

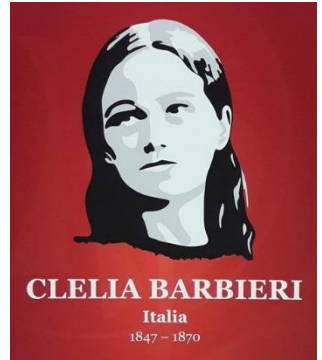


Diocese of Westminster

AGENCY FOR EVANGELISATION
MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE

‘Learn From Me’

Reflecting on the Lives of Saints
and Blesseds of Catechesis



“For me, someone so poor and miserable, there is a God”

St Clelia Barbieri Memorial: 13th July

(foundress of the Congregation of the *Suore Minime dell'Addolorata*)

Opening Prayer

As the deer longs for living water, so I search for you, my God.

Lord Jesus, you alone have words of eternal life: increase our faith and make us true witnesses to your Gospel.

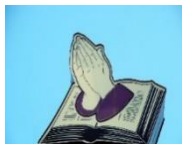
As the deer...

Lord Jesus, our resurrection and life, you have opened the gates of the Kingdom of heaven:

set alight in our hearts the desire for eternal life.

As the deer....

Scripture Reflection: Matthew 11:25-30



On that occasion Jesus said, “Father, Lord of heaven and earth, I praise you, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned and revealed them to simple people. Yes, Father, this is what pleased you.

Everything has been entrusted to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

Come to me, all you who work hard and who carry heavy burdens and I will refresh you. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am gentle and humble of heart; and you will find rest. For my yoke is good and my burden is light.”

Christian Community Bible.

- Is there a word or phrase that stands out or remains with you after reading this passage?

Biography

Born: 13 February 1847 at Bundrie di San Giovanni, Persiceto, Italy

Died: 13 July 1870 at Bologna, Italy of tuberculosis

(Being only twenty three at the time of her death, Clelia Barbieri is the youngest founder of a religious community in the history of the Church.)

Beatified: 2 October 1968 by Pope Paul VI

Canonized: 9 April 1989 by Pope John Paul II

Early Years

- Born to Giacinta Nannetti and Giuseppe Barbieri, February 13th, 1847 "Budrie", village of S. Giovanni in Persiceto, outskirts of Bologna, Italy.
- Her parents were of different social backgrounds: Giuseppe came from perhaps the poorest family of "Budrie" while Giacinta from the most important family in town;
- The wealthy Giacinta accepted the poverty of a labourer's life and moved from a comfortable home to the humble cottage of her father-in-law, Sante Barbieri; nevertheless forming a family built on the rock of faith and a totally Christian life.
- In line with her mother's expressed wish, baptized Clelia Rachele Maria on the very day of her birth.
- The mother taught Clelia to love God early in her life placing in her heart the desire for sanctity. One day Clelia asked her, "Mother, how can I become a saint?" (see below) Clelia also learned the art of sewing, spinning and weaving kemp which was the most important work of the district.
- In 1855, during a cholera epidemic, father died when Clelia was 8 years old, she, her mother and younger sister Ernestina then moved into a more comfortable house near the parish church.
- Although it was usual at that time to receive First Communion almost at adulthood, Clelia due to her unusual catechetical preparation and spirituality, made hers on June 17th, 1858, at only 11 years of age; a decisive day for Clelia's future since it was then that she had her first mystic experience: exceptional contrition and repentance for her own sins and those of the world.
- From the day of her First Communion, the crucifix and Our Lady of Sorrows inspired her. At the same time she had a first inspiration as to her future which she perceived as based on prayer and good works.
- She lived in charity, completely dedicated to loving her fellowmen. She forgot and even ignored her body. She was happy to belong to the Lord and her happiness rested, in fact, in thinking only of Him. Something, however, compelled her to turn towards her fellowmen,

the poorest and most tried, who often waited in vain for some small sign of love and brotherhood.

Mum, how can I become a saint?

This question, which is exceptional in a child, has a sound that is familiar to us. It reminds us of the doctor of the law who asks Jesus "Master what must I do to inherit eternal life?". The intention of that scribe was probably not right, but the question was right. It is the only question that really counts and deserves our every attention, while we are led to neglect it in a thousand ephemeral curiosities and in a thousand vain claims.

From this question shines through, the clarity and correctness of perspective, the attitude of the spirit not to disperse, the concreteness that leads us to focus immediately on what is true and definitive, which are all fruits of God's love "poured into our hearts through the Spirit which has been given to us" (Rom 5.5).

It is precisely this sense of God that we implore through his intercession as the first and fundamental teaching for all of us.

(From a homily by Cardinal G. Biffi)

Catechetical Work and Founding a Religious Order

- Late C19th Italy, "The Christian Catechism Workers"
- Clelia admitted as an assistant, then leader
- Group of ladies, with Clelia as leader, conceived the idea of a community, a life of service with Eucharist at its heart, teaching catechism to farmers and labourers of the area.
- Felt that she "must go" to give herself to all of God's poor. She loved that solitude which would permit her to reach God more fully, but she left the protection of her home and went forth inspired by her all-consuming love for mankind.
- The idea could not become a reality immediately due to the political situation at the time of Italy's unification (1866-67).
- Finally realised on 1 May 1868, once unification problems were resolved. Clelia and her young friends moved into the so-called "teacher's house" where the Workers for Christian Catechism had formerly met: the humble beginning of Clelia's religious family, later named the religious community of the "Suore Minime dell'Addolorata".
- "Minime" – devotion to Minime Romito di Paola
- "dell'Addolorata" (of Sorrows)– Clelia's most loved of Our Lady's titles
- Clelia the force behind the group's missionary work, in spite of humiliation at the hands of those who should have been more understanding.
- Faith, desire for God and missionary zeal, a creativity and imagination marked this community.
- Small initial group grew as did the number of poor, sick, young children needing catechism and religious instruction.

- Slowly began to see Clelia as leader and teacher of the faith; “Mother” at the age of 22.
- Died soon after of tuberculosis
- Prophecy:
"I'm leaving, but I'll never abandon you. When in that alfalfa field next to the church there will be a new community house, I will no longer be with you ... You will grow in number, and you will expand over plains and mountains to work in the vineyard of the Lord. The day will come when here at 'Budrie' many will arrive with carriages and horses ...". And she added, "I'm going to Heaven and all those who will die in our community will enjoy eternal life".
- The Suore Minime dell'Addolorata has expanded and continues to grow: throughout Italy, in India and in Tanzania, continuing their work of aiding those in need and now number 300 spread over 35 community houses.

For reflection: What does the life of St Clelia Barbieri say to us as catechists? What can we learn from her?

Closing Prayer

Lord, Holy Father,

we glorify you because in your goodness you filled Saint Clelia with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and now in heaven you have glorified her to be a model of Christian virtue and to intercede for us with your mercy.

We ask you, therefore, through her intercession, to make our faith firm, our hope steadfast and our charity ardent.

Grant, Lord, comfort in tribulation, defence in danger, relief in pain, peace and harmony among nations, serenity in the family, safety in work, strength and health to fulfil our duties.

Accept in particular the humble request that today, confident in the intercession of Saint Clelia, we present to you with a filial heart ... (*petition*). Through Christ our Lord. Amen

'Take Away' : Going Deeper

https://www.vatican.va/news_services/liturgy/saints/ns_lit_doc_19890409_barbieri_en.html

Congregation website <https://www.minimesantaclelia.it>

https://www.minimesantaclelia.it/images/preghiera_13_lulgio21.pdf

Biographical video - <https://youtu.be/RNuQjGw7jq0> (Portuguese)

Acknowledgements

Biographical notes:

<https://catholicsaints.info/> ; <https://catholic.org/saints>

https://www.vatican.va/news_services/liturgy/saints/ns_lit_doc_19890409_barbieri_en.html