Sometimes we’d prefer that our lives be a different story than the one God seems to be writing. Chiara Badano seemed to have everything going for her as a teen. She had a loving, holy family and a solid faith that was nurtured by retreats and youth ministry programs. She was popular amongst her friends and was great at tennis, swimming, and mountain climbing. Her outgoing personality and adventurous spirit made her dream of becoming a flight attendant. Chiara had a bright life ahead of her.

One day while playing tennis, Chiara experienced excruciating pain in her shoulder. Shortly afterwards she was diagnosed with osteogenic sarcoma. She watched her bright future slip away. But it’s here that the real story of her life begins—the story of heroic virtue.

Chiara’s joy was explosive, and it only increased with her suffering. After one very pain-filled night she said, “I suffered a lot, but my soul was singing.” One of her doctors remarked, “Through her smile, and through her eyes full of light, she showed us that death doesn’t exist; only life exists.” Cardinal Saldarini heard of this amazing teen and visited her in the hospital. Awestruck, he said, “The light in your eyes is splendid. Where does it come from?” Chiara’s reply was simple, “I try to love Jesus as much as I can.”

Chiara had a profound sense of redemptive suffering. She often repeated the phrase, “If this is what you want, Jesus, so do I.” Like any teenage girl, she loved her hair, but with each lock that fell out she’d pray, “For you, Jesus.” She frequently refused morphine, saying, “I want to share as much as possible in His suffering on the cross.” Ever thinking of others, she said, “I have nothing left, but I still have my heart, and with that I can always love.”

Chiara requested to be buried in a wedding gown. As the end of her short life drew near she told her mother, “When you’re getting me ready, Mum, you have to keep saying to yourself, ‘Chiara Luce is now seeing Jesus.’” She died on Oct. 7, 1990. Her parents and friends were with her. Her last words were: “Goodbye. Be happy because I’m happy.”

Thanks to her local bishop, Chiara was declared “Servant of God.” More recently, a young boy in Italy was dying from meningitis. His organs were shutting down, and there was no way to save his life. His parents learned of Chiara’s story and sought her intercession. He was fully healed. A panel of doctors has ruled that there was no medical explanation for this turn of events. On September 25, 2010, she became the first member of Generation X to be beatified.

Source: Chris Stefanick
ONE OF THE LETTERS OF BLESSED BEATA CHIARA LUCE BADANO
"Living every instant in the fullness of God"

I am 12 years old. I have met the Ideal and immediately became very attracted to it. The most important reality for me during these meeting has been re-discovering Forsaken Jesus. Before, I used to live this Ideal superficially and I was accepting Him only to expect joy in return. I realized I was going about things the wrong way. I must not exploit Him but just love Him and nothing else. I discovered that Forsaken Jesus is the key to unity with God and I want to choose Him as my first Spouse and get prepared for when He comes. To prefer Him! I understood that I can find Him in the distant ones, the atheists, and that I must love them in a very special way, without interest! I re-discovered the Gospel under a new light. I understood that I wasn’t an authentic Christian because I wasn’t living it to the full. Now I desire this wonderful book to be the only goal in my life. I don’t want and I cannot remain illiterate when it comes to such an extraordinary message. Just as it’s easy for me to learn the alphabet so must it also be to live the Gospel. I have re-discovered this phrase that says: “Give, and it shall be given to you”: I must learn to trust Jesus more, to believe in his immense love. In this period, the occasions for embracing my Spouse have certainly not been lacking; as a matter of fact, I’ve had a very high temperature for about a week, which, being already very debilitated, makes me very weak; but these are so many occasions for love that I have to be even more rooted in God. I offer my nothingness so that the Holy Spirit can bestow his gifts of love, light and peace upon the youth; so that everybody can understand what a free and immense gift life is and how important it is to live every instant in the fullness of God. I feel so little and the road ahead is so arduous that I often feel overwhelmed with pain! But that’s the Spouse coming to meet me. Yes, I repeat it: “If you want it Jesus, so do I”.

Here everybody is asking for a miracle but I cannot bring myself to ask for it. Maybe this difficulty that I have in asking for it is because I feel that it is not His will. I offer everything, my failures, my pains and joys to Him, starting again everytime the Cross makes me feel all its weight. The important thing is to do God’s will. I might have had plans about myself but God came up with this. The sickness came to me at the right time.... However you can’t even imagine what my relationship with Jesus is like now... I feel Jesus is asking me for something more, something bigger. I might be on this bed for years..., I don’t know. I’m only interested in doing God’s will, doing that well, in the present moment: playing God’s game. I was out of your life in an instant. Oh, how I wished I could have stopped that runaway train that was taking me more and more away from you! But I still didn’t understand. I was too much absorbed in insignificant things, frivolous and transient things. Another world was waiting for me and all I had to do was to surrender myself to it. But now I feel like I am wrapped into a wonderful design that it’s slowly unfolding itself to me.
Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing. But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another. We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone. See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people. Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. 1 Thessalonians 5:11-18

Questions:

1) What do you take from Blessed Chiara’s life? What can you apply in your own life?
2) What do you most admire about her?
3) What is most challenging for you from the 1 Thessalonians passage?
4) What does it mean, practically, to give thanks in everything? How do you practice gratitude?
5) What does the word “joy” mean to you? Who is the most joyful person you know?