

SHORT BIOGRAPHY

OF BLESSED SISTER MONICA OF JESUS

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1. *Things were proceeding peacefully in the Spanish nation in 1889. It was the 17th of May, mid-day. In the small town of Monteagudo, in the province of Navarre in northern Spain , house number 38 in the neighborhood known as Monteagudillo, Maria Zapater, married to Eusebio Cornago Soria, happily delivered a beautiful baby girl. She was the third of the ten children that would complete the family . She was baptized in the afternoon of that same day. God was in a hurry to open this privileged soul to His love and flood it with His light. She was cristened with the name Basilia.*

2. *Maria Zapater, as do all mothers, carefully kept in her heart the memories of this daughter, some of which were not easy for her to understand in their day. As the years passed these memories were revealed to her friends in private conversations and they have been passed down to us.*

3. *This is how we know that as a three-year old child Basilia was a busy and playful child. Her round face, framed by a head of dark chestnut hair, with a pretty button nose was constantly smiling. Her slightly dark complexion was highlighted by large lively coffee-colored eyes which sparkled with the joy that animated her. She was friendly with everyone. Maria and her husband Eusebio recalled being frightened to death by an incident that happened in her early childhood. She was playing alone at the door of their home. Suddenly at the end of the street appeared a horse whose rider had dangerously lost*

control. Basilia quickly got up and stood in the way of the horse who stopped abruptly causing her to be knocked down. She was injured, and a small scar remained where the hooves of the animal struck her. She told her parents that she stood in the way of the horse so that the animal would not kill its rider.

4. Basilia, by that time a Sister, related in a letter: *“I was about four years old. I was playing with a friend in the street and I saw two young people in front of me. ‘I’m your guardian angel’ one of them told her”*. Basilia, expressing the sincere longing that filled her young heart, told him: *“I want you to teach me how to love Jesus”*. She was left with the impression that everyone saw his own guardian angel and didn’t think it particularly noteworthy.

5. Maria remembered being greatly upset when the seed potatoes couldn’t be found in their home. Basilia, only a few years older, had given these potatoes, reserved for planting the next crop to those in need. Eusebio, her husband, became quite upset. *“Always tell your mother when you give something away!”* he told her, very seriously.

6. She hadn’t yet made her First Communion when a girl her age had become gravely ill. This was a very difficult time for Basilia. During the day she made as many visits as she could. A few days before the girl passed she offered to spend the night taking care of her. The girl’s mother, by then exhausted, gratefully accepted, knowing that her daughter felt very happy with Basilia.

7. God delights in communication with children and Basilia always offered to him a loving and open heart. Her awakening intelligence gradually began to comprehend that all that is good comes to us from Jesus. It became her delight to learn

about Jesus. Her attraction to Him in the holy Eucharist became irresistibly magnetic. *She would write, "I can assure you that from earliest memory in my heart was only Jesus"*.

8. *Mother and daughter arose early every day to attend Mass at the convent of the Augustinian Fathers, the sanctuary of the Virgin of the Way, patronnes of Monteagudo, which rises majestically on the way out of town. There were days when Maria was unable to attend and from a very early age Basilia sometimes went alone. As she had not watch to tell the time she would sometimes, during a full moon, arrive hours early at the church. Curled up in the entryway of the church she thought of Jesus. She would write, "Jesus was my only focus during childhood, I wanted to know Him and didn't know how to do that; this is why I contented myself in thinking of Him and in the Sanctuary"*.

9 *She never failed to attend Mass! She lovingly and tangibly perceived that this was the most sublime and most holy act that was celebrated here on earth. The Holy Spirit instructed her from within. There was Jesus! – The contains all of the spiritual gifts of the Church: God is given his due glory and worship; it commemorates the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross whereby at the Altar, the Father receives Him as the Sacrificial Lamb, and He gives Himself to the Church, his body, as invigorating food of eternal life – she would write many years later. "The sacrifice of the Holy Mass is one of the greatest mysteries upon which we can reflect, and through which we can receive the most Grace"*

10 – *She received her first Communion on the 16th of May in 1901. Basilia had been delighted for days, neither sleeping nor eating, not worried about her dress or anything else. Finally Jesus was to come to her heart! She would never let Him leave!*

It was an unforgettable day! Seventeen years later she would write: "How I remember that day! I have continued to renew my promises to Jesus to never offend him especially on purpose!"

11 – At night Basilia used to go to the home of her paternal grandmother Simeona to help her and keep her company. When her grandmother didn't need her assistance she used to spend lots of time thinking of the grandeur and goodness of God. She would write, "I began to formally structure my mental prayers at the age of 13 when my aunt Ursula gave me a book on 'Visits to Our Sacred Lord and to the Virgin' by Saint Alfonso Maria of Liguori. When I read this, it resonated within me and I would spend as much time as I could thinking of what I had read"

12 – Her burning devotion to the Most Holy Sacrament would be the seed by which her lively devotion and vocation to the contemplative life she would develop: "It has been some time now since – during prayer – I have succeeded in carefully writing the image of Jesus deep on my heart; In this way, when I need to be attending to other matters, and I cannot remain focused in my mind, I still am able to feel Jesus in my heart and, in this way, it goes well with me. Everything tells me: Jesus, Jesus. To Him be the glory!"

13 – By this time Basilia was 19. Her sister Victoria, the youngest sister said to have heard from her mother that Basilia was the prettiest and nicest of all the girls. She was not presumptuous but friendly, pious, hardworking ... As a result it was not surprising that the young men of the town were paying attention to her. One of them proposed to her but she turned him down talking of her intention to be consecrated to God.

14 – One of the Augustinian Recollectst Fathers presented her with a seal of sister Mary of the Cross, a young Religious woman who died in the odor of Sanctity in the monastery of Saint Mary Magdalene in Baeza, Jaen. She did not doubt. She felt that this is where God wanted her. Her parents accepted her decision. She requested admission as a novice nun. She was accepted and on the 14th of August of 1908 she enters the monastery.

15. The consecrated life is characterized by complete devotion in the following of Christ according to the Gospel. From this flows forth the enlightened special vocation in which God is all: the contemplative devotion. To those so called, their souls are exposed to the 'precious pearl' (cf Mt. 13, 45-46): JESUS. For Him they give up all they possess, even space. The monasteries were built for and by these woman of such devotion.

16 – Basilia felt herself seduced by the Agustinian Recollect contemplative lifestyle in Baeza. There she would live a loving and continuous offering of her life to God for the purification of her heart, for praise, giving thanks, beseeching Him, for intercession, giving offerings, sacrifice, tears ... She made real the ideal of "One soul and one heart united to God". At the monastery, there was no private property as all was held in common. Fraternity thus lived was able to generously meet the spiritual and material needs of all human kind.

17 – As was customary, she received the name of Basilia of Saint Monica. From then on everyone called her: Sor Monica. Her primary objective: "To be a Saint" and "deny nothing to Jesus"

18 – Her assigned task was to help in the kitchen and in attending to the chickens. She also did embroidery work which

turned out very well for her, and in the later years she managed the shoe store. She always took care to be neat and orderly: *“God is everywhere, you don’t always have to be waiting for Him quietly in the Choir Stall”*. She never missed a chance to offer sacrifices to the Lord: *“We must labor and not miss any chance, as minor as it may seem to achieve the virtues, so necessary these days and in our abode to be able to relate to our good Lord Jesus”*.

19 – Not long after she had made her commitment, Mother Dolores, her mentor, came into the choir stall of the chapel and found her there on her knees, with her arms in the position of the cross and given over to tears. What’s bothering you Sister Monica? Do you wish to return home? – she asked. Sister Monica replied: *“Mother! I don’t wish to return home. I’m crying because there are many sinners ..., and their souls are condemned”*. The Augustinian Archbishop of Valencia, St Thomas of Villanueva, explained in his Sermons the absolute incapacity of men on this earth to make whole the breach created with God that sin. *“Man is required to restore that breach but cannot, God can restore it but is not obligated to do so. By the incarnation of the Son of Go, it became possible to simultaneously pay both, the debt of sin paid by God who is able to do it and debt of sin by Man who is obliged to restore the breach but cannot”*. Happy guilt! – the Church would sing in the Easter vigil – which has earned us such a Savior – Jesus Christ!

20 – Sister Monica desires to be consoled to Jesus, to repair that breach *“I want nothing more than to love Him until being consumed by that love and not to offend Him. Ask of our Lord Jesus: That I be transformed and can be humbled, as up until now I have not been able to achieve that state and am nothing more than a bundle of false pride”*.

21 – Her Guardian Angel would accompany her throughout her life. He would refer to him as his “Older Brother” and she became very close to and comfortable with him. “His zeal, guidance and attention is constant ..., he instructs me and at the least failing he lovingly tells me: “Don’t to it that way...” He instructs her in the knowledge and understanding of the truths of our Faith, correcting her, consoling and helping her with her tasks. On occasion, when she was sick he would bring her Communion to her in her room. He also helped her in the conversion of souls.

22 –She always presented herself to her fellow religious sisters as someone who was both devoted and abounding in joy. To one of them, encouraging her to work for the Kingdom, she said: “Everything we think do and love is in order to save lost souls”. When she saw one of the sisters becoming sad or discouraged in her tasks she would say softly “Our mission, sister, is saving souls, and this is why we are in the convent. Let us live with joy, as we are brides of Jesus, we must win many souls!”

23 – God gave her the ability to see the devil. He tried to separate her from Jesus and to upset her a thousand ways. “The enemy can do nothing if we don’t allow him, as we posses the grace of God and with that grace we are much stronger than him”. “On our own we are powerless, but relying on the strengths of Jesus Christ, that’s another thing”.

24 – The neopagan society of her time made her want to offer herself as a victim for the reparation of sins: “I suffer greatly for the outrages that are being done to Jesus. Many times I offer myself so that this poor servant may be able to accept whatever his holy will requires of me”. “Even if the whole hell

eternally hates it, we are of Jesus and must remain so wholly and forever”.

25 – The Spanish Civil War breaks out on the 17th of July of 1936. The 22nd of July of that same year, when the Monastery was seized by the militiamen, the 29 nuns were obliged to leave. They were accepted by family members and people of good will who took them into their homes even though this presented a danger of reprisals.

26 – During these three years Sister Monica undertakes to do all the good she can; helping the poor, encouraging her Sisters and praying earnestly for the souls of those executed. Her reputation for holiness becomes well known even outside the province.

27 – At the conclusion of this fratricidal war the nuns all returned to the convent. These were years of austerity borne with great joy.

28 – For this Servant of God the love of Jesus and her love for sinners who have become separated from him becomes the principal focus of her life. Her intercession on behalf of sinners is a constant throughout her life. “I offer myself constantly (to God). I would love for him to tell me that suffering in order to compensate for the sins that are committed and the souls that can be saved ... Always with Jesus loving him without measure or reserve, to fill in for those who do not love him, although they be at the gates of hell. I hope in this way to avoid souls being lost forever this way”

29 – On Good Friday in 1917 Jesus shows her seven hearts beating with love within his heart. They are the Seven Victims of Love, a Group formed by Sister Monica to console Jesus:

“Jesus is very offended: eyes must be opened”. Jesus tells her that “I will reign in Spain”. Interceding for one of the many souls that Jesus allocated to her for conversion, she tells him with utmost sincerity: “Punish me so that this soul which you have redeemed with your precious blood may not be lost, since but a drop of your blood is all that is needed to pardon all sins, however great they may be” She offered on behalf of the Church, constant prayer and mortification to redeem sinners and beseeching her Guardian Angel that he might achieve through Jesus her timely liberation and longed for entry into Paradise.

30 – Many were those who drew near to the convent looking to Sister Monica for the answer to their overwhelming material and spiritual problems. All who approached her were relieved. She was also able to help them see their errors and their vices so that they might be converted and that they would be able to throw themselves with confidence into the infinite mercy of Jesus. She gave out Rosaries, handmade by herself, and encouraged the praying of the Rosary and to entrust themselves to the most Holy Mother of Jesus with complete filial trust.

31 –She passed from this life in the odor of Sanctity in her Monastery of Saint Mary Magdalene of Baeza the 14th of July of 1964.

32 – The Canonization Process was initiated the 8th of December, 1979.

33 –On the 13th of June of 1992 she is declared Venerable based on the proclamation and approval of her Heroic Virtues.

PRAYER – All powerful Lord, who glorifies the humble and casts down the prideful, by your holy Name grant us the grace to see your most faithful servant Sister Monica glorified on earth as she lived only for You and for the salvation of souls and the grace which with faith we ask of you. In Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

(Our Father, Hail Mary and Gloria)

Commendatory, Fervent Prayer to Sister Monica:

“Holy Mother, save me as you saved your divine Son!”

“Holy Guardian Angel, defend me!”

PROCESS OF CANONIZATION

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