

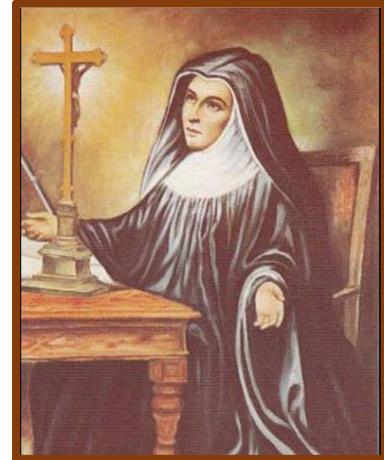
Bl. Gertrude Prosperi (Sr. Maria Luisa Angelica)
(Italy) 1799-1847
*Served as a nurse, sacristan, camerlenga,
novice mistress and abbess.¹*

Gertrude Prosperi was born August 19, 1799, in Fogliano di Cascia, Perugia, Italy and was baptized on the same day at the parish church of San Hippolytus in Fogliano di Cascia. Her parents were the wealthy and pious Dominic and Maria Diomedi. When she was 20 years old, Gertrude joined the Benedictines at the Monastery of Sante Lucia di Trevi on May 4, 1820, and took the name Sister Maria Luisa Angelica. There she served as a nurse, sacristan, camerlenga (four times) and novice mistress. She meticulously carried out her duties in order to be able to devote herself intensely to prayer, often inviting sisters to join her. Testimonies are unanimous in describing her as lovable, well-liked by the pupils and nuns.

This was not always considered the case as she experienced considerable suffering. After the arrival of the first spiritual director, Sister Maria Luisa was forced to come out of silence and tell what happens to her in prayer. She saw *“Jesus carrying the cross on His shoulder... He told her, ‘this is how I want you, you will be the opprobrium of all. You will see yourself oppressed and you will also suffer from demons, you will suffer because of the Confessors. They will want to help you, but they will not be able to. Oh God, what pain!”*² And He informed her that she would also have to carry hers.² She was, therefore, made the object of monastic sanction and misunderstood by the sisters.

However, 17 years into religious life, at the age of 38, she was elected abbess on October 1, 1837. Sister Maria Luisa served as abbess for the last 10 years of her life. She revived full observance to the Benedictine Rule and served as an example in action. She overcame residual mistrust through a personal practice of total humility, so much so as to surprise the nuns on many occasions. She had an attractive way of governing, not authoritarian, but with a strong personal charisma. Sister Maria Luisa was devoted to Eucharistic adoration. She infused the monastery with a new spirit in which the sisters saw her as a nun who loved interiority and recollection and who did not tolerate sloppiness or little attention in prayer. Her capacity for introspection was often decisive, especially in her ability to inspire new vocations to the monastic life. Under the management of Sister Maria Luisa, the monastery passed from narrowness to abundance. It became a source of alms for many, and the abbess gave to the poor who knocked on the door of the monastery in Trevi where life for many was very hard. In order not to leave someone empty-handed, she even took food from the warehouse without warning the camerlenga.

Though desiring to keep her mystical experiences secret, her new spiritual director, the Archbishop of Spoleto Monsignor Ignazio Giovanni Cadolini, obliged her to write periodic reports. They are overwhelming experiences of encounters with the beloved, the Christ. Beginning in 1838, Sister Maria Luisa begins to sign “Maria Luisa of God’s will.” It caused suffering for her to write about these things, but Mons. Cadolini obliged her to do so on a regular



basis. In all, she sent the Bishop over three hundred pages. In the visions she saw the Sacred Heart of Jesus which was a popular piety in the 19th century. Often these visions occurred to her close to the moment when she was about to receive the Eucharist and therefore became a unitive moment with Christ. She reported dialogues between her and Christ as loving dialogues similar to the Song of Songs. The union of the hearts necessarily meant participation in the pains contained in the heart of Christ who, in one vision, told her, *"Behold daughter your dwelling. Here you will rest. Ask for what you want. Put here your heart's desire. I have accepted them. Just to love me more, to convert sinners and return infidels to My Church."* The vision of a suffering cardinal in Purgatory served to introduce a discourse of unexpected criticism of the internal situation of the Church.

In the last four years of her life she experienced great personal suffering. The Holy Week of 1847 on Palm Sunday she fell ill seeming to suffocate. On Holy Thursday she laid as if paralyzed in bed, she did not move and had very strong pains. She lived the Passion of Christ in all its moments. She recorded for the bishop, *"Around the head He has like signs in the form of a thorn crown, near the heart He has an open wound full of living blood, in His hands appeared a paonazzo sign in the middle."* After Easter, Sister Maria Lusia's condition improved. Unfortunately, an infection returned with a violent fever and headache. From August 1847 she remained ill in bed getting up very little.

A few weeks before her death she was described as continuing to oversee the monastery until the last --- sick in bed, dying — but always abbess. The last moments of her life were a sign of serenity. She prepared to die by lying in the position of the Crucified One. Sister Maria Luisa Angelica died September 13, 1847, in Trevi, Perugia, Italy, of natural causes and is buried in the church of Santa Lucia in Trevi.¹

The diocesan process for the recognition of the heroic virtues of Sister Maria Lucia was started in 1914 by the Bishop of Spoleto Pietro Pacifici. It was suspended for the war events of the 1900's. It was officially reopened by Archbishop Ottorino Pietro Alberti on December 13, 1987, and closed on December 13 by Archbishop Antonio Ambrosanio. Pope Benedict XVI issued the decree of heroic virtue declaring her venerable on July 1, 2010. Pope Benedict XVI signed the decree recognizing her miracle: the healing of an Umbrian woman seriously ill in the brain. She was beatified on November 10, 2012 by Pope Benedict XVI at the cathedral of Spoleto. (Memorial - September 12).¹

References:

1) "Blessed Gertrude Prosperi". CatholicSaints.Info. 28 July 2020. Web. 8 December 2021.
<<https://catholicsaints.info/blessed-gertrude-prosperi/>>

2) Santi Beati. Beata Maria Luisa Angelica (Gertrude) Prosperi, Benedettina.
<http://www.santiebeati.it/dettaglio/95646>. Accessed 16 June 2022.