

## ***Regioni & Città - Natuzza Evolo, Pino Nano: “Domenico Tarcisio Cortese, the priest who changed Natuzza’s life”***

**Rome - 08 feb 2021 (Prima Pagina News) Extraordinary and scientifically unexplained healings; diagnoses delivered in great detail; handkerchiefs used to wipe her body imprinted with her blood; stigmata on her hands and feet; thorn wounds on her forehead; conversations with the dead; simultaneous appearances in different parts of the world; a wonderful scent of flowers announcing her presence while she continued to live and stay in her home in Calabria; followers and faithful everywhere; and visions of and conversations with the Virgin Mary. Natuzza Evolo was all of this.**

There is a priest – or rather a bishop – who has played a key role in Natuzza's life. It is Monsignor Domenico Tarcisio Cortese, bishop of the Diocese of Mileto-Nicotera-Tropea. In fact, he had to deal with Natuzza for thirty years, burdening himself with what was a big and unsolvable issue for the Church of the time, and he accompanied her throughout her amazing journey until the day of her death. “I was bishop of the diocese of Mileto-Nicotera-Tropea for twenty-eight years, and I can say I’m the chief witness of the events that have marked my long episcopate, having known Natuzza for years. With this contribution,” as Monsignor Cortese writes in his afterword to the essay written by Luciano Regolo, Deputy Editorial Director of Famiglia Cristiana, and dedicated to her, “I do not intend to judge the extraordinary phenomena attributed to the mystic from Paravati. Only the Church can decide on this delicate matter, when and how it deems appropriate. What I can say for sure is that Natuzza, a woman of faith, did obey the Church, even in the most delicate and difficult moments of her life. I can confirm it. Some members of the clergy had doubts about Natuzza, because of her visions and her messages, which were sometimes veiled accusations against the clergy. This has caused misunderstandings. When I joined the diocese, in 1979, Natuzza came to me and said: “Your Excellency, if you want me not to receive people and not to talk to them, I will obey you!” I pointed out that I did not have the power, nor did I intend to prevent her from receiving and talking to people, as I believed that her meetings and her words would only do good. She was relieved when she left.” Monsignor Domenico Tarcisio Cortese continued to repeat these words while he was alive: “As a bishop, I have never heard such a loyal declaration of obedience. Natuzza was a woman of faith, and she had much in common with other exceptional witnesses of our time. Padre Pio, for example.” But I prefer to talk about Don Primo Mazzolari. Seen as a frontier priest, too innovative and therefore troublesome, he was rebuked and warned several times by the ecclesiastical authorities, which he never stopped obeying. Today, there is much consensus around the testimony given by this strong and brave man. Before dying, he wrote in his will: “I am sorry if I made my superiors suffer; it was not my intention, but I do not regret having suffered.” Pope Paul VI indirectly responded to his statements,

almost as if he wanted to ask don Primo forgiveness for what the ecclesiastical authorities had done to him: “Of course, we could not share his ideas. It was hard to keep up with him. He was ahead of his time, he suffered, and we suffered too.” Wherever he went and whenever he was asked about Natuzza or what he thought of her, the old bishop of Mileto always told the same strange story, which gave a clear idea of the great connection they had: “Since she was a girl, Natuzza has always proven her faith, even with extraordinary signs that can be intriguing and disturbing at the same time. Natuzza was a simple and humble woman. There is, in particular, an episode that confirms that Natuzza was a genuine person, but she was also naive. She ordered a statue of the Virgin Mary – with specific features required by her – from Ortisei. Before the statue was blessed so that it could be displayed for veneration by the faithful, I asked to see it. I was just curious. So, one evening, I went to Natuzza's house and I saw this statue with a young and smiling face and her arms stretched wide in welcome. Then, I said to myself, This is the first time I see a statue of the Immaculate Conception with its arms stretched out towards other people, and not to Heaven, as if it wants to embrace humanity. Natuzza was impatient to hear my views, so she finally asked the question: ‘Your Excellency, do you like my statue?’ “Yes”, I replied, “I definitely like it, but it’s not my Virgin Mary.” I was joking, but Natuzza did not get it, so she insisted: “How does your Virgin Mary look like?” I should point out that I am a faithful follower of Saint Francis of Assisi, and, according to the Franciscan iconography, the Virgin Mary always holds the Christ Child in her arms. But I didn't waste time reassuring Natuzza. I told her that her Virgin Mary was like Our Lady of Lourdes and of Fatima, who does not hold the Christ Child in her arms, although the ‘Blessed Mother’ had the Holy Rosary in her hands. Natuzza, finally reassured, kissed my hand, and said: “Your Excellency, I'm so happy!”. She was an extraordinary woman of faith, that's why she was misunderstood and even scorned by some members of the clergy. And she suffered, but she never stopped obeying the Church, supported by her unshakable faith, and she continued doing what she was doing because she had a mission to accomplish: bringing all the love she could into the world. Of significance – Bishop Cortese concluded in his interview with the Deputy Editorial Director of Famiglia Cristiana – is the confession made by one of Natuzza's children in front of his mother's coffin on the day of her funeral. It was raining buckets and it was also a windy day, and thousands and thousands of faithful were there. He sounded confident, although he was suffering and he was moved, and he said: “Thank you mom, because, since I was a child, I've always known that I have a family – you, dad, and my four brothers, but I also have many other brothers and sisters, as love can be everywhere in the world. And it was you who taught me this.” (by Pino Nano)

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