

Nennolina's condition became increasingly worse with the extraction of fluid from her lungs and the adjustment of three ribs under a local anesthetic. The child grimaced from the pain, but never cried or complained. Afterwards, Nennolina announced that she would be in Heaven in ten days.

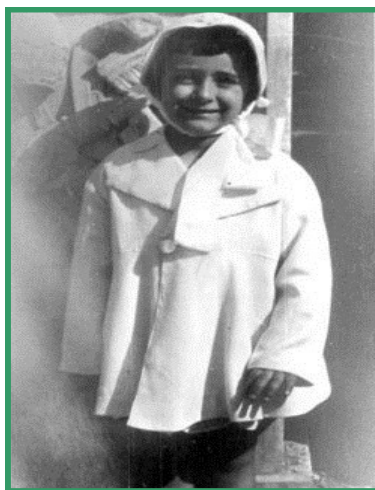
Large tumors had developed that compressed her lungs, causing suffocation and irritation of the throat. The cancer then progressed to the brain, to a hand and to a foot.

After a time Nennolina became so placid, and she accepted the various procedures so willingly and pleasantly, that her mother asked the doctor if the child's pains had ceased. The doctor replied, "But lady, what do you ask... her pains are atrocious."

Exactly ten days later, as Nennolina had predicted, she died on July 3, 1937. She was exactly six years, six months and nineteen days old.

After her death the question arose: can a child not yet seven years old reach such a degree of sanctity as to be considered for the honors of the altar? The Congregation for the Causes of Saints studied the matter very carefully and determined that children can attain heroic sanctity and can be considered for canonization.

Soon after Nennolina's death, biographies of her work were published which enjoyed wide circulation. Her sanctity was soon recognized by archdiocesan officials, who then permitted the examination of her cause for beatification. Pope Benedict XVI signed a decree on December 17, 2007 recognizing that she had lived the Christian virtues heroically. The Pope declared that Antonietta Meo had "reached the summit of Christian perfection and is an example of holiness for all children."



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***Heavenly Help for Those Who Suffer
from***

Lung Tumors

***Seek the intercession of
Venerable Antonietta Meo***



(1930—1937)

Venerable Antonietta (Nennolina) Meo (1930—1937)

Nennolina, as she was affectionately called, lived only seven years, but during that time she taught us valuable lessons on how to love God in simple, childlike ways. Nennolina was born into a prosperous and virtuous family of Rome on December 15, 1930. She is described by her family as being "a happy, vivacious, and mischievous child, as are all children her age." When she was in kindergarten, the nuns described her as being in "perpetual motion." But she was a normal child in all respects.

Nennolina was not yet five years old when a swelling was noticed on her left knee. Because of all her activities, it was thought that she had injured it in a fall; but when the swelling grew larger, she was taken to a doctor, who gave an incorrect diagnosis. For reasons only he knew, the child was subjected to injections of iodine. As all children would, Nennolina cried and complained; but when her mother suggested that she think of the sufferings of Jesus, the child bore the pains quietly.

Another doctor correctly diagnosed the problem as cancer of the bone. Because of the delay caused by the first diagnosis, the surgeon could do nothing else to save the life of the child but to amputate her leg. Painful procedures followed, in addition to the fitting of an orthopedic apparatus. Sometime afterwards, the doctor described Nennolina's behavior in this way: "She bore the surgical intervention with uncommon fortitude and with joy, always maintaining herself in a joyful attitude, really unusual for a child of her age."

Just a few months later, Nennolina suffered from tonsillitis. While recuperating, she began dictating little messages to Jesus, which she called "poetries." Her mother explained, "I took the first piece of paper that happened to be at hand, and I began to write under dictation, smiling indulgently at what she dictated with so much simplicity and care." Since the mother at first thought them of little importance, some of the earlier poetries were lost; about 177 of them have survived, of which 158 were later published in a book.

When Padre Orlandi visited the child and asked her questions from the catechism, the youngster explained the answers in her own words so clearly and completely that the priest suggested that she receive her First Holy Communion earlier than usual. This began Nennolina's intimate conversation with Jesus, which included words such as: "Dear Jesus, I went for a walk today, and I went to my nuns and I told them that I want to make my First Communion at Christmas. Jesus, You come soon into my heart so I can hold You strongly, and I will kiss You. Jesus, I want You to stay always in my heart."

Another time she dictated: "Dear Jesus, I want You so much. I want to repeat it that I want You so much. I give You my heart. Dear Madonnina, you are so good. You take my heart and hand it to Jesus... My good Jesus, give me some souls, give me so many. I ask gladly. I ask You because You make me become good so I can come with you to Heaven."

When she returned to school, Nennolina learned how to use a pen. She signed her dictated letters, "Antonietta and Jesus." Then she wrote, "My dear Jesus, I have learned to do it [use the pen], so soon I will write You by myself" – which she did.

After receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation, Nennolina's condition became progressively worse. She became weak and developed a cough; but in spite of pain, she always wanted to recite her usual morning and evening prayers and her daily devotions. These consisted mainly of the recitation of the holy Rosary and of novenas which she made for the conversion of sinners and for the souls in Purgatory.

One of the poetries which the child dictated to her mother reached Pope Pius XII by way of a professor who had been called in for consultation regarding Nennolina's medical situation. After reading the following note, the professor felt that the Holy Father should see it; and since he was a friend of the Pope, he brought the note to him.

The note read: "Dear crucified Jesus, I want You so much and I love You so much. I want to be with You on Calvary, and I suffer with joy because I know I am on Calvary. Dear Jesus, I thank You that You have sent me this illness because it is a means to arrive in Heaven... Dear Jesus, tell Padre God that I also love Him so much. Dear Jesus, give me the strength to bear these pains that I offer You for sinners... Dear Jesus, tell the Holy Spirit that illuminates me of love and gives me the seven gifts. Dear Jesus, tell the Madonnina that I love her so much and I want to be near her on Calvary because I want to be Your victim of love. Dear Jesus, I want to repeat that I love You so much. My good Jesus, I recommend to You my spiritual father and [ask that You] give him necessary graces....Your child sends You so many kisses."

The following day, an envoy from the Pope arrived to present Nennolina with the Apostolic Blessing. The family was told that the Holy Father had been touched by her note and that he recommended himself to the child's prayers.