

FAMILY 2012

Family Miracle

The story of Pietro Schilirò and the beatification of the Martin spouses

Pietro is a child attending the fourth grade who is preparing to receive the first Communion, plays and "lives a simple life" - says his mother Adele Schilirò, interviewed by SIR Europe - and he is used to "pray to the Lord for what he desires, it could be the snow but also a request for support to his classmates or other people whose needs are known to us". He suffered of very serious lung problems at birth, and doctors had given very little hope to his parents, Adele and Valter, and yet, after an initial bewilderment, the two asked "unpretentiously" a miracle to the Lord through the intercession of spouses Luigi and Zelia Martin, parents of Saint Therese of the Child Jesus, who had lost four of their nine children. The miracle of Pietro, who according to science was doomed to die and instead, "to the amazement of doctors, nurses and also ours", says his mother, began breathing on his own, allowed the beatification of the Martin couple, which took place in October 2008.



A holiness within our reach. Pietro was the last to arrive, and according to his mother the most "spoiled" child in a family consisting of parents and four other children: Marta, 24, student of medicine; Elisa, 22, student of architecture; Giulio, 20, student of first year of Arts; and Lorenzo, 14, student in a high school of beaux-arts. And how about the Martin couple? The big surprise for Adele Schilirò was discovering that "these spouses were like us. Holiness is within our reach, like us they lived the daily dimension of life, they had the same work-related concerns - he was a watchmaker and she was a lace maker - and the same concerns for their friends and their neighbours... By comparing ourselves with them we understood that marriage is really a way to holiness, for us it was a great opening for our vocation of marriage".

Over night. Pietro was born on May 25, 2002, but his health was not good at all: one week after birth he was urgently baptized because doctors believed his life was in danger, and soon he underwent a lung biopsy. "Father Antonio Sangali - Adele reports - a Carmelite religious who played the part of our spiritual father and whom we had asked to celebrate Pietro's baptism [he later became vice-postulator of the cause of beatification of the Martin's, *editor's note*] gave us a printed image of the Martin's, with which he had come across by accident while looking for the book of the rite of baptism. Two days after the biopsy we were told that Pietro could live on just for a few hours or maybe days. "We went home and said the rosary with our friends, then we discussed the issue of his funeral". But during that silent night, something happened. "We had changed our perspective. Beforehand we were resigned, then we said to each other they were making a mistake, and we were wrong in accepting that science could have the last word. If we are children of a Good Father, Lord of life, with the freedom of children we could ask for a grace, trusting what God had planned for Pietro". In their request the Schilirò's were not alone, though: they began to distribute the image of the Martin's to all their relatives, friends, parishioners, to the other members of the Communion and Liberation movement they belong to, and even to their non-believing neighbours.

The "little boy". The days passed while they prayed and waited, but no positive sign arrived, so the two parents asked God to help them see at least "a little", that "good destiny" that should be there for all of us but which they could not envisage on Pietro". And on that occasion there was the first miracle, or perhaps the first response, because Adele's sister took up a book with letters from the Carmel of St. Therese, and opened it on the page of the vocation of the "little child" who helps "to save souls" (letter nr. 194). From these lines, the couple realized that the suffering of Pietro was not useless, it could make sense, even if the pain remained. The child was so sick that his parents could not even touch him and stood by him with prayers and songs. Towards the end of June, Pietro had a very serious crisis, but, on the morning of June 29th, on their arrival at the hospital the Schilirò's found him very weakened, but improved: during the night, he had incredibly shown signs of breathing. Three days later, he was extubated, and the head of the hospital where Pietro was hospitalized, a non-believer, honestly testified in the process for his beatification: "We cannot deny the extraordinary nature of what happened".

For Pietro everything is quite clear. What did Pietro understand of all that happened to him? On the day of the Martin's beatification, Adele asked it to the child, who was then 6 years old, and his answer was: "When I was born I was very sick, and you and dad have asked for help to the parents of St. Therese. They went to Jesus and told him: 'Please heal Pietro'. And I was healed". Quite clear, isn't it? The risk, in the following years, was that the boy would be taken as a phenomenon. "Many people had misunderstood", recalls his mother. When Pietro was 3 years old, "we found out he had become deaf, and it was an important fact because it helped us and those around us to put him in his right place. He was a child like the others who must be accompanied in his growth and his faith. He has a good relationship with his classmates and for the other pupils it is an opportunity to welcome those in need".

(10 May 2012)