



# Blessed Chidra Baddano

## Her Secrets to Happiness

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# Contents

In Her Own Words .....	13
Introduction.....	15
<b>Chapter One</b>	
Chiara's Apple and the Table: A Transgression and a Glimpse of Light.....	16
<b>Chapter Two</b>	
The Least, also Known as Jesus .....	20
<b>Chapter Three</b>	
Human Nature and the World.....	25
<b>Chapter Four</b>	
The Secret of the Abandoned One .....	34
<b>Chapter Five</b>	
Patient Endurance and Joy.....	42
<b>Chapter Six</b>	
Called by a New Name.....	50
<b>Chapter Seven</b>	
Her Legacy Begins .....	53
<b>Chapter Eight</b>	
Beatification and Beyond .....	56
Discussion Questions .....	59
Acknowledgements .....	60
Bibliography .....	61

## In Her Own Words

Let's stop for a moment to reflect on the meaning of our lives. . . . Often, human beings do not live their life because they are immersed in a time that does not exist, either in the memory or regrets of the past or projected into the future. In reality, the only time that anyone possesses is the present moment, which should be lived completely taking full advantage of it. By living in this way, people will feel free because they are no longer crushed by the anguish of the past and worries about the future.

Certainly, it is not easy to reach this goal and it requires constant effort to remain in this reality. . . . The only way to make the most of time is to make sense of our every action, large or small. A person could give meaning to everything by going beyond selfishness and giving value to everything by doing it for others. Perhaps we would have to give a new intention to each of our actions and we would certainly feel more fulfilled and become more aware of the value of life as a precious gift that cannot and should not be wasted nor burned up in sterile selfishness and useless ambition.<sup>1</sup>


Chiara Badano

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1. Chiara Badano Foundation, *In My Staying Is Your Going*, trans. Bill Hartnett and Maria Blanc (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2021).



## Introduction

A watercolor illustration on the left side of the page shows the shoulder and hand of a person. The hand is resting on the shoulder, with fingers slightly curled. The colors are muted, with shades of brown, tan, and a soft pinkish-red on the shoulder area.

“Be happy, because I am,” said the young woman on her sickbed. Chiara Badano, almost nineteen years old, had discovered the secrets of happiness. Those secrets had nothing to do with being well, much less being rich, beautiful, or famous, doing whatever she wanted or having whatever she wanted. She held these secrets in her heart and put them into practice every day. These secrets, which had been shared with her and which she shared with others, helped her live an extraordinary life and create a legacy of light and love that continues to this day. However, her story begins much earlier, with her parents, Ruggero and Maria Teresa, and a lot of prayer.



## Chapter One

# Chiara's Apple and the Table: A Transgression and a Glimpse of Light

**T**ruck driver Ruggero Badano and his wife Maria Teresa lived in Sassello, a hilly northern Italian village known for its traditional cookies and porcini mushrooms. For eleven years, Ruggero and Maria Teresa had prayed to have a child, even praying at a shrine dedicated to Our Lady. At long last, on October 29, 1971, they had a baby girl and named her Chiara (kee-AR-ah).

Ruggero and Maria Teresa said, “She was our child, but even more than that, she was a child of God.”

Maria Teresa left a job in a factory to stay home and raise their daughter, who grew up happy and healthy. There was something special about Chiara, too. At times, she seemed to have a deep, insightful understanding of things. Her gift of understanding may have helped her to grasp the secrets.

Of course, like all children, Chiara sometimes misbehaved, needed to be taught right from wrong, and struggled to do the right thing. Once she brought home an apple from a neighbor's orchard. She had taken it without the neighbor's permission. Her mother explained why Chiara had to give it back immediately and apologize. Embarrassed, Chiara hesitated at first, but with her mother's guidance and encouragement, she returned the neighbor's apple. Ruggero also disciplined Chiara, but always with love and reason.

The Gospels made an impression on Chiara at an early age. Maria Teresa would read bedtime stories (fairy tales and the

like) to Chiara. However, she would often read the Gospels to Chiara too, and she taught Chiara to pray. Chiara showed how much she understood one day when her mother asked her to clear the table.

“I don’t want to,” Chiara said. She folded her arms and walked away. But then she turned back, saying: “How does that



story from the Gospel go, about the father who asks his son to go to the vineyard?”<sup>2</sup> Remembering the parable about the two sons and which one did his father’s will—meaning God’s will—she cleared the table (see Matthew 21:28–31).

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2. Kelly, Christine, “Ordinary, Extraordinary Life,” *Living City*, March 2010, 6–7.

Doing the will of God was one of the secrets to happiness that she would embrace, and it was hidden in the Gospel. Chiara and her parents would have to see the Gospel in a new light in order to discover this secret and others.

This light began dawning when Chiara's parents heard about the Focolare (foh-coh-LA-ray) Movement. It was a group of people, of all ages and walks of life, who wanted to love God. They tried to put Jesus' words into action every day. Maria

