

III *Blessed Poor Clares*

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Blessed Agnes of Spello + ca . 1270 ?

Hearing the Call:

Agnes was the daughter of Don Opportulo Bernardo, a relative of St. Francis. As a child, Agnes went to visit the monastery of San Damiano with her mother. St. Clare's gentleness made such an impression on her that she never wanted to return home and remained there.

Living the Charism:

Although an innocent child, she tended to imitate her holy mother, Clare, with the austerities she practiced. One day she asked St. Clare to borrow one of her hair-shirts, but returned it after a few days because it was more than she could bear.

It is said that was she who one day saw the Christ Child in St. Clare's arms. And once when she was listening to a conference she heard within her the words: "My Daughter, I am within you." From that moment she lived daily in God's Presence until she went to be in that same Presence forever.

Her body was placed in the Church of St. Clare in Assisi.

Resources:

*Fiege, Marianus, O. M. Cap. *The Princess of Poverty. Saint Clare of Assisi and the Order of Poor Ladies*. Originally Published by the Poor Clares of Evansville, Indiana, 1900. Republished by the New man Press, 1991. p. 108-109.

Blessed Amata of Assisi, + ca. 1255. Corcorano, Italy.

Hearing the Call:

Amata di Martino was the niece of St. Clare, but was not influenced by her saintly aunt, like her sister Balvina, who joined Clare eleven years previously. Rather she enjoyed the admiration of all who knew her and enjoyed all the pleasures available to her along with the finer things of life. Being both beautiful and wealthy she was sought after and soon engaged to marry. Her wedding day arrived when suddenly she realized the meaning of the step she was about to take, and she decided to ask the prayers of her holy sister, Clare.

Her aunt received her tenderly and listened to her request for her prayers, then proceeded to speak of the greatest nuptials—espousals with the heavenly Bridegroom, Jesus Christ. She pointed out the shortness of life, the futility of material things, and the peace of solitude, and the joys of eternity. The words were felt deep in Amata's heart and she embraced her sister with tears, vowing never to leave her side. Her friends, relatives and husband-to-be came to San Damiano. Their attempts at persuasion turned to rage, yet Amata remained serenely at peace, responding to their entreaties that she was done with all the world offered and would remain with Clare.

Living the Charism:

Once Amata entered the monastery of San Damiano she soon became known for her humility and desire to turn from her former life of pleasure to a life of penance. When her aunt became ill, it was her joy to wait upon her. One day when she had left Clare for a moment, she returned to find that her face that had been drawn in pain, was now beaming with joy and happiness. Amata asked her what had caused this change, and Clare replied in all simplicity, " My dear daughter, how can I help rejoicing since at this moment I hold in my arms my dearest Lord who is

the joy of my soul.”

Amata was the fourth sworn witness for Clare’s canonization. She told of the healing of a little boy’s eye disease which Clare attributed to her mother, Hortulana, while Hortulana claimed Clare had healed the boy. Amata also told of her own healing of a serious illness by St. Clare; how Clare had placed her hand upon her, made the sign of the cross, and prayed that God would heal her if it was good for her soul.

Amata survived her aunt but a short time. Her remains were transferred to the Church of St. Clare in Assisi.

Resources:

*Fiege, Marianus, O.M. Cap. *The princess of Poverty. Saint Clare of Assisi and the Order of Poor Ladies*. Originally Published by the Poor Clares of Evansville, Indiana, 1900. Republished by the Newman Press, 1991. p. 106-108.

*“The Acts of the Process of Canonization of Clare of Assisi,” in *The Lady. Clare of Assisi Early Documents*, Revised edition and translation by Regis J. Armstrong, O.F.M.Cap. New York: New City Press, 2006. Pp. 162-166.



Blessed Antonia of Florence, 1401-1472, O.S.C., Aquila/Abruzzi, Italy.

Feast: February 28/29

Hearing the Call

Like many noble young ladies of Florence, Antonia was married at an early age according to the wishes of her parents. After but a few years she lost her husband, and determined that now she would live for God alone, refusing her relatives promptings for her to re-marry.

In 1429, she joined Blessed Angelina of Marsciano in the Third Order Regular Institute she had founded. Antonia was the first to consecrate herself to God in the new community opened at Florence. She was quickly distinguished by her generosity and virtue. Only one year later she was called to Foligno, to serve under the direction of their holy Foundress, Blessed Angelina, Superior General of this new Institute.

Antonia learned well from the counsels and example of this holy woman and was soon named Superior. Her daughters found her to be a woman of prayer, and a tender mother, as well as a prudent guide. Under her guidance, the holiness of the sisters in her convent became the joy of their city.

But although the sisters lived a fervent life, Antonia longed for a life more centered in God and a more absolute poverty as found in the First Rule of St. Clare. St. John Capistrano,

her Spiritual Director, approved her desire and encouraged her.

Living the Charism

Antonia, with twelve nuns from her former community, made profession of the First Rule of Saint Clare in 1447, and founded a new monastery at Aquila. Because of her zeal in promoting Clare's First Rule she is considered one of the Order's leaders during the 15th century Observant Reform.

Although she was appointed superior with the approval of the Holy Father, she claimed no honor or distinction for herself, but rather, always chose the lowest place, the most worn clothing, and would assign to herself the most menial and disagreeable work; a true model of her holy mother Saint Clare. And these were not merely external acts—they were who she was in every manifestation of her person, in every word, in how she walked, and in her thoughts and opinions of herself.

Antonia endured endless problems with her relatives, particularly from a son who demanded time with her. Like Saint Clare, she was not free of temptations that tried her fidelity, and the sufferings of a painful illness for fifteen years. An even more difficult trial occurred when the Friars gave up the spiritual direction of the nuns because they thought their life was too austere. St. John Capistran helped the sisters through this by finding friars for them, and then proceeded to write a *Declaration on the Rule of Saint Clare*. They were so affected by the holiness of Antonia and the sisters that they revoked their decision.

Always severe with herself, she was kind and motherly toward her sisters, who were lovingly devoted to her., showing them endless patience in their weaknesses. Antonia made poverty the Queen of their house, and lived poverty in such a way that it became equally loved by the sisters. But her love for a poor and austere life never overshadowed the place of the kindness and charity which made Antonia an image of God's tenderness and compassion. At age 70 she resigned the office of Abbess, always retaining the respect and veneration of all her sisters.

As the time approached when she would enter into the Divine love that consumed her, she called the sisters around her, counseling them to be faithful to the Rule and to mutual love. At age seventy-one, after receiving the sacraments, she entered into God. Her body remains incorrupt, with eyes still open, at the Corpus Christi Monastery in Aquila.

Writings:

Lode della B. Antonia da Firenze. [A ms. preserved in the archives of the Monastery of the Poor Clares at Firenze.]

Resources:

*Bl. Antonia of Florence: 15th century Poor Clare Reformer. *Pro Monialibus* 31 (1972): 9-10.

Devotion of Bl. Antonia of Florence towards the First Rule of St Clare. *Pro Monialibus* 34 (1972): 7-9.

Fiege. 211.

Francescini, Ezio, O.F.M. La perfetta clarissa secondo san Giovanni da Capistrano. *Chiara d'Assise* 4 (1956): 81-5; 6 (1958): 35-40.

*Habig, 150—153.

Lupinetti, Donatangleo, O.F.M. *Vita e lode della B. Antonia da Firenze tratta dai manoscritti del monastero di "Santa Chiara Povera" dell'Aquila.* Lanciano: Cooperativa Editoriale Tipografica Orfanotrofio Antoniano, 1953.

____. *La beata Antonia [de Firenze +1472] Ed il suo monastero.* Aquila: Ed. Leandro Ugo, 1983.

Blessed Beatrice of Assisi, + 1260.

Beatrice, St. Clare's youngest sister, gave all her earthly goods to the poor and joined her at San Damiano when she was eighteen years old. She was sent to several places to start new foundations of the Order.

Resources:

MartFran, January 25; *SerMart*, January 21.

***Blessed Cecilia Coppoli, O.S.C. Abbess, 1426 -1500.
Foligno, Italy.***

Hearing the Call:

Cecilia's father was Magistrate of Perousia, Ambassador to Bologna and Florence, Senator of Rome, but had no children. He asked the prayers of Bernardine of Siena, and soon obtained a daughter. She was one of the most highly educated women of her times, especially in Greek and Latin culture. At eighteen years of age she was beautiful and Mistress of her late father's rich heritage. Officially engaged to a young noble she fled to the monastery of Saint Lucy in Foligno.

Living the Charism:

Cecilia was known for her zeal for holy poverty, monastic observance, and a love of prayer. She is one of the reformers of the Order during the fifteenth century Observant Reform

Writings:

*Historiam Monialium Clarissarum proedicti Monasterii a V. Alexandrina
Sulmonensi ejusdem loci Moniali, suaque magistra inchoatem.*

Publications on the Writings:

Lainati: *BF*, 1107, n. 4169 (1954-57); 673, n. 8495 (1974 -1980).

Resources:

Fantozzi, A. Documenti intorno alla B. Cecilia Coppoli Clarissa (1426-1500). *AFH* 19 (1926): 210.

—. La riforma osservante dei monasteri delle Clarisse nell'Italia centrale. *AFH* 23 (1930): 361-82; 488-550.

Lainati, I: 128, 129; II: 1587.



*Blessed Clare Agolanti
of Rimini, O.S.C., 1282-
1346. Rimini, Italy.*

Feast: February 10

Hearing the Call

Chiara (Clare) Agolanti was born at Rimini in 1282. Deprived of her parents at a young age, her youth and beauty soon lead her into the ways of a dissipated life, and she married a man just as worldly as she was.

When her father and brother were executed in civil disturbances, it changed her life completely. One day as she attended Mass in the church of the Friars Minor, she felt called to pray an Our Father and Hail Mary fervently. After this episode she started reflecting on her life. And, with the consent of her husband, was clothed in the habit of the Third Order Franciscans, resolving to live a life of penance for her past. He died shortly after.

Clare soon became a model of virtue, especially of charity towards the destitute and handicapped. She sold herself into slavery so she could use the money to buy a man out of prison. The Judge commuted the sentence and returned the money so she was freed.

When the Poor Clares were freezing without fuel she went into the woods, found a huge log, and was carrying it to the convent. A relative stopped, saying it was beneath her dignity as a noble woman to carry wood like a servant. Clare responded that if Jesus could carry a great piece of wood to Golgatha for the sake of sinners like her, she could hardly hesitate at carrying it for the Brides of Christ. Again, when the Poor Clares were compelled to leave Rengo because of the wars, it was through Clare's help that they were able to obtain a convent at Rimini along with sufficient support.

Living the Charism

Clare entered the Order of St. Clare along with a few other devout women. She became Abbess of Our Lady of the Angels at Rimini, where she lived a holy life and was gifted with extraordinary contemplation.

Clare died on February 10, of natural causes, and interred at the Cathedral in Rimini. Clare of Rimini was declared Blessed by Pope Pius VI in 1782.

(Image represents Jesus blessing Clare as St. John gives her his Gospel.)

Resources:

BF, 655, n. 8210 (1981-1985).

Dalarun, Jacques, "Gospel in Action: The Life of Clare of Rimini." *Franciscan Studies*, Franciscan Institute Publications, Vol. 64, 2006. Pp 179-216.

Donovan, Stephen. Blessed Clare of Rimini. *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. Vol. 4. New York: Appleton Company, 1908.

Fiege, 211.

Habig, 104; Iriarte, 451.

*<http://catholicsaints.info/blessed-clare-agolanti-of-rimini/>
<http://www.newadvent.org>

Blessed Clare Ubaldini, +1261. Monticelli, Florence.

Abbess of the Monastery at Monticelli, Florence, after St. Agnes of Assisi. She taught her sisters to live with Christ and place their hope in God alone.

Blessed Claudia Weinhardt, +1643

Feast: December 28.

*Blessed Elizabeth of Saint Francis, Beaza, Portugal,
+1534*

Blessed Felicia Meda of Milan, 1378-1444. O.S.C., Urbanist. Pesaro / Marche, Milan, Italy.

Feast: September 30 (July 26)

Hearing the Call

Felicia was born of a distinguished family of Milan. Her good parents left nothing undone that could contribute to the spiritual development of their gifted child. She learned Latin at an early age. When her parents died, she took care of her brother and sister, and grew even closer to God. At age twelve, she made a vow of chastity. In 1400, at age twenty, she gave away all she owned and joined the Poor Clares at the convent of St. Ursula in Milan. Her sister later became a Poor Clare, and her brother, a Franciscan Friar.

Living the Charism

Felicia did not have an easy time in the convent, as she endured many temptations. She would pray: "O, God, come to my assistance! O, Lord, make haste to help me! But she persevered in her vocation to be a Poor Clare.

When the Abbess died, she was unanimously chosen to be Abbess in 1425, and she did her utmost to be the servant of all and promote a true religious spirit of humility, love of poverty and penance in her community, so that the community of St. Ursula's became renowned for their holiness.

Her good name reached the attention of Pope Eugene IV and the Vicar General of the Observants, Bernardine of Siena, who entrusted her with the additional foundation of Poor Clares at the Monastery of Corpus Domini in Pisaro in 1439. In spite of her advanced age, she and seven sisters, made the journey from Milan to Pisaro on foot. When the Princess of Montefeltro offered Felicia her carriage, she humbly declined, and en-

the town on foot with her sisters. There she spent four years and strengthened many new sisters in the spirit of St. Francis.

Felicia Meda, along with Seraphim Spforza, led the Order in the Observant Reform through the example of their observance of the Rule of St. Clare. Felicia died as holily as she had lived and went happily to her Beloved Spouse in 1444. Pius IX beatified her in 1812. Her body was laid to rest at Corpus Domini, but 400 years later it was transferred to the Cathedral at Pesaro.

Resources:

BF, 852, n. 4073 (1951-1953).

Compendium Chronicarum FF Minorum. *AFH* 3 (1911): 106.

De Mareto, Felice, O.F.M.Cap. Meda, Felice (Felix) beata [+1444] *Enciclopedia Cattolica* VIII, Citta del Vaticano 1952. 565.

Fiege, 211;

*Habig, 553-555; Iriarte, 456.

*<https://catholicsaints.info/blessed-felicia-meda>.

Meda, Filippo. Una insigne Clarissa Milanese, La B. Felice Meda (1378-1444). *AFH* 20 (1927): 241-59.

Moorman, 557.

Blessed Felicia of Verona, + ca. 1440. Verona\ Venice.

Resources:

BF, 958, n. 4577 (1958-63); 851-2, n. 4072 (1951-3).



*Blessed Florida Cevoli,
O S C Cap. 1685-1767*

Hearing the Call

Lucretia Elena was born in Pisa on November 11th, to the noble family of Count Curzio Cevoli and Countess Laura Dlla Seta. She was entrusted to the Capuchin Poor Clares in Città di Castello for her education, and at the age of eighteen announced that she wanted to join them and become a Poor Clare. Her family opposed her decision, and the sisters were equally reluctant to accept her because of her social position. She persisted, however, and was received into the Capuchin community.

Living the Charism

Saint Veronica Giuliani, who was her Novice Directress, inspired her new novice by her instruction and example to grow steadily in the desire to give herself totally to God through prayer and contemplation. On June 7th, the Feast of Corpus Christi, she received the habit, taking the name Sister Florida. Even after Sister Florida made profession of vows, she chose to remain in the novitiate so that she could be further exposed to the guidance of her holy Directress.

Because of her education she was assigned to the

Pharmacy, serving also as Infirmarian. She was happy doing the most menial work around the monastery, taking her turn as cook and baker, and doing each one devotedly. In 1716 Sister Veronica was elected Abbess, and Sister Florida, her Vicarress, until Sister Veronica died and she herself became Abbess in 1727. Sister Florida lived evangelically her mission as a true servant of her sisters. She led the Capuchin sisters to the generous observance of the Poor Clare Rule by restoring the observance of silence, and enclosure, and a deeper spirit of contemplation, and increased the number of times the sisters could receive the Eucharist. She instilled within each one a true love of holy poverty and a simple manner of living.

To the poor who came to their door she was always generous, doing whatever she could to alleviate the needs of neighboring families. In her concern for the people, she became a Mediator of peace during the uprising that erupted at the death of Pope Benedict XIV in 1758.

Through the fever and pain she experienced throughout much of her life, she grew in her understanding of the overwhelming love of the suffering Christ. In the spirit of St. Clare, she remained always close to Mary, through a deep devotion to the Mother of Sorrows. Enduring great agony toward the end of her life, she cried out: "Help me! ... help me to love God"! She died on June 12th. The expression "Jesus amor, fiat voluntas tua, " with which she started her letters, sums up the desire of her whole consecrated life to be completely conformed to the will of God. For her life dedicated to love and service she was beatified by Pope John Paul II. on May 16, 1993.

Resources:

John Paul II's Book of Saints, Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Division, 1999.

*"Florida Cevoli, a Capuchin Poor Clare, lived with zeal for poverty and prayer." *Osservatore Romano*, 1993.

Lazaro, Iriarti. *Beata Florida Cevoli. Discepola di Santa Veronica Giuliani*. Ed. Cantagalli, 1993.



*Blessed Helen Enselmini
of Padua 1208-1242.
Padua, Italy.*

Contemporary of St.
Clare.

Feast: December 5

Hearing the Call:

Helena was born of a noble family in Padua. Even as a child she was drawn to Christ. The style of living at her disposal never attracted her. Rather, nothing was more valuable to her than solitude. And then one day, when she was only twelve years old, she was deeply influenced by a sermon preached by St. Francis, but we do not know the topic that held so much meaning for her.

Living the Charism:

St. Francis himself received Helena into the Order of Poor Ladies at Arcella Vecchia in Padua, a monastery he had established. The early sisters were instructed in the spirit of St. Clare by her sister Agnes. Helena became an example to all of perfect obedience, penance and a spirit of prayer, especially devotion to the sufferings of Christ.

St. Anthony frequently visited this little monastery and edified the sisters by his sermons. He lived just next door in the friars' hospice attached to the sisters' convent, and it is here that he died. Tradition tells us she was one of the spiritual children of St. Anthony who was her Confessor, although there are some

biographers who doubt this fact.

In the year 1226 Helena was stricken with an illness which lasted thirteen months. Gamboso says it left her blind and unable to speak. However, Gamboso also states that it was after St. Anthony's death that Helena lost her sight and speech, and that she died three months later. This would mean that she had this illness for sixteen months whereas other biographers claim Her whole body was paralyzed for sixteen years. But in proportion to the increase in her bodily sufferings, her interior union with Jesus became stronger, so that her joy showed itself outwardly in her features. She retained her sense of hearing and had partial use of her fingers, and so had some meager means of communication.

For the last three months of her life she took no food, and died on November 4th, 1242 at the age of thirty-four. Her body remained incorrupt for many centuries. In 1695 she was beatified by Pope Innocent XII.

Helena is called "The First flower of Padua" in the garden of St. Francis.

Resources:

BF, 851-2, n. 4072 (1951-1953); 1105, n. 4163 (1954-1957); 673, n. 8492 (1974-1980).

Fiege, 115-117; 211; Habig, 912.

Gamboso, Vergilio. *Per Conoscere S. Antonio: La Vita—Il Pensiero*. Padua, Italy: *Messaggero di S. Antonio*, Editrice, 1991.

*Nugent, Madeline. "Sister Helena de Elselmini," in *St. Anthony: Words of Fire, Life of Light*, Boston, MA: Pauline Books and Media, 1995. Pp. 267-278.

Sartori, Antonio. *La Beata Elena Enseldmini da Padova*. *L'Osservatore Romano* 19, 4 maggio 1957.

*Blessed Illuminata Bembo +1496, Ferrara, Venice /
Bologna, Italy,*

Hearing the Call:

Illuminata Bembo was the daughter of the Senator of Venice, Lorenzo Bembo.

Living the Chiasm

Illuminata entered the Poor Clare Monastery at Ferrara, where St. Catherine of Bologna was Abbess, in 1432. In a life so different from that she had known, and with the rigors of the Poor Clare life, she became discouraged and doubted her vocation. In this she experienced the power of the prayerful intercession of St. Catherine through which she obtained the grace to persevere.

With St. Catherine she went from Ferrara to the new foundation of Corpus Domini in Bologna, where she was elected Abbess three times.

Among the disciples of St. Catherine de Vigri of Bologna, she was the closest to her in spirit and ideals. These she extolled in her life of St. Catherine entitled: *Specchio di illuminazione*, in which she wrote everything she had seen with her eyes and heard with her own ears about the holiness of this woman. These writings also allow us to see something of the culture and education of the author. An autographed manuscript is conserved at the Corpus Domini Monastery.

Resources:

*Marianus 1584.

Nunez, L. M., O.F.M. "Le compagne della Santa," in *La Santa nella storia, nella lettere e nell'arte*. Bologna, 1912, 152-168.



*Blessed Isabel of France,
ca. 1225-1270, Long-
champ /Paris, France*

Patron: Sick and Poor.

Feast: September 1

Hearing the call:

Isabella was the daughter of the King Louis VIII of France and Blanche of Castile. At an early age she learned from her mother a love of Jesus and Mary, how to pray and meditate and do little acts of kindness to others. As a young woman she was educated beyond her status and knew Latin fluently, studying scripture and the Fathers of the Church in that language. She was expert with embroidery and weaving and made beautiful ornaments for the Church to honor Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Isabella practiced fasting that was insufficient to normally sustain strength, sending most of her food to the poor. She was careful to be always recollected in God's presence, careful not to let the world overtake her heart, and would converse only about spiritual things.

When her beloved brother became King Louis IX, upon the death of his father, she showed him the reverence, due a King, which seemed to embarrass him. But Christ still claimed her inmost heart. When her brother asked for a cap she had knitted, she would not let him have it. This was her first, she

told him, and it was for the Lord. That night she sent it to a poor sick woman. She would also visit the sick personally and offer them sympathy in their sufferings. From her many acts of charity, Isabella would spend hours day and night, in contemplative prayer, where she found the kind of joy the world cannot give.

Isabelle became attracted to the Franciscan Order. She broke off her engagement with a Count, and refused a marriage with Conrad the son of the German Emperor, Frederick II. But the Princess was determined to remain a virgin and protested that she would rather be the least among the virgins consecrated to God than be first among the Queens of the world. She requested a religious of the Order of Friars Minor as her confessor and spiritual director and the Pope readily consented.

While her saintly brother was fighting in the Crusades, Isabelle deeply mourned the loss of her noble mother, Blanche of Castile. When her brother returned, he took her place in assisting and encouraging his sister in the way of holiness, but even his tender love for her could not satisfy her yearning to sacrifice herself entirely to God and spend her life in the seclusion of the cloister. The King approved her desire to found a Poor Clare monastery and built it for her on the land she chose near Paris, called Longchamp.

Living the Charism

On June 10, 1256, the first stone was laid and the monastery was completed in 1259, and given the name: *The Monastery of the Humility of the Blessed Virgin Mary*. Isabel had a Rule based on the Rule of Saint Clare, compiled by eminent men of the Franciscan Order, among them, St. Bonaventure. In this Rule the sisters are called: *Sisters of the Order of Humble Handmaids of the Blessed Virgin Mary*. Isabelle considered that humility is the virtue most needed by wealthy ladies who would not be living poverty. Having considered the delicateness of the noble ladies who would inhabit the new foundation, the fast would not be as

strict as in the Rule of Saint Clare, the community would hold property, and Isabella continued her charitable works. Most importantly, however the sisters would retain a close Relation ship with the Friars Minor. The first sisters for Isabel's monastery came from the monastery at Reims in order to instruct the sisters in the spirit of the Rule of St. Clare.

However, Isabelle was not satisfied with the first rule and sought guidance to draw up another rule, which was approved by Pope Urban IV , who gave the sisters the title: "Enclosed Sisters Minor," to emphasize its close union With the Friars Minor Isabelle sought. Some communities adopted her Rule for a time but it never took root. The San Lorenzo Monastery was originally an Isabelline foundation, and later became Urbanist. *The Rule of Isabella* is considered to be an Urbanist Rule.

Isabel was clothed in the habit and made profession in this monastery. However, in the available resources, there appears to be some discrepancy as to whether she actually lived in the Longchamp monastery; some claim she never actually lived in the cloister but rather in her home. In either case, after her profession, Isabelle lived a holy life, centered in God, in prayer , charity and penance for about nine years, and then slept peacefully in the Lord on the 23rd of February in 1270. Her body was buried in the convent. She was declared Blessed by Pope Leo X in 1521. In 1696, her feast was celebrated by the whole Franciscan Order. During the Revolution her incorrupt remains were destroyed along with the Longchamp monastery. Some relics remain in the Church of St. Louis in Paris.

[Although Isabelle of France is known as a Poor Clare, the question remains as to whether she ever did make profession as a Poor Clare. Sources are ambivalent. One claims she made profession and lived alone in a house within the monastery property. Another says she never was a Poor Clare, and another,

that before she died she made her profession. But it is to be noted that she is pictured among those around St. Clare in the 15th century painting below.]

Resources:

Agnes of Harcourt, third Abbess of Longchamp, wrote her biography:

Vie de Madame Isabelle, now in the National Archives of Paris.

BF, 335, n. 5261, 5262 (1940-46); 1093, n.4116 (1954-57); 953, n.4537 (1958-63).

De Clary III, 89-96; Fiege, 119, 211.

Field, Sean. *The Rules of St. Isabella*. St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 2015.

*Habig, 415.

*<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08179a.htm>.

*DeClary: III, 89-96.





*Blessed Yolenta (Yolande),
1235-1298, Sary Sacz and
Gnesen, Poland.*

Feast: June 12

Hearing the Call

Yolande was the daughter of Bela IV, King of Hungary. Her mother, Mary, was the daughter of the Greek emperor of Constantinople. Her elder sister, St. Kinga, married to the duke of Poland, asked to supervise the child's education. So, Yolande was guided by her holy sister in the ways of grace from her childhood.

As a young woman, Yolande was married to Boleslaus, the duke of greater Poland. But the young duchess did not take well to the glories and pleasures of courtly life. Her greatest joy was to do good wherever she could. She helped the poor, and she and her husband built hospitals, convents and churches. She was such an inspiration to him to do what is good and pleasing to God that he was called "the Pius." But his life on earth soon ended.

Living the Charism

Following his death, two of Yolande's daughters married, and she and her third daughter followed her sister, St. Kinga, into the monastery of the Poor Clares, which Kinga had founded at Sandec. There they lived a life of prayer and self sacrifice, happier than they had been with the lavish pleasures that

had been available to them. When a war was raging around them they moved to Gniezno, a monastery she had founded.

With great reluctance, she was made Abbess, and she proceeded to guide her sisters by word and example in living the Christ-life in the spirit of Saints Francis and Clare. She continued to do good beyond the walls of the cloister as well, so that her holiness was known far and wide. Regardless of all that fame, she remained humbly devoted to the interior life as the vocation of a Poor Clare requires, especially focusing on the sufferings of Christ.

At one point, Jesus made known to her that her life with him was soon to begin. She became seriously ill, asked to receive the last sacraments, and encouraged her sisters to remain faithful to living the Rule of St. Clare. She quietly died a holy death on June 11, 1298. In 1827, Pope Leo XII approved the veneration shown her.

Resources:

Boras, Zygmunt. "Książe gnieźnieński Bolesław Pobożny i jego żona Jolanta [Dux de Gniezno Boleslaus Pius et eius uxor Iolanta]." *Gniezno* (Warszawa) 1 (1984): 49-72.

Fiege, 137, 211.

*Habig, 424; *MartFran*, June 11.

Sawicki, Witold. "Błogosławiona Jolanta." *Polscy święci* 3. 19-71.

_____. *Błogosławiona Jolanta. Życie i dzieje kultu*. [B. Jolanta. Life and Cult]. Gniezno-Niepokalanów: Franciszkanie, [1980].

Wedzki, Andrzej. Jolanta (Jolenta) Helena k. siezna. *Wielkopolski Słownik Biograficzny*. Warszawa, 1981, 300-1.

Zylinska, Jadwiga. *Piastówny i żony Piastów* [Daughters and wives of the Polish dynasty: Bl. Salomea, Cunegunda, Jolenta...] Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1975.

Blessed Julia (Giulia) of Milan, Milan, Italy. + ca. 1545

Hearing the Call:

Biographical notes on the life of Blessed Julia of Milan were lost when the monastery was suppressed. Perhaps one day they will be found. All that is known of her early life is that she was from Lombardy, Italy.

Living the Charism

Blessed Julia was a religious in the Monastery of St. Ursula in Milan, a holy house known for the sanctity of its members. Most of what we know of her personal holiness is found through her relationship with St. Catherine of Bologna, to whom she related her revelations and meditations constituting three volumes, and in the writings themselves which manifest her own inner journey immersed in contemplation and mysticism.

Julia writes in a fresh vibrant style, manifesting intelligence and a heart attentive to the beauty of creation and the sublimity of its Creator. Her writings reveal a heart centered in God and in the mystery of the Incarnate Word. Julia also expresses acute theological insights along the line of John Duns Scotus, formulating the doctrine of the Incarnate Word as the first “design” in the mind of God, independent of humanity’s fall.

Like all those who live in profound intimacy with Christ she immersed herself in the mystery of Crucified Love, yet not in a morbid manner, but as a means of transformation into Christ through life in the Spirit, as her mother Clare taught her daughters. Blessed Julia strongly emphasized the Marian dimension of the Clarian vocation, and the idea of living Mary’s journey within themselves. With tender simplicity she would like to hold Mary’s little son in her arms.

Some glimpses of her Poor Clare life appear here and there. We see that Julia was available for the various work of the community, including heavier work, as in the kitchen, so she must have had sufficient health. Her writings reveal the portrait of a strong but feminine women, able to see beauty everywhere because she is always united to the One who is Beautiful; spontaneously humble because she is too immersed in Jesus to get lost in herself, yet not without her daily struggles.

The strongest desire of this intensely loving woman is to be always with Jesus, to live in his presence, to remain in prayer. At the same time, her writings frequently mention that the balance of grace leads one to live their fraternal life with great generosity and willing obedience, and that her journey with one who became obedient unto death demands this compliance of a Poor Clare. Julia became able remain always in God's presence , united with God during her daily work and commitments.

Her pages contain an important document of the spiritual life, capable of leading one to the fullness of love in a life totally given to God in harmonious communion with her sisters, and continual intercession for the needs of all. She wrote for thirty years; her last manuscript is dated 1540, the date she stopped writing.

Resources:

* Chiara Giovana, O.S.C. "Guilia da Milano." (This chapter on Blessed Julia of Milan is part of a larger work graciously sent to me by the author who lives at the Poor Clare Monastery in Milan.)

Grasseti, G. *Vita della B. Caterina de Bologna*, Book IV, Bologna.
p. 153-154.

Marianus 1583-1584.

Revelations della B. Caterina alla B. Giulia da Milano: cod. Y. H. 734-736.



Blessed Margaret of Colonna, Urbanist, 1210-1284. Rome/Palestrina, Italy.

Feast: November 9

Hearing the Call:

Margaret was born to the princely Roman family of Colonna. When still a young girl she lost both her parents and was placed in the care of her two brothers. Refusing the marriage proposal by the chief magistrate of Rome, against her older brother's wishes, she declared she would have no other Spouse than Christ. Her younger brother supported her resolution. She took off with two maids to a country house belonging to her family in the mountains of Palestrina.

The three of them wore coarse clothing similar to that worn by the Poor Clares, and scheduled their days according to their Rule as far as possible. They gave themselves to prayer, penance and charity towards the most needy. Margaret's relatives caused her a lot of trouble and annoyances but she considered them as marks of love from her Divine Bridegroom, drawing her heart from all she had know so that she might center her life in Christ. It was at this time that Margaret felt visited by the Lord who placed

a crown of lilies on her head and a ring on her finger.

Living the Charism:

Margaret and her companions intended to join the Poor Clares in Assisi, but she became very ill and her plan had to wait. When she recovered sufficiently, she consulted her younger brother, now Cardinal Colonna, about establishing a Poor Clare Monastery in their family's country house on the mountain. There with her companions, and a few other like-minded women who had by that time joined them, Margaret observed the Rule of St. Clare as well as her continued infirmity permitted.

Margaret had her share in the sufferings of Jesus. An ulcerous wound opened on her right side and grew wider and deeper, causing her much suffering during the last seven years of her life. She thanked God for this favor up to the last day of her life. When that day came, before receiving the Blessed Eucharist, she prayed: "I thank Thee, dear Lord, for having permitted my body to become weak and infirm, so that I could the more freely return my soul to Thee." Assisted by her brother James, and the prayers of the sisters, she gave her soul over to God on December 30, 1284.

After her death the community transferred to the convent of San Silvestro in Capite. The nuns were driven from their cloister by the Italian Government at the time of the suppression, and the monastery has since been used as the central post office of Rome. The exiled sisters found shelter in the convent of Santa Cecilia at Trastevere, where the body of Blessed Margaret is still entombed.

Resources:

Donovan, S. Blessed Margaret Colonna in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*.

New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910.

Habig 840-841.

<http://newadvent.org/cathen/13164a.htm>.

and officials. Regardless of the extent of her authority Margaret remained a humble and prayerful person who practiced austerity and spent a large part of her day meditating on Jesus in his sufferings.

Living the Charism

Margaret never allowed her high station in life to get in the way of her love for God. The day came when Duchess Margaret handed over her duties to her son, and retired to Mortagne, a Monastery of religious women who followed the rule of Saint Elizabeth, as members of the Third Order of St. Francis. But this was not enough, she wanted to be a Poor Clare, so she brought some of these nuns with her to Argentan in Normandy where she founded a monastery of the Rule of Saint Clare of Assisi. She received the Poor Clare habit and made her vows on October 11, 1520.

After living just one year in the austere spirit of the Rule, she died a holy death in her simple cell on November 2, 1521 at the age of 62. When this monastery was suppressed, her remains were transferred to the church of Saint Germain d'Argentan. During the French Revolution in 1793, her body was thrown into a common grave.

At the urging of the Bishop of Séez, Louis XIII requested a canonical inquiry to be made into her virtuous life. Margaret of Lorraine was beatified by Pope Urban VIII in 1921.

Resources:

*<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08179a.htm>.

Blessed Margaret of Lorraine. In *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. Vol. 9. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910.

Guerin, Rene. *La bienheureuse Marguerite de Lorraine, Duchesse d'Alençon*. Alençon, 1924.

_____. *Vie de l'äieule d'Henri IV (1463-1521), Bienheureuse Marguerite de Lorraine*. Paris, 1953.

*Habig, 831. Iriarte, 456; *MartFran*, November 2.



*Blessed María Angela
Astorch, 1592-1665. O.S.C.
Cap. Barcelona, / Murcia,
Spain.*

Hearing the Call

Maria Ines Jerónima Astorch was born into a comfortable family in Barcelona on September 1, 1592. Orphaned by the death of her parents as a child, she was left in the care of the housekeeper in Sarria, who raised her piously in the Spanish tradition. Even during her childhood she was mature for her age, and considered to be a gifted child. She was a hard worker, and also loved to read, becoming fluent in Latin.

Living the Charism

In 1603, at the age of 11, she entered the same Capuchin Monastery in Barcelona where her sister, Angela, also was. She brought with her the six volumes of the Latin Breviary, which she had mastered. Such a feat at so young an age raised doubts among the Abbess and Novice Directress as to her humility, so they decided to test her by forbidding her to read Latin. Because she was so young, her novitiate was prolonged. This was very difficult for her, but on September 8, 1608, the day finally came when she made profession.

In 1614, at the age of 21, she was sent, along with five others, to a new foundation in Zaragoza where she served as

Mistress of Novices for nine years.

In 1626 she was elected Abbess at such a young age that a dispensation had to be obtained. She immediately worked at getting Constitutions approved for the Spanish Capuchin Poor Clares. She promoted assiduous study of the Rule of Saint Clare, and a dignified performance of the Liturgy of the Hours. She had a brilliant mind and had studied ecclesiastical texts so that her spiritual conferences were a source of inspiration for her sisters, as was her example in serving both their spiritual and material needs as a mother, respecting the individuality of each person. She willingly took her turn in the kitchen, laundry, infirmary and garden. Always mindful of the poor, as well, she shared with them whatever the community could spare.

After thirty years, heedless of the hardships involved, Angela accepted the invitation to found a monastery in Murcia which would be dedicated to Adoration of the Eucharist. Plagues, floods, and endless difficulties always marked her foundations, and so it was. Finding refuge at a Jesuit residence, because of damage to the monastery, she was accused of inappropriate relations with priests. Mother Angela and the Vicareess were 'de-veiled' and put in the status of penitents. The false gossip was soon found to be groundless, fueled by spite, and the sisters were returned to their status as nuns. For the sisters it was one more cross on the way to the new foundation.

Maria Angela's spirituality was centered in the mystery of Jesus Christ, although for some years she also entertained various religious devotions and had twelve favorite saints. These tended to fade until her spirituality became totally biblical and scriptural, and the liturgical life of the Church became the source of nourishment for her interior life.

Maria Angela continued as Abbess until 1661 when her mental faculties were weakening, leaving her in a childlike state. Suffering from Epilepsy, as well, since early 1665, she went to meet her Bridegroom on December 2, after receiving the sacraments and singing the *Pange Lingua*. Her body is incorrupt,

although her remains had been thrown into a common grave and consequently damaged during the Spanish Civil War.

Sister Mary Angela Astorch is distinguished from other mystics in the Church by the centrality of the Liturgical life of the Church in her mystical life. She was beatified on May 23, 1982, by John Paul II who called her the Mystic of the Breviary.

Writings:

Autobiography, letters, poetry.

Escritoras, 189.

Resources:

BF, 661, n. 8286 (1981-1985); 1115, n. 4206 (1954-7).

Joannes Paulus II. Litterae apostolicae pro beatificatione Mariae Angelae Astorch, monialis capuccinae. *Anal. O.F.M. Cap.* 99 (1983): 289-91.

**John Paul II's Book of Saints*. Ed. Matthew Bunson. Huntington, ID: Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Division, 1999, p. 233.

*<http://saintscatholic.blogspot.com>

*Wikipedia



Blessed Marie-Celine of the Presentation [Jeanne-Germaine Castang], P.C.C., 1878 – 1897. Bordeaux - Talence, France.

Feast: May 9

Hearing the Call:

Emilie-Julie Jeanne was the fifth of eleven children born to loving and faith-filled parents, Germain and Marie Castang. Her father gave her a third name, Germaine, so she was called "Little Maine." Her mother was from a fine family with some social rank, of a sweet disposition, yet also firm. Both were good people with big hearts, who opened their home to all in need. Little Maine was taught well by her mother, and saw around her a model life with hard working parents. She was a stubborn child and mischievous, but her mother corrected her appropriately.

Suffering would mold her into the image of Christ. It began when she developed a painful paralysis. Then her foot became deformed and she was crippled. But through it all Germaine became more patient. Her natural energy and courage turned exclusively toward God and her family. Her father was hard working and creative, but ultimately left the family in utter destitution, without a roof over their heads, nor food to eat. Germaine did her best to make the cramped hovel they were forced

to move into as clean as possible, although she was tormented with constant pain as she hobbled along on the side of her foot with an open wound filled with worms. She gave herself to spreading sunshine and comforting her family. She did find some solace in letters to her sister Lucie who had entered the Sisters of St. Joseph of Privas.

Germaine deprived herself of food to give more to her brothers and sisters, until she was tortured by starvation. One day, stumbling under the weight of a heavy wheelbarrow, she made the rounds of neighboring farms begging for food, returning exhausted and overwhelmed with pain, but they had food. Then, when there seemed to be no hope, her father found work, and their life improved. She wanted to return to school, but stayed home to help her mother set up their new home. After being bitten by a dog, the doctors who treated her sent her to the Children's Hospital to treat all her other ailments as well. This was a good time for Little Maine, she grew stronger and could walk again. While there she helped all the other children and made them smile. But her mother was concerned for her future and arranged for her to go to an orphanage. She hoped she would be able to go to school there, but they assigned her to a workroom. The situation there was difficult but she responded to everything with serenity and pleasantness, available for any service, giving joy to all, and accepting the tricks played on her with a smile.

At last, at the age of fifteen, she was allowed to receive the Holy Eucharist for the first time. She asked for the grace to be a religious. Shortly after was Confirmed and the bishop gave her the name, "Clare." Because of her infirmity she was refused at the first community she applied to. This was a hard blow. Added to this, her mother died.

One day while walking with the other boarders, they came to a monastery of Poor Clares. She asked a Friar to intercede for her but again was refused. Germaine was heartbroken. She asked her sister to intercede for her with the Sisters of St.

Joseph but she told her to resign herself. She would have to remain at the orphanage. One day a sister invited her out for a walk to the Poor Clare monastery to say hello to a sister she knew there. While visiting Germaine exclaimed, Oh, if only I could enter!" Would you like to speak with Reverend Mother?" she was asked. Her heart pounded, but the smiles of the Poor Clares put her immediately at ease. The four sisters were inspired to receive her. A letter arrived at the orphanage a few days later: Germaine had been received. She obtained her father's reluctant permission.

Living the Charism

Germaine entered the Poor Clare Colettine Monastery of the Ave Maria on June 12, 1895, the Feast of the Sacred Heart, at the age of seventeen, with great courage and with a deep love of Jesus already in her heart. "Here I have found what I was looking for... I am too happy," she exclaimed.

In October of 1896, the time for her reception of the habit arrived, Little Germaine felt totally unworthy and feared she would not be accepted. Her Novice Mistress testified that she always gave full measure. How humbly grateful she was when she heard the happy news of her acceptance. On the feast of the Presentation she received the holy habit of a Poor Clare and the new name, Sister Marie-Celine of the Presentation.

Later that same day at recreation she became suddenly ill. The seriousness of her illness was not known and she continued with great difficulty to carry out the daily schedule and all her duties, and always with joy. Then one day she could not go on; the symptoms pointed to a brutal form of tuberculosis. Increasingly, she was drained of all energy and her body tortured by pain while she struggled to live the conventual life. She was allowed to make profession *in extremis*, to her great happiness. Her sufferings increased; her throat dried up, her stomach shut down until she could eat only a few bits of a strawberry or apricot.

When death was obviously near, she could no longer eat or sleep, tormented day and night by intolerable pain. But she never complained. "A Poor Clare ought to mortify herself." One day Sister Celine looked at her sisters with an inexpressible tenderness saying: "O Mother, what sadness to think I shall soon leave my Mother and sisters! The pain is too great to bear. I have never known happiness on earth except since my entrance here." She asked pardon of her sisters for any pain she had caused them. Finally, she lowered her eyes, kissed her crucifix, and entered into a great silence. A few hours later she died.

It was Sunday, May 30, 1897, at 3 a.m. It was soon discovered that Sister Marie Celine was keeping her promise that "I will forget no one." Her grave became a place of Pilgrimage. On January 22, 1957, Pope Pius XII declared the Servant of God to be Venerable. Pope Benedict XVI beatified her on September 16, 2007.

Resources:

BF, 336, n. 5267 (1940-46); 614, n. 2640 (1949-50); 668, n. 8433 (1974-80).

**Blessed Marie Celine of the Presentation*, by the Poor Clare Nuns, Rockford, IL. Tan Publishers

A Lily of the Cloister; or, The Edifying Life of Sister Marie-Celine of the Presentation. Poor Clare Nuns. Trans. Mary Caroline Watt. Chicago: Benziger Brothers, 1924.

Lekeux, Marcial, O.F.M. *La petite Soeur Céline*. Paris: Éditions Albin Michel, 1949. Spanish: *La pequeña sor Celina*. Trans. P. Jose Carrillo, O.F.M. Barcelona: Luis Gili Editor, 1956.

Poor Clare Nun. *Sister Celine*. Abridged from the French Life by R.B.M. Foster. London: Burns Oates and Washbourne, 1923.



*Blessed Maria Crucifixa
Satellico, 1706-1745, Venice,
Italy.*

Hearing the Call:

Elizabeth Maria Satellico, born on January 9, 1706, lived in the home of her maternal uncle, a priest, with her parents Pietro and Lucia Mander Satellico. It was her uncle who guided her in the ways of living a spiritual life. Besides being drawn to fervent prayer, Elizabeth had a gift for music and singing. She grew up with the desire to be a cloistered Poor Clare Nun.

Living the Charism:

Elizabeth was accepted as a postulant at the Poor Clare Monastery in Ostra Vitere where she played the organ and directed the community's singing. In 1725 she received the holy habit of a Poor Clare at the age of 19, and her new name, Marie Crucifixa, and made her profession on May 19, 1726. She was devoted to the Most Holy Trinity and the Holy Eucharist, desiring only to be a true religious and Bride of Christ.

Elected Abbess, she gave her sisters an example of Seraphic holiness and of Franciscan charity, caring for the poor as well as her own sisters. She died on November 8, 1745, at the age of 39 and was buried in the Church of St. Lucy. Pope John Paul II beatified her on October 10, 1993, praising her as "a faithful

daughter of St. Francis! You have configured your life to him who for love of humanity let himself be nailed to the cross. . . and now you contemplate the glory of your Lord.”

Writings:

Her autobiography and many letters.

Resources:

BF 851-2, n. 4072 (1951-3); 657, n. 8231-2 (1981-1985);.

De causa beatificationis Ven. Servae Dei Mariae Crucifixae Satellico, monialis professae Ordinis S. Clarae, in monasterio S. Luciae Montis Novi - Senogallien Dioecesis (1706-1745). *Commentarium Ordinis Fratrum Minorum Conventualium* 80 (1983): 126-31.

Giuliani, Innocenzo, O.F.M. Splendori di santità nel Secondo Ordine Franciscano nelle Venezie. *Venezia Franciscana* 20 (1953): 145-202.

**John Paul II's Book of Saints*. Ed. Matthew Bunson. Huntington, ID: Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Division, 1999, p. 260.

MartFran, November 8.

Parisciani, Gustavo. *La beata Maria Crocifissa Satellico, Clarissa*. Rome: Postulazione Generale dei Frati Miuali, 1992.



*Blessed Mary Magdalen of
Martinengo, (di Barco),
O.S.C. Cap., 1687-1737. Bre-
scia, Italy.*

***Feast:** July 27.*

Hearing the Call

Margaret was born of a noble family of Brescia. Even as a child she was drawn to the austerities of religious life.

Living the Charism:

Margaret, as she was known, entered the Capuchin Monastery in 1705, at the age of seventeen. She was modest and patient and cheerfully obedient in whatever was asked of her. She relished the time set apart for prayer as her favorite times.

As Mistress of Novices, and then Abbess, she gave an outstanding example of holiness and loving gentleness by which she became a capable guide for her sisters on the way to transformation into Christ. Like her Holy Mother, St. Clare, people outside the monastery also heard of her and sought her out for consolation and advice. She was able to encourage those who despaired, heal the factions that separated people, and bring those who had lost their way back to God.

Exhausted by labor and a life of austerities she died on July 27, 1737, at the age of 50. She was beatified by Pope Leo XIII in 1900.

Writings:

Autobiography

Dialoghi: tra l'anima e l'umanita; tra l'anima e lo spirito; tra lo spirito e l'Amore.

Discorso sopra il niente.

Discourses on various passages of Scripture.

Diverse massime spirituali del ven. P.dre Giovanni di S. Sansone della provincia di Turrena, sopra le quali la ven. madre Maria Maddalena Martinengo capuccina nel monastero di Brescia disse il suo sentimento, con diverse conferenze e misteri della passione del Signore. Il tutto fatto dalla stessa per ubbidienza a lei data da Confessori. [This manuscript preserved at the Monastero di S. Chiara at Lovere has complete works]

Exercizi spirituali.

In nidulo meo morior.

Numerous Letters.

Racolta di varie lettere e biglietti scritte a diverse persone dalla venerabile Madre Cappuccina Maria Maddalena Martinengo da Barco. [This manuscript, preserved in the archives of the Boshop of Brescia, is not complete but also contains some letters]

Spiegazione dele Costituzione Cappuccinae.

Trattato sull'umilita

Resources:

BF, 336, n. 5271-2 (1940-46); 493, n. 2074 (1947-48); 615, n. 2644-5 (1949-50); 861, n.4124 (1951-53); 1117, n. 4214 (1954-57); 963, n. 4609 (1958-61).

Da Milano, Ilarino, O.F.M. Cap. Martinengo, Maria Maddalena, di Barco, Beata [+1737]. *Enciclopedia Cattolica* 8 (1952): 208-9.

Fiege, 212.

Maria Maddalena Martinengo, Contessa di Barco, Clarissa Cappuccina. Milan 1964.

*Habig, 556.

Humani, Maria Castiglione. Contessa e cappuccina (Maria Magdalena Martinengo). *Frate Francesco* 15 (1942): 172-6.

Poor Clare Nun. *St. Clare and Her Order: A Story of Seven Centuries.* London: Mills & Boon, 1912: 260-1.



*Blessed Matthea Nazzarei,
O.S.C. Urbanist, 1234-1300.
Matelica, Italy.*

Feast: November 10

Hearing the Call:

Mattia was born of Count Guarniero and Sibilla Nazzarei of Matelica, Italy. Even in childhood, however, she preferred a simple life of prayer to the social life of her upper class family. She made a vow of virginity, resolving never to belong to anyone but Jesus. At the age of eighteen, she secretly escaped to the Poor Clare monastery of Santa Maria Maddalena in order to avoid the marriage her father insisted upon arranging for her. The abbess of the monastery was her aunt who refused to accept her without her father's consent. So, Mattia went into their extern chapel, cut off her long hair, found an old tunic, and stayed there praying before the crucifix until her father, accompanied by a large group of relatives and friends, found her. She resisted all his threats and promises, until he relented and gave his permission.

Living the Charism:

Mattia entered in 1252, and received the habit in 1253, shortly before the death of St. Clare. An old manuscript states that she lived during the lifetime of St. Clare. Little is known of

her life there except that she became a mirror and model of Christ for her sisters, in the footsteps of our holy Mother Clare in living the Gospel. She was elected Abbess eight years after she entered and served her community humbly for forty years. Long before her death she was renown by the people for her gift of prophecy. Because of all this adulation, she would always take the hardest and lowest jobs in the house for herself. Her sisters recall her as tender mother and sister, providing for all their needs, and a mediator of mercy, of consolation and of peace.

Mattia knew the day was approaching when she would leave her sisters to join her Beloved Spouse and spoke to them of their union with God. She fell asleep on December 28, 1300. Many extraordinary signs occurred after her death. Mattia was declared Blessed by Pope Clement XIII on July 27, 1765. Her body remains incorrupt and continues to emit a blood-like fluid at certain times, just as it did at her burial. Her cause for canonization has recently advanced.

A prayer of Blessed Mattia's:

“O Jesus Christ, my most sweet Lord, I am your creature and you are my Creator. In you, Lord, I put all my hope.”

Resources:

Clarisse de Matelica. Beata Mattia, rivelaci il tuo segreto! In *Margine* ai 750 anni dalla nascita della beata Mattia. *Forma Sororum* 40, n.5 (2003): 256-62.

*De Clary, 332- 338. Fiege 211;.

Diotallevi, Ferdinando, O.F.M. *Vita delle B. Mattia Nazzarei Delle Clarisse in Matelica. Arti Grafiche-Gentile-Fabriano*, 1962.

*Habig 843; *MartFran*, Dec. 28.

Papa, Chiara Rosamaria. “Apparve nel Luogo Tanto Splendore...” In *La Beata Mattia e il suo Monastero*. Monastero Clarisse Santa Maria Maddalena, Via Beata Mattia, 41, 62024 Matelica MC — Italia, 2017.



*Blessed Paula Montaldi,
Mantua, Volta. 1443- 1514.
Urbanist.*

Feast: August 20

Hearing the Call:

Paula was born in the Montaldi castle. From her childhood in the devout family she learned modesty and a strong attraction to God. When she made her debut in society she felt such a loathing for the amusements and interests of her peers that she left home and entered the Urbanist convent of St. Lucy at Mantua.

Living the Charism:

Paula received the habit of St. Clare in 1458 when she was merely fifteen years of age. Although so young she began religious life in earnest, desiring to use her body for God's glory alone, she consciously endeavored to reject the demands of the false self for personal comfort and enjoyment. To the community practices she added her own, sleeping on the floor with a stone for a pillow, fasting more than specified, and spending a long time in prayer-filled vigils, and meditation on the sufferings of Christ.

In order to remain recollected and centered in God



*Blessed Salomea (Salonica)
of Crakow, 1201- 1268 Cra-
cow, Poland.*

Feast: November 18

Hearing the Call

Salome was born in Crakow, Poland, to the royal family of Prince Lescon. Betrothed at age three to Colomon, Prince of Hungary, and the brother of St. Elizabeth of Hungary, and sent to the court of King Andrew II, to be prepared for her royal marriage. She proved to be a child of grace and a model to all with whom she associated.

At her wedding, the pious couple vowed to preserve their virginity, which they did to the end of their lives, and vied with each other in works of charity and penance. With her husband's consent, Salome was clothed in the Secular Franciscan Habit. Many of the ladies at court followed her example so that the palace looked like a convent. Even when her husband became King, and she also wore a crown, she remained the simple daughter of St. Francis.

When King Coleman died in the battle with the Tartars 1225, Salome resolved to consecrate herself to God, and used her

wealth to help the poor and build churches. In 1240 she entered the convent of the Poor Clares at Zawichost.

Living the Charism

Here Salome lived for twenty-eight years, highly respected by her sisters because of her evident holiness. On several occasions she was elected to the office of Abbess. The convent was later moved closer to Cracow, to protect it from the Tartars, and was known as St. Mary of the Stairs.

At the age of sixty-seven, an illness came upon her suddenly, and she knew she would die shortly. She counseled her sisters gathered around her bed to live in charity and harmony, and to faithfully observe the Rule of St. Clare, and then died on November 17. Her body was found incorrupt seven months after burial and was entombed in the Franciscan church at Cracow beside her husband, King Coleman. She was beatified by Pope Clement X in 1673.

Resources:

BF, 951, n. 4523 (1958-63); 1038, n. 7543 (1964-73); 646, n. 8086 (1981-85); 667, n. 8412 (1974-80).

Fiege, 136, 211.

* Habig, 866.

<https://catholicsaints.info>.

she was careful to avoid chatter and useless or distracting thoughts. Yet she always looked upon herself as the servant of all the sisters, and the least of all, even with the seniority of one who had spent many years in the monastery.

Her sisters appreciated the example of her life of selfless giving and elected her as Abbess three times. Her love of God overflowed in humble charity to all, and her gifted wisdom, flowing from her experience in the spiritual life, enabled her to guide her sisters to transformation into Christ. The people also came to ask her advice, receive her consoling counsel, and to ask the help of her prayers for all their needs.

After a life of many trials, temptations, and endurance of a long and wearisome illness, she passed on to the pure vision of God in 1514. After this old and venerated convent was suppressed, the people of Volta brought her body to their church. Pope Pius IX proclaimed her Blessed in 1866.

Resources:

*Habig 621-623.

*Blessed Petronilla of Troyes/Moncel. Provens, France.
(1330-1355)*

Feast: July 25

Hearing the Call:

Petronilla was descended from the royal family of Troyes. While still a girl she was attracted to God and choosing evangelical poverty to all her riches, she gave up all the possibilities her bright future spread before her and looked to the Poor Clares at Provens to embrace with her whole heart the happiness to be found in giving oneself totally to the love of Jesus.

Living the Charism:

In the monastery she soon became a model of humility and renunciation of her noble status. She established a monastery at Beauvais, called the Mount of Heaven, and was appointed Abbess there. She cared for her sisters with prudence and motherly solicitude. The community soon became known for their holiness and joy. Daughters of some of the noblest families came and begged to receive the poor habit of St. Clare. Even Queen Joan spent time with the sisters in that peaceful place and asked to be buried there.

After eight years as Abbess she resigned in order to prepare for death as a simple religious. Eleven years later, she was called to her Divine Spouse. Pope Pius IX approved the veneration shown to her.

Resources:

*Habig 552-553

www.revolvy.com



Blessed Seraphina Sforza de Colona, (Svena, Sueva), 1434-1480. Pesaro / Marche, Italy.

Feast: September: 9

Hearing the Call:

Seraphina belonged to the family of the Counts of Urbino but was orphaned as a child. Her maternal uncle, Prince Colonna, raised her in Rome. During these early formative years the desire for God became her abiding attraction, and nothing else had any value for her.

When she reached marriageable age her family arranged for her betrothal to the widowed Prince Alexander Sforza, governor of Pesaro. Serafina had a difficult task before her, but she completely won the affection of her husband, and also embraced the son and daughter of the Prince's previous marriage. She lavished upon them the love and attention she would give to her very own children; the children reciprocated the love of their Step-mother and esteemed her as their very own mother.

When the Prince had to go to battle to assist his brother he entrusted the government to his young wife, for he already marveled at her wisdom and skill in managing the household. During his six year absence Seraphina carried out her duties perfectly and was admired for her ingenuity and impartiality. She sought God's blessing on her endeavors by almsgiving. The people saw this and loved her for her virtuous living and her extraordinary generosity.

However, when her husband returned she received no word of appreciation, for he returned a different man. Rather, he brought his new woman into their home and reduced Seraphim to the condition of a servant. But she kept her peace, suffered, and prayed. The very presence of his virtuous wife was an unbearable reproach to her husband, and he planned to kill her. When all his attempts failed her sent her out of the house to the Poor Clares. And that is where Seraphina went.

Living the Charism

Seraphina was happy to be able to serve God with these holy women, yet she continued to wear secular clothing since she was still his wife. She prayed for his conversion. The Prince tried to force her to take the habit so he could re-marry, but she did so only after she became sure that it was God's will for her, then she professed her vows.

Seraphina was a perfect religious in every way, even in the smallest directives. Her sacrifice and prayers brought about his conversion, and he came on his knees to beg her forgiveness.

Seraphins lived eighteen more years in the monastery, and promoted its spiritual and temporal welfare,

especially during the last three years when she served as Abbess. On the feast of the Nativity of Mary, September 8th, 1478, she went to be crowned by her heavenly Spouse. Pope Benedict XIV approved her cause. Her body rests in the Cathedral in Pesaro.

Resources:

Acta Sanctorum Sept. 3, 312-24.

BF, 852, n. 4076 (1951-53); 1106, n. 4167 (1954-57)

Fiege, 211.

*Habig, 675677;.

Iriarte, 456.

De Clary, II: 114-20.

Moorman, 557.

Sannazzaro, Piero. Sforza, Serafina (Svena), beata [+1478]. *Enciclopedia Cattólica* 9 (1953): 476.

Annales, XIV: 211-213.

