suffer more, because it is not right to go before God without having suffered a lot”.

She still had to endure three days of passion, in the mysterious measure that everyone has to complete Christ’s Passion in their bodies, according to God the Father’s wonderful and strange design.

We shall have to speak again about this death, and on Gianna Berettas Via Crucis which lasted seven months, during which she obtained that total transparency of the Eternal of which sanctity consists.

In the light of what happened, we must now go back over her short existence, not to search for more heroic episodes, but to see the weaving of Christianity that makes sanctity possible.

Her husband further writes as if he was speaking to her: “You did nothing extraordinary, no exceptional penitence, you did not sacrifice anything just for the sake of sacrifice, nothing heroic just to be heroic. You knew and carried out your duties of a young girl, a wife, a mother and a doctor fully accepting Gods plans and will. With a spirit and desire for sanctity, for yourself and others”.

Certainly Gianna’s parents were exceptional: one of those typical couple’s of the turn of the century who had numerous children (Gianna was the tenth of thirteen children), for whom faith was the daily substance, both in work and in education, in thoughts and feelings, in happiness and sadness of life.

When Gianna meets Pietro, seven years after the death of her parents, she will speak about them like this: “My saintly parents, so righteous and wise, that wisdom which is a reflection of their good souls, just and God-fearing”.

When she married, the celebrant (one of her brothers) will say to her during the sermon: “Gianna, I will not put before you the saints as an example, but our mother. Remember how she was always so sweet, smiling, docile, patient, active, always united to God, both in times of joy and pain”.

Another brother recalls: “Mamma, rain or sun, cold or hot, early every morning, would take us children to Holy Mass and Communion. She would waken us, not by ordering or imposition, but with a sweet invitation, caressing our faces and letting us be free to choose whether to get up or continue sleeping. She would help us speak to Jesus before and after Communion: she would gather us around her on the Church bench, after having left us alone with God, on receiving Communion so that we could speak to Him, then she would begin, asking us to repeat her words, they weren’t prayers but her own words, simple and beautiful”.

Sanctity always depends on a familiarity as far as the Lord God is concerned, and familiarity beings with an encounter.

Living in a truly Christian family means that this (supernatural) encounter with God made man happens ‘naturally’, just as it is natural meeting mother and father every day, with their teaching and examples, with their kindness and preoccupations, with their chastising and their forgiving: in one simple word, with their faith, hope and love.



Gianna as a young woman.

In this case, the miracle of conversion (of turning towards Jesus) is made easy, as simple as it is for a child to turn towards its mothers voice and face.

Gianna’s sanctity began this way. Then this gift of familiarity expanded in the gift of a tradition, in a flow of ecclesiastic life, which reached her and conducted her.

Let us try to seize these flowing significant moments.

When she was almost sixteen she took part in a retreat of spiritual exercises in preparation for Holy Easter.

We have some of her notes, which she entitled: Gianna Berettas

recollections and prayers.

One of these prayers begins like this: "Jesus, I promise you to undergo everything that You wish. I ask you only to let me know Your will".

We have a list of proposals or decisions for life; it is worth while re-reading them, in order to understand how a Christian conscience is formed during these delicate years of a teen-ager.

1. I made a holy promise to do everything for Jesus. Everything I do, all my sorrows, I offer everything to Jesus.
2. I promise that in order to serve God, not to go to the cinema, if beforehand I cannot know if the film is modest or scandalous, immoral.
3. I would rather die than commit mortal sin.
4. I want to fear mortal sin as though it were a serpent, and repeat: I would rather die a thousand times rather than offend the Lord.
5. I want to pray God that he will help me not to go to hell, and so avoid anything that would harm to my soul.
6. I will say an "Ave Maria" every day so that God will grant me a holy death.
7. I pray the Lord to make me understand his great Mercy.
8. Obey and study even if I don't feel like it, for the love of Jesus.
9. From this day on, I want to pray on my knees, in church in the morning and at the foot of my bed at night.
10. I want to accept any scoldings. The road of humility is the shortest to sanctity.
11. Pray God to let me go to Heaven. Always say that I am afraid I will not go, that way I will pray and with the help of God I will enter the Reign of Heaven, with all the saints and souls.

It is not hard to notice the tone of the sermons of years ago in these proposals.

Someone may say, perhaps, that there was too much morality: it is certain that there was a lot of seriousness and a huge desire to love Jesus through facts and not only in filling diaries with intelligent notes and beautiful quotations, as so often happens.

So much so, that these proposals will generate a rich community life that Gianna develops assuming responsibility in the ambit of the "Catholic Action".

She will teach her girls, through words and example, that we need to make truth a loving thing, offering oneself as an attractive example and if possible heroic, because man needs to see, to touch, to hear; he is not easily won by words. Saying alone does not conquer but making things seen does. We must be living witnesses of the grandeur and beauty of Christianity.

These are expressions taken from the schemes that Gianna, a university student, prepared for female youth of the "Catholic Action".

Having finished her medical studies at university – during the hardships she had to face because of the World War 11 – she began to practice medicine in an out patients clinic in Magenta and Mesero not leaving aside her activity in the political elections in 1948.

For some years she will mediate and reflect on her vocation. Should she not follow the example of one of her brothers, who after becoming a doctor enters the Capuchin and goes to work in the missions in Brazil?

Meanwhile we know from some of her notes, written in a prescription book, how she lived her medical profession:

"The beauty of our mission. The whole world works in some way in service to men. We work directly on the person. Our object of science is work and the person we have before us says: "Help me" and expects us to give him the fullness of his existence. Our mission does not end when medicine is no longer of any use. There is a soul to be brought to God. Jesus is saying: 'Who visits the sick, visits me'. A priestly mission: just as the priest can touch Jesus, so do we as doctors touch Jesus when we touch the body of the sick, poor, young, old and children. Thus Jesus shows himself in our midst. Let it be that He finds a lot of doctors who offer themselves to Him".

These are probably also notes taken at some conference, but the testimony who comment them are those who see her applying them with simplicity, even on the last day, when heavy from her pregnancy, she made her last visits, before going into hospital to die.

Another decisive stopping point towards sanctity happens in 1955, when at thirty-three years old, she becomes engaged to Pietro Molla an engineer.

In 1954 "The Marian Year", Gianna had been to Lourdes on a pilgrimage. When she returned she tells a friend: "I have been to Lourdes to ask Our Lady what I should do, should I go to the missions or marry. When I reached home Pietro came in".

They had met in the cinema-club at the cultural centre in Magenta, they met again at the Scala at a ballet to celebrate the New Year, and they toasted the New Year in the Beretta home. From then on the occasions were plentiful and they got to know each other well, in February 1955 they became officially engaged.

We have covered the list of their social and worldly encounters – without mentioning the deep meetings of their souls, from the first intuitions – this is in order to underline that this "story of sanctity" happens, takes place in the normal scenery of our modern society.

"We got to understand each other very well", Pietro will say at the time.

Both of them found that they had the same wishes and inspirations, hopes and certainties.

Pietro will note» The more I got to know Gianna the more I was persuaded that a better gift God could not have given me".

Gianna wrote to Pietro: "Pietro, If only I could tell you what I feel for you! But I am not able. You make up for this. God really loved me. You were the man I had always wished to meet, but I cannot deny that I sometimes ask myself: 'will I be worthy of him? Yes, of you, Pietro, because I feel such a nullity, incapable, that, even if my greatest desire is to make you happy, I fear I will not be able to. So I pray God: 'Lord, you who can see my feelings and my good will, take care and help me to become a bride and mother as you want me to be and as I think that Pietro desires'. Is this alright, Pietro?"

When Gianna was a small child, the priest had told her that she was lucky to have a mother that resembled the "strong woman" that the Bible speaks of, in the book of the Proverbs.

Remembering this, after receiving her engagement ring, she will write to Pietro.

"My Dear Pietro, how can I thank you for the magnificent ring? Dear Pietro, to repay you I give you my heart and I will love for forever as I love you now: I think that on the eve of the evening of our engagement it will please you to know that you are the dearest person to whom my thoughts go constantly, my affects, my desires, and I cannot wait for the moment when I will be yours for ever...I like to mediate this verse constantly: 'who will find the strong woman?'..Her husband's heart can confide in her..eccetra', Pietro, that I could be for you that strong woman of which the Bible speaks! Whereas I seem and feel weak..".

Her fiancée will reply: "You are for me the strong woman of the Bible. Near you my joy is perfect".

In another letter she writes:

"I love you so much, Pietro, you are always in my thoughts, in the morning when, during Mass, at the offertory, I offer with mine, your work, your happiness, your pain, and during the day until the day ends".

When her wedding day is near, she confides to Pietro:

"You are my Pietro, and I feel that we are as one heart and one soul..your happiness is also mine and everything that worries and causes you pain is mine also. When I think of our marvellous love I cannot stop thanking God".

All the letters are full of real human tenderness that does not leave out faith. Moreover, that love is the reincarnation of their mutual faith.

This is the way she projects the future:

"With Gods help and blessing we will do everything so that our new family will be a little cenacolo, where Jesus reigns over all our affects, desires and actions. Pietro, the day of our marriage is near and I am touched when I think that I am going to receive the Sacrament of Love. We will become Gods collaborators in creation, we can thus give Him children who will love and serve Him".

Here is a letter she wrote to Pietro while in the mountains skiing, he had to remain in the city because of his work:

"I am sorry you had so much work to do on Monday. You are always on my mind, and if I could help you I would with all my heart. The sun is shining today as it was yesterday. I get up at eight o'clock (how lazy I am" You are in your office at that hour of the morning) because mass is at 8.30. Would you believe, I have never appreciated Mass and Holy Communion as much as I do now? The Chapel is so beautiful; it is small and empty. The celebrant has not even an altar boy, so I have the Lord for you and myself alone, Pietro, because now, where I am you are also present".

Her husbands recall these times: "You were for me, more each passing day, the marvellous creature that transmitted her joy of living to me..the joy of our new family, that was near, the joy of the grace of God".

For her wedding day Gianna choose a beautiful wedding dress, made of a particularly precious material.

She explained the reason for this to her sister: "You know, I want to choose a special dress because I want to make a chasuble for one of my son's first mass".

In front of this interlacing of human and sacred love, spiritual and profane thoughts – so as to say – it is not difficult to be a little perplexed.

It remains for us to reflect on an exceptional point: that Christianity is this interlacing, just as in Jesus divinity and humanity are undissolvably united.

When this point of Christian synthesis are reached, the two aspects are seen constantly in their complete harmony. The passage from one to the other seems so naturally supernatural and so supernaturally natural! Where as who, take from the living synthesis, or think only with their brain, necessarily experiments that falseness that they have inside them.



From the time of their marriage and their family life, completed by the arrival of three children, we will only mention what her husband recalls:

“You continued to possess the joy of living, to rejoice in the wonder of creation, the mountains and snow, symphonic musical concerts, the theatre, just as you did during your juvenility and during the time of our engagement. You were always active in our home: I cannot remember seeing you idle...Even though the work in our family kept you busy you continued as you had wished your mission as a doctor in Mesero, above all for the love you had for the young mothers, your elderly patients, your chronically ill patients..your proposals were always coherent with your faith, with the spirit of charity of your youth, with your complete faith in providence and with your spirit and humility. In every circumstance you entrusted everything to Gods will. Everyday, I remember you had time for your prayer and meditation, your conversation with God, your thanksgiving for the gift of our wonderful children. And you were so happy”.

Even the more delicate questions on the conjugal intimacy were faced during the canonical process of Beatification. We have the sworn testimony of her husband: “As far as the question of conjugal intimacy, the test insists in saying that the fidelity to the moral principals of Christian morality, to which they were educated, was absolute”.

Having completed our journey, and without having forgotten the birth of three children and the thousand joys, caring and preoccupations attached to the rearing of three children, we must now return to those last months in which God asks her to donate everything.



Gianna with two of her children

We are not talking about one single gesture of heroism, done effortlessly, blindly, but of a meditated sacrifice (as Paul VI defines it) which lasted seven months. A period of time that was entirely filled with a constant decision: “Do not save me, save the baby”.

To be able to understand this motherly meditation, we can linger on that which was the question that everyone asked. From the ordinary woman of the mass-media, on hearing of her decision, brutally comments: “What a fool!”, to the friend who objects: “You have three children, think instead of living yourself”, to her husband who agreed with her decision, with the same faith, but could not bring himself to even think about it or speak about, to Gianna herself who on her death-bed will say to her sister: “If you knew how you suffer when you leave children so young”.

What made her make this decision?

Certainly a clear conscience, without a doubt, to have to obey that God who says: “Do not commit murder”. She had said it herself, as a doctor, to a girl who had asked her to help her abort”. You cannot joke about children.

You cannot take care of three children sacrificing another.

It is her husband himself, even if it is heartbreaking; who explains what made his wife sacrifice herself the way she did. “What she did was not done in order to ‘go to Heaven’. She did it because she felt she was a mother. To understand the decision you cannot forget, first of all, her deep persuasion as a mother and a doctor, that the creature she was carrying was a complete human being, with the same rights as the other children, even if it had been conceived only two months before. A God given gift, to whom a sacred respect was due. We cannot forget the immense love she had for her children: she loved them more than she loved herself. And you cannot forget her trust in Providence. She was persuaded, in fact, as a wife, as a

mother to be necessary for me and for our children, but above all in that precise moment, to be indispensable for the tiny creature that was forming in her...”.



Gianna Emmanuela and Laura Molla

man continues to perceive his evidence. This is the reason why Giannas decision was “mediated”, as the Pope says, “a reasoned reaction” as her husband courageously writes.

Finally we have arrived at the decisive word, that antique word that is the only light through which we can truly look when existence seems to become obscure and difficult to figure out: Gods Providence.

If Divine Providence is not present, the creature can agitate, calculate, and even kill in the persuasion that it is to better its life and the lives of others. If the humble, simple, antique faith in providence exists – that to which Christ gave a brotherly and fatherly semblance – then

The evidence was that she was necessary for her other three children, but for the one she was carrying in her womb she was indispensable.

Without her God could have ‘taken care’ of the other children, but not even God could have ‘taken care’ of the child in her womb, if she refused it.

Lauretta Molla, the third-born who God himself ‘took care of’ was only three at the time. At sixteen years old she remembers her mother in a school essay, like this:

“I was only three and maybe I did not understand the meaning of all those lighted candles and all those tears.. That which mostly remains impressed in my mind is her image of a true mother, aware of her duties towards the family..She carried out her work as a doctor with extreme care and happiness, and she loved most of all to cure children, especially the most needy. Among all the sensations that I have felt, the one that is still of major relevance in my life is the deep admiration that provokes the thought of a mother who for her creature gave her own life..I can say that I am very proud to have had a mother of such enormous courage, who was able to truly live as God desires...I feel she is always near to me, and that she helps me as though she was still alive”.

The rest is left to the name that was given to the fruit of such sacrifice. While the mother was still on her deathbed, the baby was taken to the church and Christened, receiving the name Gianna Emmanuela: her mother’s name united to the name of Jesus that is “God with us”. Then the father consecrated the baby to Our lady, as Gianna always loved to do.

The family tomb was not ready, and so the parish priest touched by the event put the central chapel in the cemetery in Mesero at their disposition. So the coffin was placed in the sacerdotal tomb, perhaps a sign of delicacy on the part of God, for the sacrifice of this mother.

But at this moment the oldest child, Pierluigi, who was five and a half years old, asked his daddy: “Why is mummy closed in there? Where is mummy?..”And insisted: “Mummy, can you see me? Can you touch me? Are you thinking of me?. He ended by saying: “For mummy we need a golden house”.

Thus when the family chapel was ready, Giannas husband wanted the wall at the end of the chapel to be covered in a golden mosaic. It represents Gianna offering her baby to Our lady of Lourdes. The inscription, in Latin, is taken from the Book of Revelations.

It reads: “Be faithful until death”.