

A bright

LITTLE



ANGELA TOCCO ASC



The year is 1805. In a small town of Lazio called Vallecorssa, which stands upon a hill surrounded on three sides by the Lepini and Ausoni mountains, a nice little baby girl is born, little Maria.

The parents, Mr. and Mrs. De Mattias, are overjoyed.

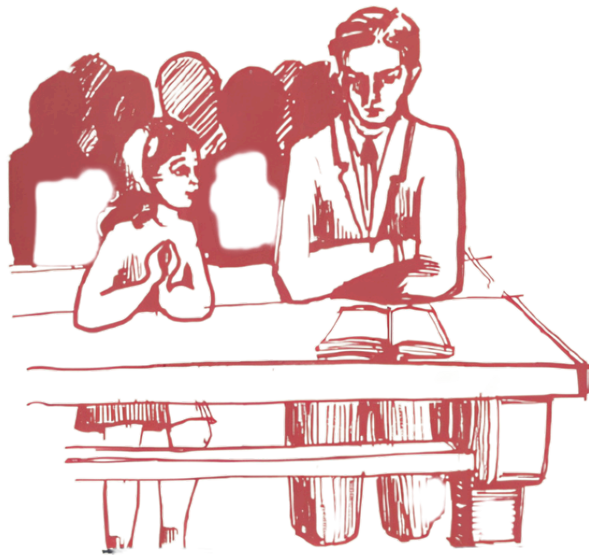
The baby girl, whom they call "Little Queen," grows up lively and mischievous; and like a canary, she fills the house with her warbling. Her mother is a little strict. She doesn't want her to play tricks, and sometimes she gives her a resounding slap. However, her father is less demanding and easily forgives her innocent, playful pranks.



In the evening, her papa takes little Maria on his lap and strokes her long blond hair. The little girl is very happy to hug him; and between her kisses, she promises she will not do so many pranks.

Her dad, moved by the promises of his Little Queen, tells her fascinating stories from the Bible, which little Maria listens to very attentively.

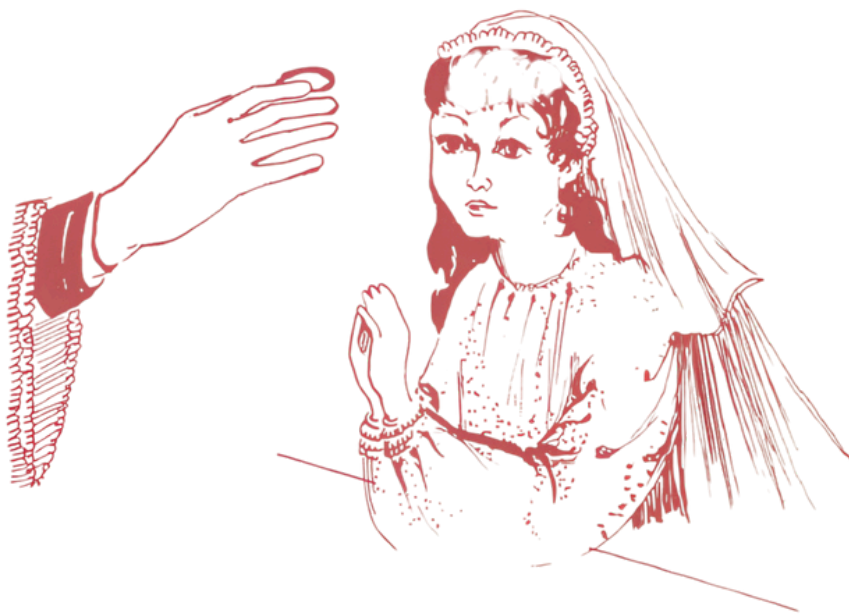




*She is a little distracted in church.
Her pretty dark eyes do not stop to
look at the dangling earrings of the
ladies, but are fixed...*

*sometimes on the altar and
sometimes on her father as he prays
devoutly. On Easter Sunday, the
priest talks about a meek Lamb that
lets itself be killed in order to wash
away the sins of the people with his
blood.*





Maria listens very carefully. She understands that the lamb is Jesus, and she resolves to love him.

forever and never to offend him. With all her heart she desires to receive her First Communion. Soon Jesus comes into her little heart; and Maria, who is a generous child, gives her heart to Jesus forever. She makes some resolutions, and especially to obey when she is told

to do something, without making her mother or the maid call her twice.

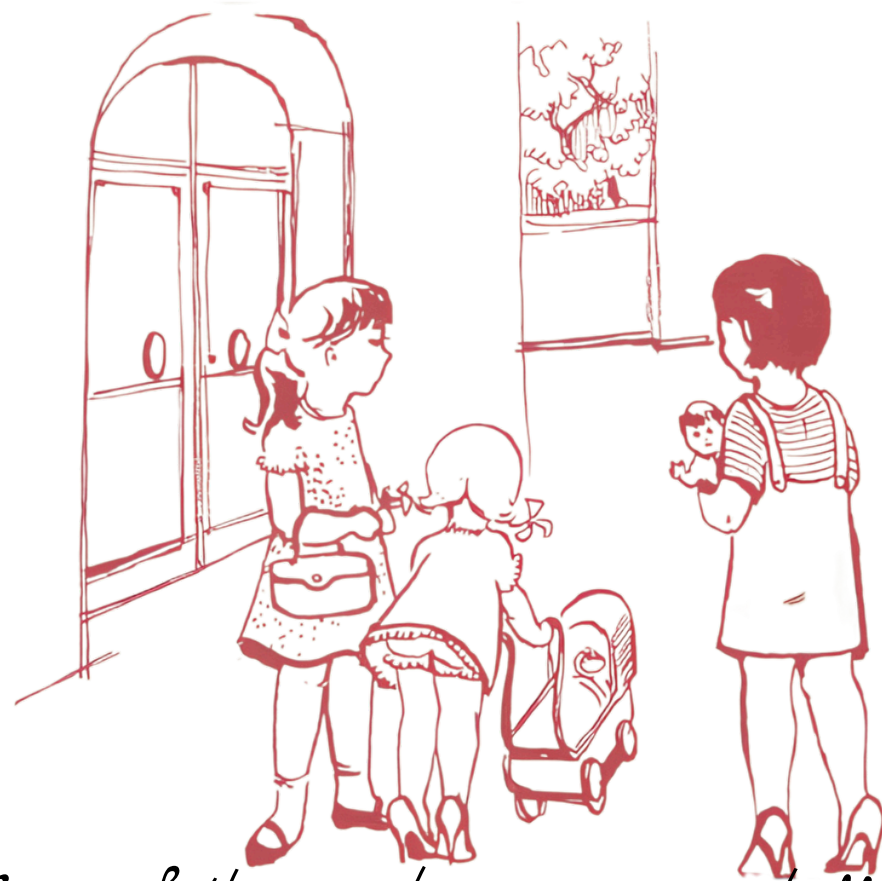


Maria keeps her promises and becomes more obedient. But she doesn't stop being lively.

She has to try very hard, when she plays, not to burst the eardrums of those who take care of her. She learns only to run without making the poor maid despair and without making the windows rattle.

She also makes sacrifices:





for example, she stops playing and goes into her room to pray to the Madonna, saying, "Mary, Mother of Jesus and my Mother, give me light!" There are many little girls near her home, with its beautiful front door and rounded arch.

Some of these girls are poor, and Maria loves them very much.

Like a mama she washes the face of the smaller ones and gives all of them little pastries. Then she invites them to play "make-believe we're ladies" with her;



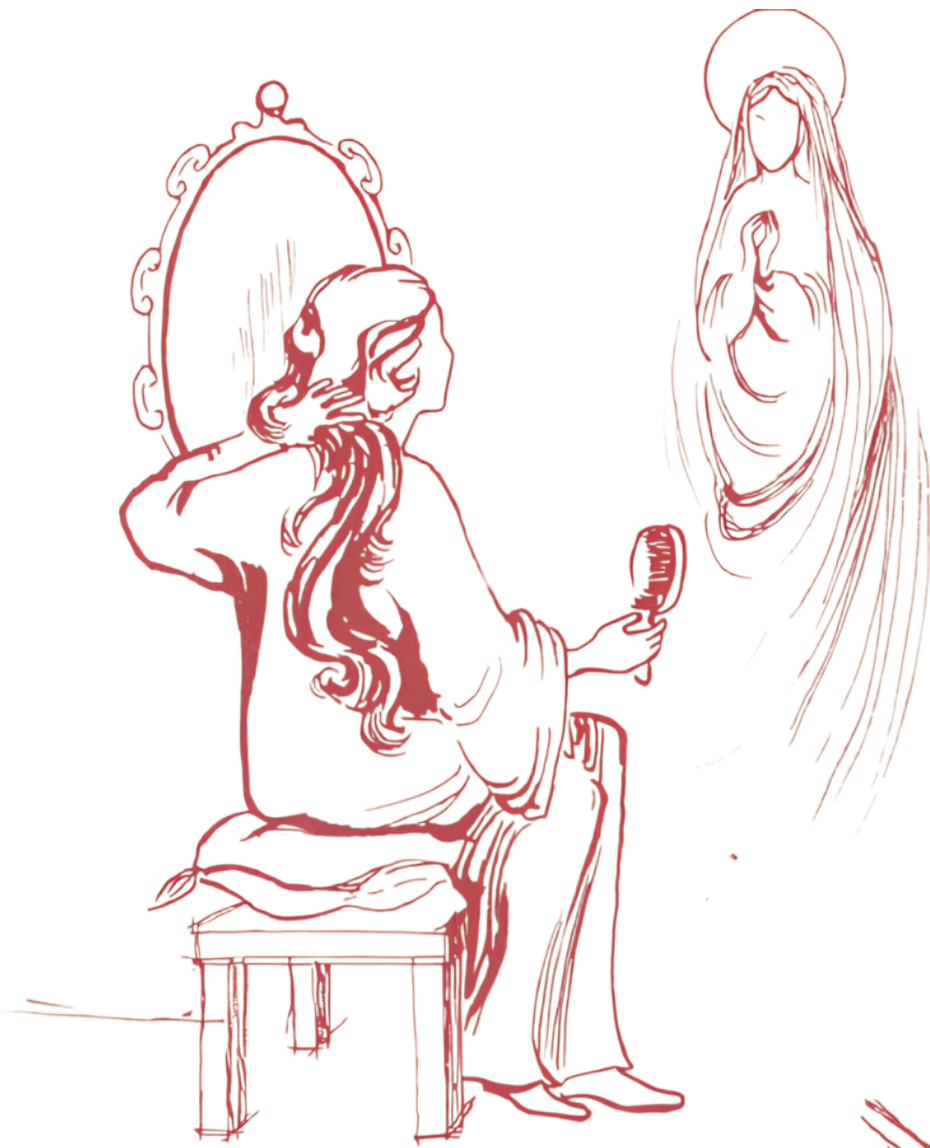


and, in a very simple way, she teaches them the catechism, which they all follow with interest. Michael and Anthony, Maria's two younger brothers, like to have fun and play the guitar, while other boys and girls dance and sing.

Maria doesn't want them to offend Jesus, placing Him on the cross again; and she breaks her brothers' guitar.

Anthony is wild with rage, and he hits Maria very hard. Maria goes to her room and exclaims in front of the picture of the Blessed Lady,





"My dear Madonna, yes, I did get a beating, but at least the offense to God is ended." Maria is almost a grown-up now, and has some difficulty with reading and writing. She likes to dress according to the latest styles and stand in front of the mirror a long time.





One day while she is combing her hair and looking at herself in a new hairdo, her gaze stops on the picture of the Madonna beside her, and she hears her say: "Come to me." From that moment on, Maria can read and write miraculously well. The Mission attracts a large crowd of farmers and women in their bright-colored traditional clothes. Every evening the church is filled with persons who want to hear the preaching of Holy Week. One of the Missionaries is Fr. Gaspare, who speaks about the crucified Jesus. Maria, who is always present in the first row, is so deeply struck that she cries in sorrow.



The voice of Jesus calls her from deep within her heart. Jesus wants her all for Himself. Maria hesitates...she loves her father very much and does not want to hurt him. She calls on the Madonna to enlighten her. Finally, she makes her decision and leaves for Acuto.

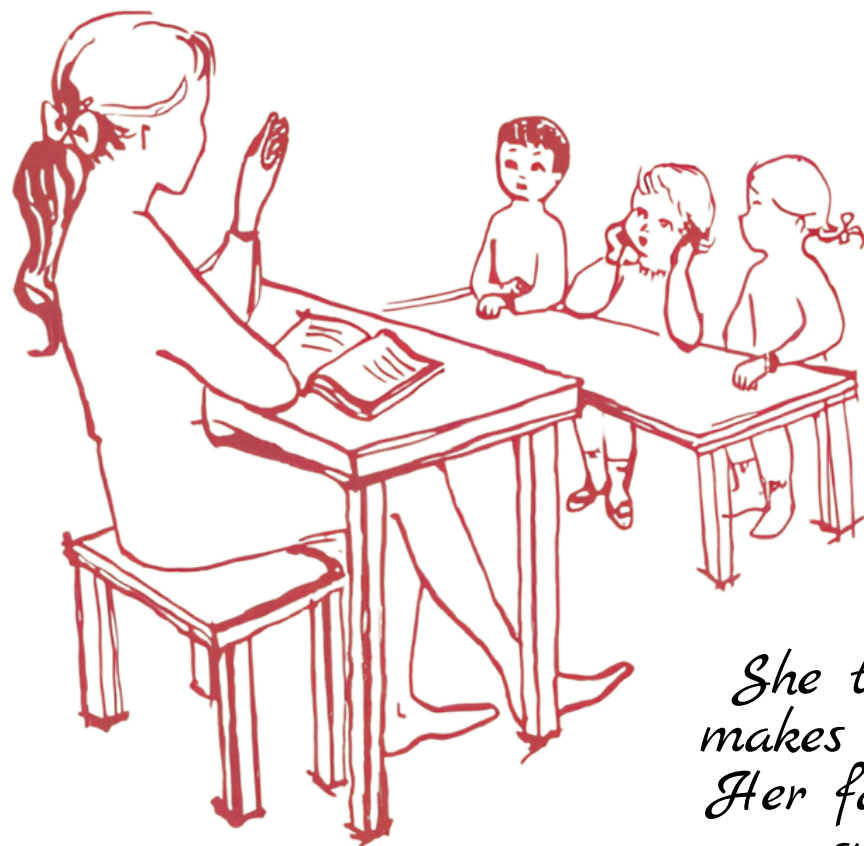
Papa is sad about the departure of his Little Queen, but accepts the sacrifice and embraces her for the last time. With the blessing of the bishop of Ferentino,





she prepares to undertake a long and tiring journey, in the company of her faithful maid who will never abandon her young mistress. Astride her donkey, she has to cross a valley covered with dense forest and has to climb up an incline that reaches the top of the mountain.

Maria suffers and prays quietly. She lets her donkey rest and walks so fast that with every step, she seems to be flying off toward a goal.



In Acuto she works in a modest, undecorated school. The classrooms are small, but the students are happy anyway, because Maria is an excellent teacher, much different from the others.



She teaches patiently and lovingly, and makes even the most difficult lessons easy. Her face is always shining with a gentle smile that attracts all the girls.



She is the one who organizes games and intones happy songs with her beautiful voice. She quickly wins the trust of the parents of little girls. The mothers continually come to see her. They confide their pains and joys to her, and ask her advice about how to bring up their little children better.

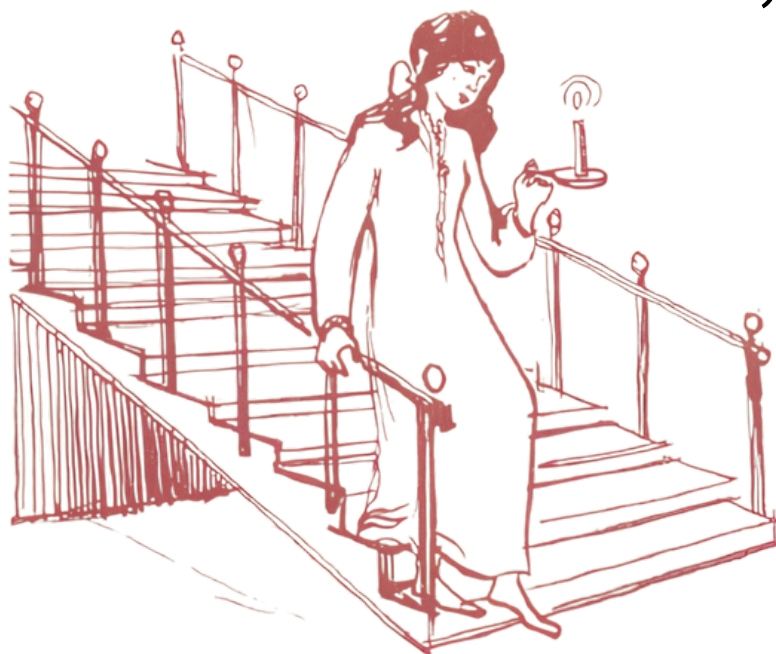
Maria has a kind word for everyone. She cries with those who suffer and smiles lovingly with those who rejoice.



The number of little girls who come to her grows from day to day, and Maria thinks it is necessary to build a new school, larger and better furnished.

She has very little money to pay the workers, and she is not used to heavy work. Still, for the love of Jesus she adapts to any kind of work.

One day she looks for a pail, and not finding one, she carries rocks in her hat.



Maria does not find the strength to be good inside herself, but in prayer. At night, while everyone is sleeping quietly, she tiptoes downstairs without making any noise, and goes into the church.

There she spends long hours in front of the tabernacle. Most of the time, her prayer continues until sunrise.





She talks to Jesus as to her dearest and most faithful friend, and Jesus listens to her and consoles her. Maria and her first companions put on a religious habit. It is black; their face is adorned by a smart-looking, starched fringe and a white coif. A red sash hangs from their waist to symbolize the Divine Blood of Jesus.



Everything is the same as the vision that Maria had at Vallecorsa, when she was at her home. Maria is a Sister; and who would ever have imagined it?

Now she is a humble bride of Jesus, always ready to help others. With the guidance of Fr. Giovanni Merlini, she writes the rules that the Sisters must observe during the day.





*Maria opens new schools and
makes long journeys.
The weather is calm; only one
black cloud passes high in the
sky. It approaches quickly,
lowers and the rain begins to
fall in a very heavy downpour.
Maria can't find the road
anymore; but she does not
despair. She kneels down and
prays.*



Suddenly, from behind a tree, a mysterious little boy appears. His face shines with a divine light. He smiles at Maria and gently invites her to follow him.

Almost as though by magic, they find the street again and the bad cloud has disappeared. It is no longer raining.





Poor people
who have no
clothes to
protect them
from the cold,
nor a piece of
bread to
satisfy their
hunger, come
to Maria who,
generous as
she is,
welcomes them
and gives
them
everything she
has, even her
shoes.

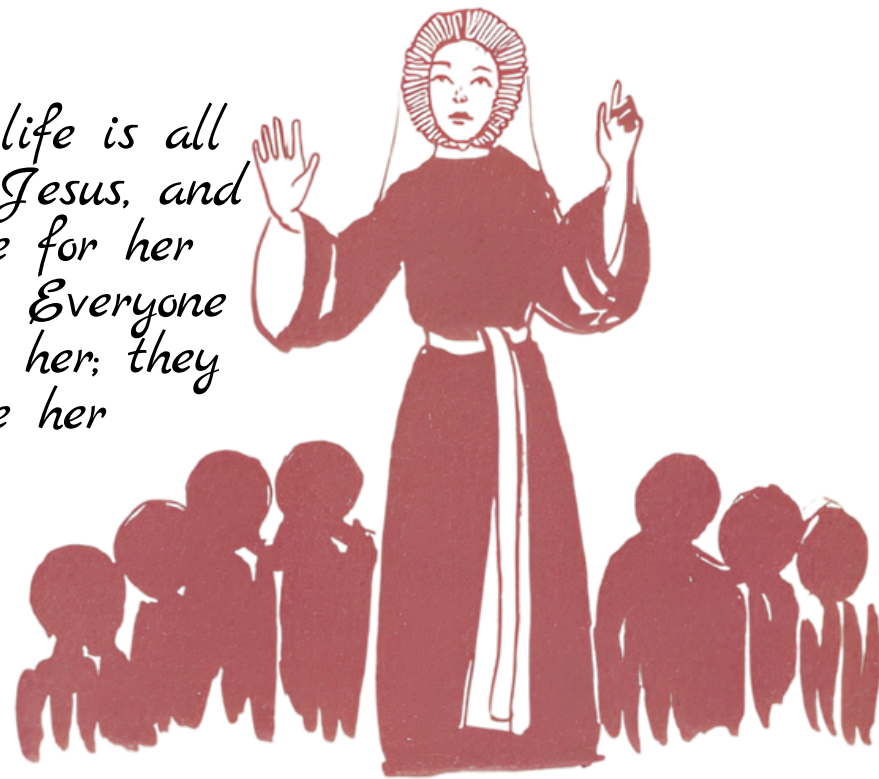




*Jesus repays her generously
and helps her in every
need. At noon she has
nothing to eat, but hopes in
Providence. She begins to
pray with her empty plate
in front of her. Suddenly,
someone knocks at the door.
It is an unknown lady
with a dinner already
prepared.*



*Maria's life is all
zeal for Jesus, and
all love for her
neighbor. Everyone
admires her; they
love her*



*and consider her a holy person. She does
not like glory, but she prefers to be
forgotten. Often she goes into ecstasy, with
her whole body being lifted from the floor,
and she works miracles.*

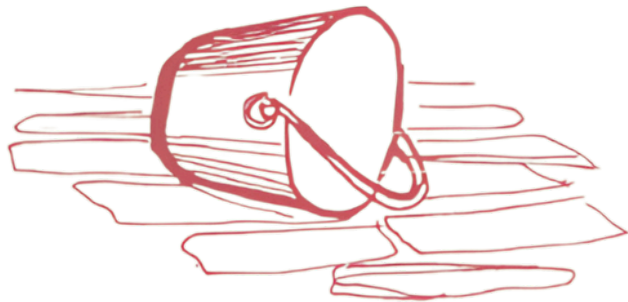


*One evening,
Maria is in the
cellar to repair a
wine barrel that is
leaking. From the
window a
mischievous little
breeze softly
touches her face*



*and extinguishes her candle. The
Sister who is with her is very afraid
because it is dark; she is ready to
yell. Maria takes the candle and
lights it again without a match.*

*The well where the Sisters draw water for cooking and washing is dry; there is not a drop left in it.
The town fountain is very far away and the Sisters cannot reach*



it easily. Maria lowers the pail and pulls it back up full of fresh water. From that day on, there has always been water in the well.



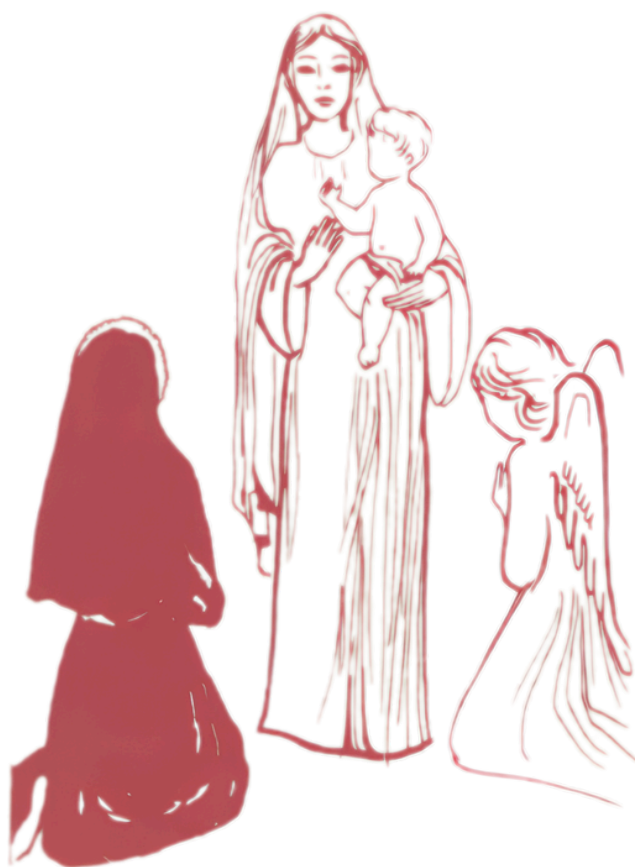
Maria is always praying and working. She is a Sister who makes great and many sacrifices, and does not realize that her strength is beginning to leave her. Jesus, on the other hand, is aware of it and wishes to reward her. He makes a light, shining ladder come down from the blue skies to earth.



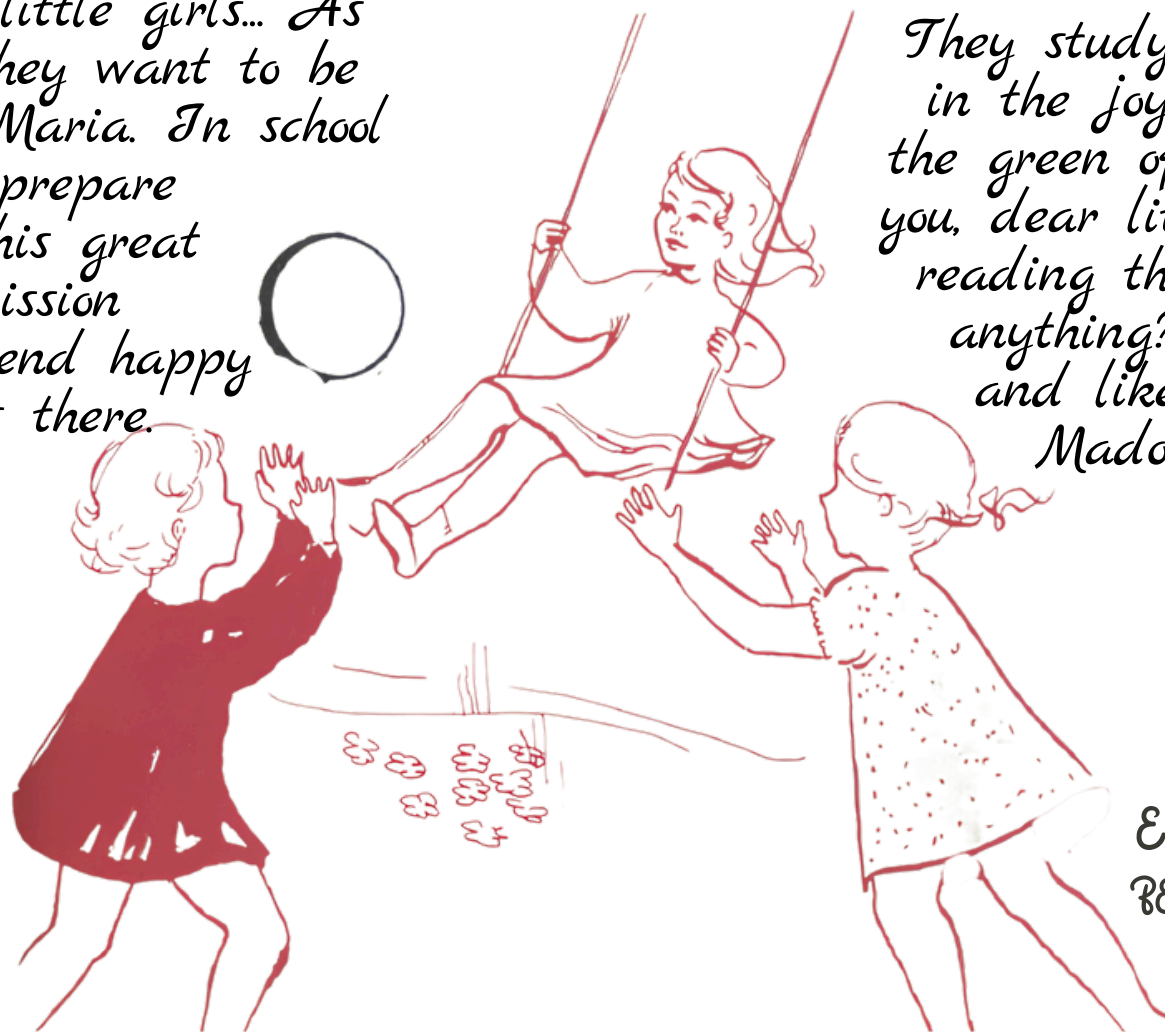
Festive angels come down and take Maria and lead her triumphantly into heaven. Now Maria is near the throne of God, together with her dear Madonna and all the good souls. She is happy and does not suffer anymore.

Her very dear companions remain with us, more than 2,000 of them scattered throught the world.

They are called "Sisters Adorers of the Blood of Christ". And they continue to teach many little children the way of goodness and love, like Maria did.



*They are vivacious,
mischievous little girls... As
grown-ups they want to be
followers of Maria. In school
they prepare
for this great
mission
and spend happy
days there.*



*They study without worries,
in the joy of the sun and
the green of meadows. And
you, dear little girl who are
reading this, don't you feel
anything? Think about it,
and like Maria, ask the
Madonna the favor to
enlighten you.*

*English translation by
BERTHA FISCHER, ASC*