

TILDE MANZOTTI was born in Reggio Emilia (Italy) on 28 May 1915. She was the oldest in a large and deeply religious family. From childhood, Tilde showed a lively intelligence and a deep passion for learning, especially literature. However, at the age of 15, her life was interrupted by early symptoms of pulmonary tuberculosis, which at that time was almost incurable. Many times, Tilde was forced to disrupt her family life and studies in order to spend long periods of time in various sanatoriums. Separation, solitude, and physical pain forced Tilde to mature quickly, making her more thoughtful and reflective than other girls of her age. In spite of these interruptions, Tilde continued her studies, eventually obtaining her diploma as an elementary teacher in 1932. She then enrolled in the College of Education at the University of Turin, but once again she was forced to withdraw by the disease.

The daily effort of coping with physical pain – and with emotions ranging from hope to despair – put Tilde’s faith to the test, leading to a crisis from 1936 to 1937. It is possible that non-religious philosophical readings and sentimental frustrations also contributed to this crisis. In November 1937, the Manzotti family moved to Florence (Italy) and Tilde enrolled again at the College of Education at the University. In that occasion, she joined the F.U.C.I. (Italian Catholic University Federation) where she met the Dominican priest Reginaldo Santilli, a well-respected spiritual adviser. This was Tilde’s first contact with the Dominican Order, which would prove crucial in her spiritual growth and lead her to join, at an unknown date, the Dominican Tertiaries (known today as the Dominican Laity).

In June 1938, because of the further decline of her health, Tilde moved to Covigliaio (province of Florence), where a convent of Dominican nuns took in convalescents in need of fresh air. The silent and prayerful environment, daily contact with the nuns and, above all, the conversations with the young Dominican



friar Antonio Lupi gave Tilde the opportunity to re-embrace fully her faith. In lengthy conversations with friar Lupi, Tilde expressed her doubts; his responses eased her troubled spirit and satisfied her desire for the truth.

With the dissipation of doubt and forged by suffering, Tilde fully abandoned herself to God's generous care. Renewed, she journeyed onward on the path to holiness. In temporal terms, however, her journey would be short as she was to die some fifteen months later. Nonetheless, it was undertaken intensely and single-heartedly. We are able to trace her paths through the letters and the diary which she wrote in the last period of her life. Written intermittently, the diary was conceived (upon the advice of friar Lupi) as an intimate and sincere dialogue with Jesus. This dialogue did not hide anything – neither her experience of beautiful moments (which she found hard to express in words), nor the rebellious ones. There are the two recurring themes: love and pain. If the ultimate gift of love given to us by Jesus was the cross, then it is only by embracing the cross that we can reciprocate this love to the crucified Jesus. The diary is unique both for its elucidation of Tilde's intimacy with Jesus and its exceptional literary value. Though she wrote spontaneously and without revisions, Tilde achieved a strikingly spontaneous style with a rhythmic prose that often transformed into poetry. Her surviving letters (currently unpublished) enhance this diary with further information on her spiritual and daily life.

After her fruitful stay at Covigliaio, Tilde returned to her family in Florence in August 1938. She expressed to her parents her intentions to become Dominican nun, but they advised her to wait until she had fully recovered. Unfortunately, the disease did not diminish. On three occasions in her final year, Tilde left from Florence and her family to live in places more suitable for her condition: at San Prugnano in September 1938, Covigliaio in January 1939, and finally Paterno di Pelago from 20 June to her death on 03 October 1939. In October 1938, friar Lupi introduced Tilde to his confrere Stefano Lenzetti, a priest highly sought after for spiritual direction who resided with him at the Convent of San Domenico in Fiesole.



Tilde and Fr. Lenzetti immediately got along well and he became a wise guide for her, since until then she did not receive formal spiritual direction. Under Fr. Lenzetti's guidance, Tilde took a series of private vows: to be a victim of love and sacrifice, to abandon herself to God, to obey her spiritual adviser, to offer herself as a victim. Little by little, Tilde came to accept that she would neither recover from her illness nor be able to embrace the monastic life. She came to understand that she would only be able to do ministry indirectly: through suffering and

love, by lovingly accepting her suffering, and offering it for the good of all, by purifying her spirit and offering it to God for the fruitful ministry of priests, especially the Dominicans. The tuberculosis worsened, but Tilde no longer sought for a cure, not even for an easing of the pain. Rather, she asked for more pain so that she could grow in love, joyfully waiting for death which she believed would complete her union with Jesus. That day came on the day the church celebrated the liturgy of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, to whom Tilde was devoted and with whom she had much in common.

In a letter dated 05 June 1998, the Dominican theologian Raimondo Spiazzi wrote to the Manzotti family: "Tilde belonged to the group of young souls who between the two World Wars represented the most vital force in Italy, especially through such organizations as Catholic Action, F.U.C.I. , and through Christian militancy in religious and charitable works [...] and who stood out for the generosity of their own dedication and for the freshness of their spiritual life. As shown by the evidence gathered, in this path Tilde reached with her suffering a spiritual height that can only be described as heroic."

~ Rev. Fausto Sbaffoni, OP

Note: Tilde's diary was published recently as *Tilde Manzotti, Diario spirituale* (Florence: Nerbini, 2004).

INFORMATION ON THE CAUSE

1. **COMPETENT DIOCESE:** Fiesole (Italy)

2. **ITER:**

- ❖ publication of decree “nihil obstat”: **02 June 1995**
 - opening of the diocesan inquiry: **05 July 1995**
 - closing of the diocesan inquiry: **07 December 1998**
- ❖ validation of diocesan inquiry: -----
- ❖ consignment of Positio to CCS: -----
- ❖ meeting of theological consultants: -----
- ❖ congregation of CCS cardinals and bishops: -----
- ❖ promulgation of decree on heroic virtues: -----
- ❖ promulgation of decree on miracle for beatification: -----
- ❖ beatification: -----
- ❖ promulgation of decree on miracle for canonization: -----
- ❖ canonization: -----

3. **POSTULATOR:** Rev. Vito Tomás Gómez García, OP

4. **PETITIONER:** Comunità di San Leolino, Via San Leolino 1,
50020 Panzano in Chianti (FI), ITALY

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