



# Blessed Giuseppina Nicoli, D.C.

Servant of Jesus Christ in the person of children living in poverty

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Giuseppina (Josephine) was born to a large and deeply religious family in Casatisma (Province of Pavia, in the northwest Italian region of Lombardy), Italy. She was the fifth of ten children. Her father was a lawyer. She spent her childhood in the nearby town of Voghera, completed her studies with honors and earned a master teacher's diploma.

Strong-willed, stubborn and, at the same time, softened by a deep religious sense, she decided to devote her life to the Church.



Soon she left her family to enter the Company of the Daughters of Charity: Christ had seduced her and fascinated her. On September 24, 1883, Giuseppina entered as a novice at the House of San Salvatio in Turin (Central House of the Turin Province of the Daughters of Charity).



Sr. Giuseppina arrived in Cagliari, Sardinia on January 1, 1885; she was just 21 years old. She joined her new mission with enthusiasm. She was sent to teach young women at the Istituto Provvidenza (Institute of Providence), but her ministry would not be limited to teaching.



The Institute of Providence was founded by Father Gian Battista Vassallo, S.J., to accommodate poor orphan girls, educating them in the Christian way and teaching them the skills necessary to become good mothers. Later they added a factory for weaving cotton, flax and silk and the boarders were trained in these trades. Blessed Sister Giuseppina Nicoli taught here from 1885 to 1889. Over time it remained a girls' boarding school until its closure at the end of the 1990s. Currently the building is closed.



At the age of thirty Sister  
Giuseppina contracted  
pulmonary tuberculosis which  
she lived with until her death. In  
spite of her fragile health, she  
worked very hard.



*Serva di Dio*  
*Suor Giuseppina Nicoli*  
*Figlia della Carità*  
*1863-1924*

In 1899, she was named Superior of the Orphanage of Sassari (in the northern part of Sardinia). There, she gained experience and began to blossom. She gave new momentum to the Association of the Daughters of Mary; brought together the Ladies of Charity and guided them in the service of the poor; encouraged catechism courses, bringing together a large number of boys and girls every Sunday, and above all reestablished the School of Religion for young university students so that future teachers would have a good religious background.



In 1910, she was called back to Turin for her outstanding organizational skills as provincial treasurer, then to direct the seminary, to which Sister Giuseppina fully dedicated herself, despite worsening health problems. By 1913 because of her very poor health, with great regret the Provincial Council made the difficult decision to send her back to Sardinia, to the island climate better suited to her lung disease than misty and humid Turin.



The Sassari to which she returned was not the city of good memories she had left. There was a hostile environment of anti-clericalism which led her to choose to be transferred back to Cagliari.



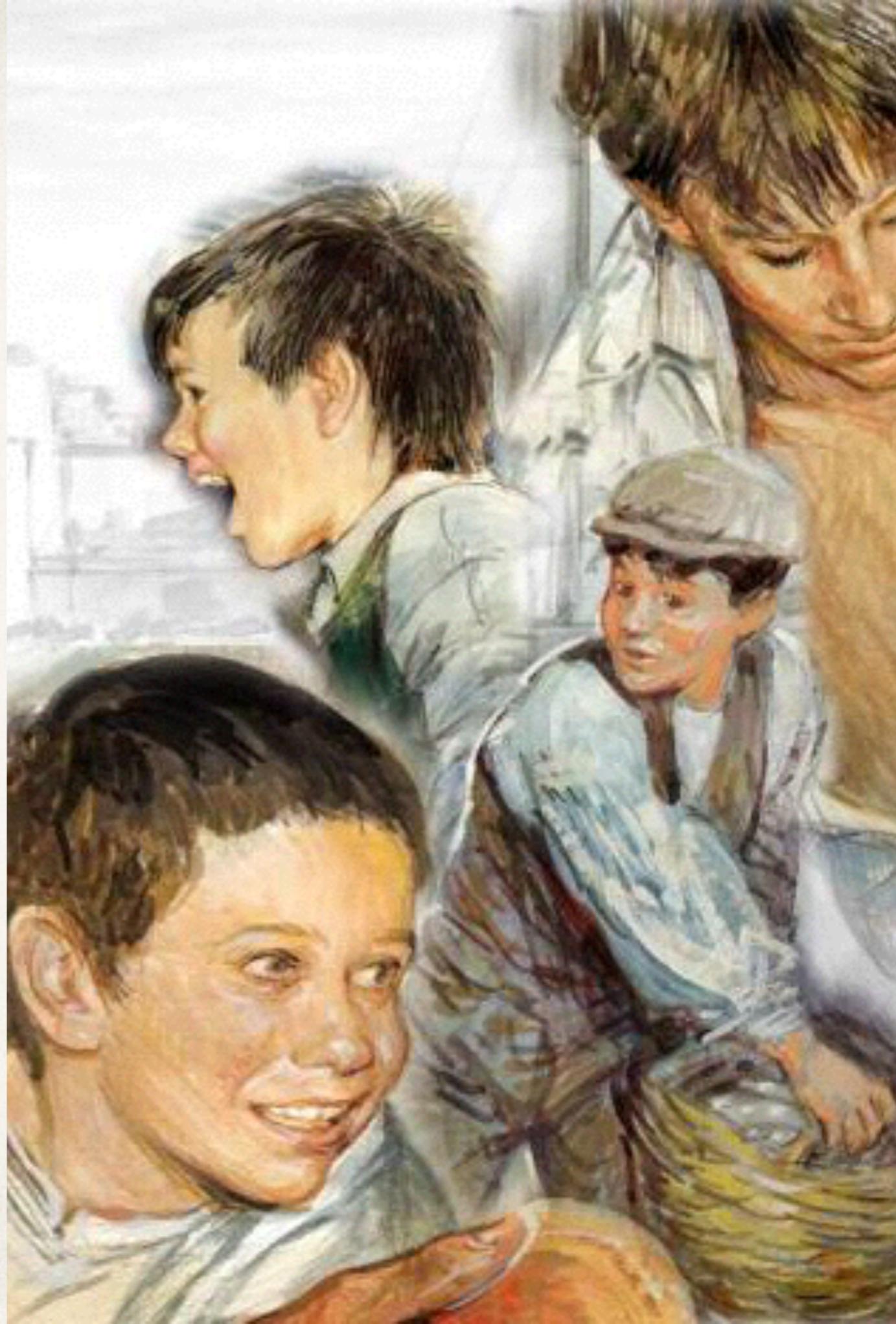
On August 7, 1914, Providence led Sister Giuseppina to the "Marina Nursery School" in Cagliari. As the children were poor, they did not have access to schooling and their lack of education led to problem behaviors. They and their families who lived in squalor survived by their wits, at times in dishonest ways. Thus along with their material poverty, Sister Giuseppina also discovered the hidden wounds of moral and spiritual poverty: she understood their need for formation.



She also took care of the youth of the city, many of whom worked in the tobacco factories, and organized spiritual retreats for them. She was also concerned about the young domestic workers who came from the countryside to the city to serve the well-off families. Sr. Giuseppina gathered them together so that they would have time for relaxation, and offered them opportunities to learn to read and write.



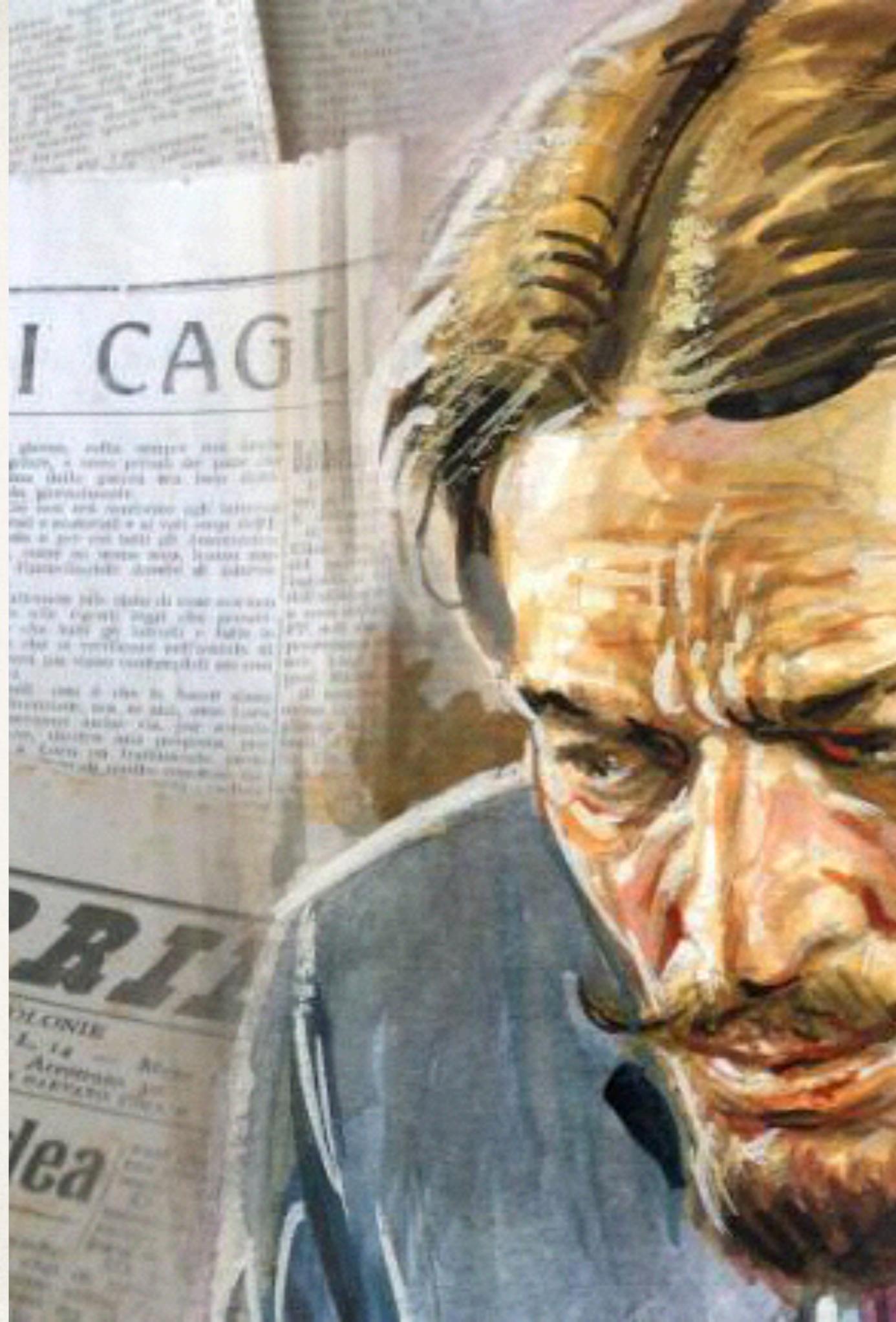
Above all else, though, Sister Nicol is remembered for her connection with the “basket boys” who were well known throughout the city because of the special tools of their trade: their basket. These boys became her constant concern. Hordes of these barefoot adolescents, poorly clothed and malnourished, would crowd around the market area in the city adjoining the Marina Nursery School. They earned a living carrying luggage for those who were coming into the city, via the station or the port, or by transporting the goods purchased by the ladies going to the market. They would often knock on the door of the school to ask for something to eat.



Accompanied by the Sisters in her community, Sister Nicoli approached these young people with the gentleness of a loving mother. She won them over, for she responded to a profound and inexpressible need they had for attention and affection. Through her trust and friendship, she guided them to find the Lord. She renamed them Mary's boys, confiding them to Mary's protection. She gave them classes, prepared them to carry out a profession, and talked with them about God giving them an awareness of their own dignity.



The last year of her life, in 1924, Sr. Nicoli and the school community were publicly slandered. Sr. Giuseppina accepted it in silence, until the President of the Administration acknowledged his error. On her deathbed, Sister Nicoli forgave him with a broad smile. She died on 31 December 1924 at age 61.



Sister Giuseppina Nicoli was beatified on 3 February 2008 in Cagliari, the city which saw her charity shine. Many favors have been granted due to her intercession. Charity was the rule of her whole life: in profound humility, she lived this affirmation of our Founder daily:

*"You serve Jesus Christ in the person of the poor: My daughters, how true is this!"*

- Saint Vincent de Paul



Let us ask for the intercession of Sister Nicoli that our lives may be full of enthusiasm and great desires to serve the poor, happy and smiling as this Sister did.

May the fidelity and dedication of the Daughters of Charity impel us always to be radical witnesses of the Gospel, without fear, and to always courageously follow the Lord who has called us.



# Sources

- *Laudes martires de Angers y Sor Nicoli* by Compañía de las Hijas de la Caridad, Ávila, Castilla y León, Spain;
  - *Giuseppina Nicoli, D.C.: Caring for the Basket Boys*, Daughters of Charity, Ireland;
  - and Wikipedia
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