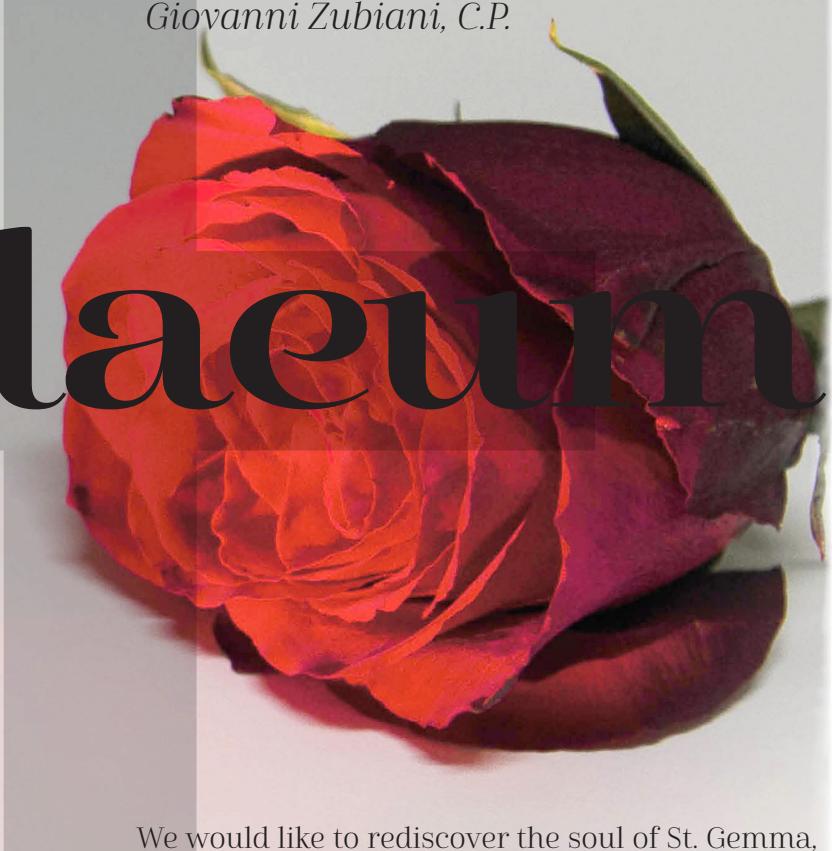


FORMATION AND CATECHESIS

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From the Daughter of the Passion to the Spouse of the Crucified King

Giovanni Zubiani, C.P.



We would like to rediscover the soul of St. Gemma, her inner world to insure that - as she wrote – “her ‘voice’ can reach the ends of the world”.¹

If we want to discover Gemma’s soul we need to look at her interior life. And what could be more intimate to St. Gemma, as St. Augustine would say, than the Crucified God? The One who Gemma loved and who dwelt in the depths of her heart throughout her life was Jesus Crucified. It was the loving Father and the Spouse of blood who captured her heart, who was the center of her thoughts and intentions, feelings, and energies, until she realized a type of perfection that was all hers, personal, and

+ + + 1 Ecstasy, No. 42, 20 July 1900.

inimitable.

Therefore, the mystery of suffering and the Cross that runs through the whole life of Saint Gemma does not have suffering as its objective; rather suffering takes on meaning in Gemma's personal relationship with Christ and in the love that leads her to follow Him. She wrote: "If I am with Jesus Crucified, I suffer; and if in the Sacrament, I love!"²

Gemma's whole childhood was spent in the joyful certainty of her adoption as a daughter of God-- a humble, unworthy, sinful daughter, but daughter, always daughter, with all the naïveté of a little girl who throws herself around her father's neck.³

Her self-perception as a daughter, considered by her to be a privilege, moves her to the feet of Jesus Crucified, a place where the mystery of redemption and adoption as a child is consumed.

Jesus lures his daughter with his paternal love in mystical dialogues, appealing to the compassion of Gemma's heart, always in need of reassurance. In ecstasy she asks Jesus-- "to this ungrateful daughter, O Lord, continue to offer your protection..."⁴

In ecstasy she addresses Jesus and says to Him-- "I am the fruit of your Passion; I am the fruit of your wounds".⁵ He replies-- "You will be a daughter of my Passion and a privileged daughter".⁶

Gemma with a full heart exclaimed again-- "You are the only love of all creatures. [...] Is this how one loves?... Jesus, I learned. I will sacrifice everything for you; but I will be faithful to you. What a beautiful gift you gave me Jesus!... Enough, Jesus, I saw you. That is the gift you prepare for your creatures... I gladly take it, Jesus, [the cross]. Let your will be done, not mine!"⁷

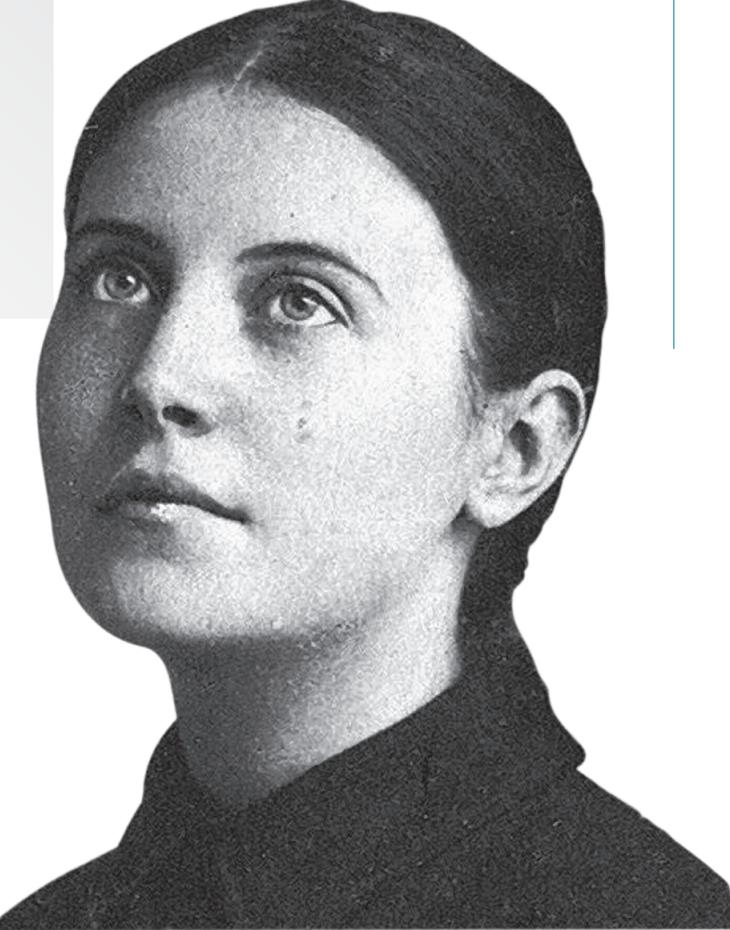
This is the explanation of why Jesus calls Gemma and she calls herself a "daughter of the Passion". It is not a romantic love, but a dramatic love that fully understands the evil of the world that caused Jesus such great suffering. Yet, it is remarkable to see that for Gemma being a daughter is no longer

enough for her. She has grown, and despite her heartfelt feelings and respect the Son of the Eternal God, her overwhelming love makes her say-- "Oh Jesus, but always daughter?... nothing more? I would like to be, I would like to... Always a daughter, Oh Jesus, always a daughter?... I would like to be, I would like to... Oh... Jesus, I would like to... Oh Jesus, I would like to... Yes, would it be too much, too much, Jesus, for me... You know what I want?... I wish, Jesus... I would like to be, Oh Jesus, your spouse, Oh Jesus... yes, your spouse, Oh Jesus!..."⁸

And a more mature, spousal love, so radical, that the spouse cries out her decision to be with Jesus until death. A love that is first received, which sees Jesus as the primary protagonist who loves first and asks for love.

And there the Crucified One awaits to show her how one loves-- "Then I told Jesus that I want-

8 Ecstasy, No.40, 10 July 1900.



2 Ecstasy, No.14, 29 March 1900.

3 Ecstasy, No.40, Circa 10 July 1900.

4 Ecstasy, No.134, 30 October 1902.

5 Ecstasy, No.29, 29 June [1901].

6 Autobiography, No.40.

7 Ecstasy No. 1, Tuesday, September 5, 1899.



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ed to love him so much, but I have a small heart and I cannot do it. Jesus then showed me all his wounds, and said to me-- 'My daughter, look at me and learn how to love me: do you not know that love has killed me? See these wounds, this blood, these bruises, this cross, it is all the work of love. Look at me, my daughter, and learn how to love.' I said-- 'But, my Jesus, therefore if I suffer, is it a sign that I love you?' Jesus replied that the clearest sign which he can give to a soul dear to him, is to suffer and to make her walk the way of Calvary".⁹

And Gemma replied to Jesus-- "Love killed you! Jesus, let me die of love too....".¹⁰ It is the ultimate act of love. To feel it we can remain stunned or disagree, but we cannot deny that the adventure of love that saves is of unfathomable proportions, and it immerses one into the most profound depths of feeling.

Love and suffering. Is it still worth repeating and living all these things today? It can only be understood by someone who is able to listen and to understand.

9 Letters to Bishop Volpi, No.16, 16 October 1899.

10 Ecstasy, No.1, 5 September 1899.