

"Let the holiness of God shine forth" (cf. Mt 5, 16)

item 460

Susana's healing



On 17 Sep just passed, a Saturday, the eyes of the Pallottine world were directed at a beautiful 11th century **Basilica of the Holy Trinity** in Codrongianos close to Sassari, on the Italian island of Sardinia. It was the place of a solemn eucharistic celebration during which Elisabetta Sanna, a lay collaborator of St Vincent Pallotti, was proclaimed Blessed.

The inhabitants of Sardinia came with joy and pride to the ceremony and rejoiced upon the official acknowledgement of the "beata", who to them had always been a saintly person. Pallottine priests, brothers and sisters and lay members of the Union from different parts of the world came to give thanks to God for the beatification of Elisabetta Sanna, a widow and mother of seven children who lived at the turn of XVIII century.

Among those who came for the event was **Susana Correia da Conceição**, a joyful, mixed-race Brazilian woman of almost 40 years. Looking into her eyes one could sense the concentration and emotion. Many approached her, wanting to touch her, others wanted to take a picture with her.

Who is Susana Correia da Conceição? A young lady who at the most beautiful moment of her life was confronted with a disease that deeply affected her. Thus Susana describes herself.

Fifteen years ago I met Susana for the first time. She was then an active member of the youth group and of the Union of the Catholic Apostolate in the parish of *Nossa Senhora de Fatima* in Pendotiba, Niterói [Rio de Janeiro]. We Pallottine priests of the *Mother of Mercy* Region served in that parish. What was the difference between



her and other people? One could say there wasn't any. She was joyful, engaged in the life of the parish, reading at Masses, guiding youth meetings and doing all the things that other people of her age do.

However there was something distinctive about her. She had a paralyzed hand. For many young people the diagnosis of bone cancer would be the beginning of depression, a loss of enjoyment of life. For her it was not like that. She records that her disease was discovered at the initial stage of its development and so the doctors decided to operate. It was then that the first miracle happened. The surgery could have resulted in the amputation of her hand. "I woke up and saw that I had my two hands. It was a miracle! Then I realized that the hand operated on was paralyzed. It was not easy to adapt to a life with such a physical disability."



However Susana could not escape her daily duties. Despite her paralyzed hand she had to do domestic work where the simplest of activities, such as washing, combing her hair, getting dressed became a real challenge. When she ventured out Susana, despite being a young, beautiful girl, but with a handicap, was not always well accepted. As she says: "I suffered a lot." People could not understand that, though still in her early years, she was struggling with a disease that prevented her doing the work of other girls of her age. In the parish youth group she found a place of joy and understanding. She was not pitied but treated as one of them, despite her handicap.

In that group of the Union she heard for the first time about Elizabetta Sanna. Susana knew that Elizabetta belonged to the closest collaborators of St Vincent Pallotti. But, she asked herself, how was it possible that, while also having paralyzed hands, she became one of their greatest contributors? Susana received a book about Elizabetta and decided to become like her! She prayed much and Elizabetta Sanna became an inspiration for her life. "I knew that God would heal me!"

With this faith, and pleading with Elizabetta for help, she participated in a recollection day for youth. It was 18 May 2008, Sunday of the Most Blessed Trinity and about one hundred young people were praying in the church. Susana, with her friend Monique, was in the Chapel of the Blessed Sacrament. Susana recalls that, while she was praying for Monique, she touched the tabernacle and instantly felt that she could move her hand! A shout of joy was her first reaction - and tears of gratitude to God!

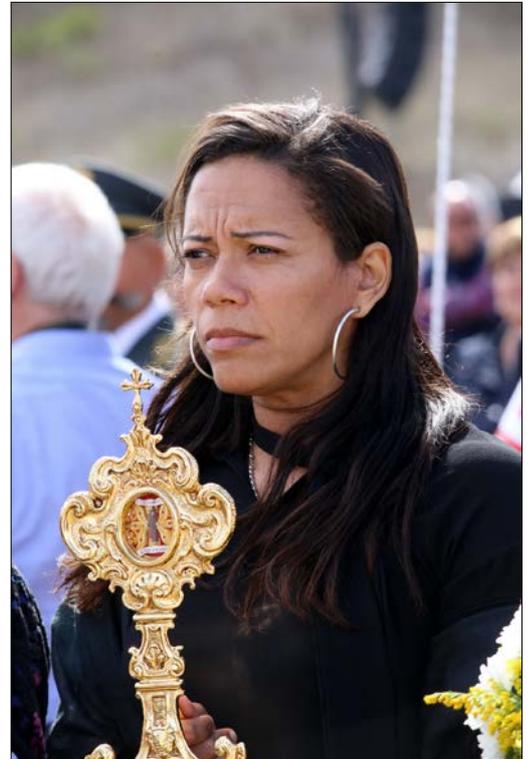
The news spread quickly among the youths gathered there. All praised God for such a concrete sign of his presence among us. Susana was healed, completely and immediately. The paralyzed arm, after eight years, was fully operational. She did not need any rehabilitation exercise. I asked Susana what she did after being healed. With a certain embarrassment and timidity she said smiling: "I went to a restaurant for lunch". After eight years of being incapable to eat a meal with cutlery she went to eat her lunch with a knife and fork!



Following that retreat there were many conversions. For the youth it was an undeniable sign of the presence of God among us. Many young people were present whose faith was not strong and many others who used

to also participate in the services of other churches. That day it became clear to them that God could transform their lives too. The parish priest, Fr Marcos Karyn sac, invited Susana to present the testimony of her healing. Susana spoke enthusiastically about what most of them already knew – about the beginning of the disease, about her eight years of struggle to overcome the difficulty of just performing daily chores, about how she came to know the life of Elizabetta Sanna and her desire and prayer to become like her, a useful person despite her physical disability. She spoke about her confidence that she would one day be healed. “I waited for eight long years, but I know that for the Lord God this was just a moment.” With conviction in her voice Susana says that God heals, He intervenes in our lives at the moment He finds most suited. Tears of joy, gratitude, enthusiasm! After the Mass Fr Marcos asked Susanna to write down all that had happened. At the end of three pages the last sentence read: “Everything has been written with my healed hand!”

The healing was communicated to Alano Maria Pena, Archbishop of Niterói and to the postulator for the beatification of Elizabetta Sanna, Fr Jan Korycki sac in Rome. Then began the long process of collecting the medical and theological records to be presented to the *Congregation for the Causes of Saints*. And for Susana normal life started again. In the beginning she considered entering religious life. But after one year of postulancy she realized that it was not her vocation. She decided to live a lay life, like Elizabetta Sanna and to serve her neighbours. Cardinal Ângelo Amato, during the beatification Mass, called Elizabetta a “humble follower of Christ and a careful witness of His Love”, a “woman of mercy”. Likewise Susana, in her UAC group and together with others, still tries to help her brothers and sisters. She prays, deepens her religious knowledge, strives to know more about St Vincent Pallotti and engages herself in works of mercy.



On 22 Jan this year, the liturgical feast of St Vincent Pallotti, Pope Francis authorized the *Congregation for the Causes of Saints* to promulgate the Decree accepting that this miracle was conferred through the intercession of the Venerable Servant of God Elizabetta Sanna, member of the Union of the Catholic Apostolate. Thus the immediate, complete and lasting healing of Susana in 2008 was now officially considered a miracle by the Church! On 17 Sep, 2016 at Codrongianos what she and the inhabitants of Sardinia and members of the Union of the Catholic Apostolate always believed was confirmed: Elizabetta is “blessed”.

Elizabetta was a simple person, illiterate, characterized by her strong faith rooted deep in her heart. Speaking with Susana, we were struck by the parallels between her life and that of blessed Elizabetta:

- At three months Elizabetta had contracted smallpox and, although she survived, the disease left its permanent mark in the partial paralysis of her arms and she suffered from difficulties in speaking. However this did not hinder her development, her disability was treated as something normal, she worked – as others – at home and in the field. Susana also had her hand paralyzed [as an adult], but still executed normally the same tasks as other women of her age.
- Elizabetta wanted to enter a convent but finally, on 13 Sep 1807, was married. It was a marriage that was very successful, lived with much mutual love and Elizabetta gave birth to seven children of whom two died while still small. Susana too, after her healing, thought of the religious life, but now she is smiling and sending invitations to her own marriage [in Nov]! She says it is unlikely she will have

seven children, but surely will raise hers in the faith of God, who shows his greatness through everyday miracles.



Its not always that God intervenes in such spectacular fashion as to heal disease but each day He shows the miracle of His love. Susana is sure of this: as He intervened in her life, He can also intervene with His power in everyone's life.

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