
Rosario Livatino. Elena Valdetara Canale miraculously healed by his intercession: "A sign of God's love but eternal life is the greatest miracle."

Today marks the 30th anniversary of the assassination of **Rosario Angelo Livatino**, the magistrate born in Canicattì assigned to the Court of Agrigento, killed in a Mafia ambush on September 22, 1990 while driving alone without police escort, as was his daily routine, along the road that connects Canicattì to Agrigento. The alleged miracles attributed to the intercession of the young magistrate, whose cause of beatification is underway, include the inexplicable healing in 1996 of **Elena Valdetara Canale**, diagnosed with Hodgkin's lymphoma in 1993, which doctors had claimed would result in death in less than two years. Married 45 years with Giovanni, Elena will turn 70 next November. She shared her story with SIR. **"When I was diagnosed with the disease in the spring of 1993, our four children, two of them born from our marriage and two adopted, were very young.** In my job as special needs teacher I witnessed the suffering and necessities of many young ones. In agreement with my husband I quit my job to dedicate myself entirely to taking care of children deprived of their mothers." The girls, Chiara and Cecilia, were 17 and 13 years old. Simona, the adopted child with Down's syndrome and congenital heart disease, who passed away in 2001, was 14 while Francesco was only four years old. He was born without all four limbs due to a congenital disorder and had to face heavy surgery. The doctors informed Elena that if she did not receive "heavy chemotherapy" combined with full-body radiation therapy, she would have about six months of autonomy and a couple of years at most to live, but they warned her that she had less than 50% chances of being able to tolerate that type of treatment - much heavier than today's. Elena realized that she would not be able to take care of her children during chemotherapy: *"All I could think of at the time was Francesco's health, he would have to undergo surgery to prevent stumps from piercing his skin, causing him painful sores. So, without thinking about treating myself, we took him to Modena where he underwent surgery, and at five to Bologna where he was given an electric wheelchair".* **One night of November 1993, she had a dream.** "A man in priestly attire, whom I did not know – she recalls – appeared before me. I will never forget his face, and, above all, his gaze. It was as if he was aware of the desire I had in my heart. He looked me straight in the eye and said:

'You have a healing power within you. Once you find it, you will be able to help other children.'

Immediately after, I dreamt I was taken to a time in the future, and someone told me it was my silver wedding ceremony with Giovanni. How was that possible? We were to celebrate it in the year 2000, seven years after the ominous diagnosis which left me with only two years to live." After having spoken with her family about her dream, Elena continued dedicating herself to her children. But in 1995 her condition worsened. *"On September 20, before entering hospital for the biopsy and other tests, I saw a newspaper article dedicated to the fifth anniversary of Livatino's murder and from the photo I recognized the face of the young man that had appeared in my dream two years before.* That article also mentioned his deep religious devotion and that he entrusted himself to God's protection - *sub tutela Dei.* I also read - she went on - that there had been an initiative for his beatification and I thought that I could ask him for the grace of my recovery." So on September 21, in the parish church of Petra de' Giorgi (Pavia) where they lived, during Mass Elena read her intention:

"I pray to Our Father in heaven, through the intercession of Rosario Livatino, for the grace of healing from lymphoma, but above all to be steadfast in the faith."

She then went to hospital where she was diagnosed with third-stage cancer, irreversible, and

was again proposed "heavy chemotherapy", which she had to suspend after the second administration for anaphylactic shock. In December, the European Institute of Oncology of Umberto Veronesi in Milan confirmed the diagnosis and suggested attempting lighter chemo. However, the treatment failed to halt the progress of the disease that reached a terminal stage. In 1996, a few months after a pilgrimage by sea to the Holy Land with Cecilia, the second daughter who was to die two years later, and young Francesco, "I started to feel better", she said, "I took new tests at the Cancer Institute and when the Professor saw them on September 20, he wrote that there was no more evidence of the disease." *Thus, by an extraordinary providential coincidence it came full circle. The certificate of full clinical and radiological remission bears the date of September 20, 1996, the eve of the sixth anniversary of Livatino's death. What does it feel like to experience a miracle?* "It's not easy to cope with - Elena replied - The newfound happiness of life and of being able to be a bride and mother again, is accompanied by a guilt feeling. I saw many seriously ill people younger than me, including many children. I was just over forty at the time... But two years later, on September 4, 1998, Cecilia died when she was just over 18 years old in a car accident, and I was put to the test then. I was overwhelmed by a feeling of rebellion: *Oh Lord, why? I was ready, resigned. You could have taken me instead of her! Why leave me to see my child precede me on the path to eternal life?*". **Giovanni intervened:** "He told me that Cecilia and Simona belong to God, they are not ours, and that we must give thanks for the time He left them with us. Simona passed away on December 15, 2001, but during the agony that began on December 8, even though she could hardly speak, she told me that she had seen her sister Cecilia at the foot of the bed with a 'mother' descending from a wonderful place where there is no more suffering but only love, coming to take her." Elena celebrated her silver wedding anniversary in the year 2000 with her husband and children at the Jubilee of Families. She recalls her meeting with John Paul II and what her husband wrote her after the death of her daughters, which she always carries with her: "there is no night in the universe; there is only a moment, a point on the threshold of time when life and death meet. But eternal life is the true life."

How has your life changed after the miraculous healing?

"My healing was a sign of God's love.

We adopted our fifth child, Andrea, also with Down syndrome but fortunately with no heart condition. He is 22 years old today, he is a loving, cheerful boy; he is our joy. *I think of the resurrection that awaits us all according to the will of the Lord. It is the true, greatest miracle, and we, here on earth, are called to prepare ourselves for that moment.* My life is no different than it was before. My thoughts go to Mary beneath the Cross, to the words of Jesus to His mother: 'Behold your Son', and to the apostle: 'Behold your mother'. Like John with Mary, we are all adopted children." "Cecilia and Simona are protecting us from Heaven and have opened our hearts to welcome Andrew", she concludes with a smile. I think of Mary under the cross ...

We are all adopted children."

Giovanna Pasqualin Traversa