

St. Philomena teaches us by her example that it is better to die than to offend God, even in venial sins. She has many times worked miracles in favor of young women consecrated to God under the banner of virginity. While it pleases God to glorify His servant by numerous prodigies, He also wishes us to imitate



her virtues. Our Saint carries in her hand the flowering symbol of her virginity, the lily. This symbol was approved by Holy Mother the Church, and soon a rule was laid down, a habit decided upon and certain practices established. In the twinkling of an eye, cities and towns which were in the vicinity of Mugnano were peopled with virgins, consecrated to God by the vow of chastity. From then on, they were called under the name of **Monastics of Saint Philomena**, the young Religious of Saint Philomena. They lived, not in a community or the bosom of a monastery, but in the bosom of their families, in the midst of the world (to which they assuredly did not belong) blending in with the rest of the faithful, practicing their rule and living their vow of chastity.

Pope Leo XII heard of them and the joy he felt was evidenced on his face. But, when he learned that they lived with their families and their presence in the world was a great means of edification, he could not contain himself and cried out: **"Without doubt, this is the greatest miracle of Saint Philomena! In a century of universal corruption and in a kingdom wherein religion has suffered so much lately, we find souls, pure and generous, who dare to trample underfoot both the flesh and the world; I bless them all!"** This flock of virgins in the middle of general depravity drew

attention, excited curiosity, provoked jealousy and inflamed the malice of the wicked hearted.

God wishes to make man understand that, in all times, in all places and under all conditions, virtue, even the most delicate, can be acquired, conserved and perfected in spite of the passions of the flesh,

the world and the devil. His Grace is never wanting. If we will it, no obstacle whatever it may be, can triumph over the weakest child. In a time when man's thoughts are almost all turned toward evil, the virtue of purity becomes excessively rare and is most pleasing to God. When a young woman has a vocation and, yet, not the dowry or opportunity to enter a holy convent ... eventually the appeal and the restlessness of the age will absorb her poor heart. It is to these and to others who may feel moved by their example, that the Good Lord opens an easy access for the practice of the angelic virtue. St. Philomena brings to earth the key to this new Eden. If it does not have all the beauty with which the cloister is surrounded, it contains a portion of the glory of the apostolate. Purity is a monument of sanctity raised up in the middle of the world. Purity is a beacon of salvation which looms up out of the stormy seas to indicate a port, without escaping the storm, where one can brave it with impunity. Purity is a sun shining in the thickest darkness. If Purity does not succeed in breaking up this horror, at least it will be exposed for what it is. This sign should bring, now or later, if not conversion of the people seated in the shadow of death, at least the victorious justification of Providence unto the day when Christ will come to judge the universe. Oh, what a glorious mission this is: Virgins consecrated to God under the name and following the footprints of St. Philomena!