

**St. Maria Bertilla Boscardin
(Italy) 1888-1922**

*Sister of St. Dorothy, Daughters of the Sacred Heart.
Trained as a nurse in 1907 and worked on the children's ward
in their hospital in Treviso, Italy.
Cared for wounded Italian soldiers during World War I,
noted for staying with patients in 1917 during bombardments.¹*



Anna Francesca Boscardin was born on October 6, 1888, in Gioia di Brendola, a village near Vicenza in northern Italy to a poor farming family. Her father was an alcoholic, prone to jealousy and violently abusive.

Maria quit school to work in the fields and help at home. With little schooling, she was simple and innocent, considered mentally slow and referred to as “the goose.” In her youth, she also worked as a house servant.¹

In 1904, at age 16, she joined the Sisters of St. Dorothy and worked in the kitchen, bakery and laundry. She received nursing training around 1907 and displayed a special gift for work with children suffering from diphtheria. She also cared for the very ill and disturbed children.

During World War I, the hospital was taken over by the military. Sister Maria Bertilla cared for the wounded Italian soldiers, and was noted by local authorities, in 1917, for staying with patients while the area was being bombed. Angry at Sister Bertilla’s growing reputation, a supervisor assigned her to the hospital laundry. When her congregation mother-general heard of this vindictive treatment, she transferred Sister Maria Bertilla back to nursing, making her the supervisor of the children’s ward in 1919.

St. Maria Bertilla Boscardin died in 1922 at Treviso, Italy, after suffering for many years from a painful cancerous tumor.

She was declared venerable with the promulgation of the decree on heroic virtue on July 31, 1949, and beatified on June 8, 1952, both by Venerable Pope Pius XII.² She was canonized on May 11, 1961, by Pope St. John XXIII,³ with some of the patients for whom she had provided nursing care being present. A statue of Santa Bertilla is on the facade of Church of Sts. Peter and Paul in Cagnano, Italy.⁴ (Feast Day: October 20).

“Here I am, Lord, to do you will, whatever comes.”⁵

References:

1) "Saint Maria Bertilla Boscardin". CatholicSaints.Info. 31 October 2021. Web. 8 December 2021. <<https://catholicsaints.info/saint-maria-bertilla-boscardin/>>

2) Hagiography Circle: An Online Resource on Contemporary Hagiography: 1922. Anna Francesca Boscardin (Maria Bertilla). Accessed 18 April 2022. <http://newsaints.faithweb.com/year/1922.htm>

3) Matthew & Margaret Bunson (2014). Encyclopedia of Saints (2nd ed). Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., 169.

4) Franciscan Media. (26 February 2021). St. Maria Bertilla Boscardin
<https://www.franciscanmedia.org/saint-of-the-day/saint-maria-bertilla-boscardin> (accessed 17Oct2021).

5) A.J. Valentino (20Oct2020). Oct. 20: St. Maria Bertilla Boscardin. Accessed 19 April 2022.
<https://www.mountcarmelblessedsacrament.com/oct-20-st-maria-bertilla-boscardin/> 2020.

Note: This biography is for all desiring to grow in holiness and follow His Holiness Pope Pius XI address to 2000 nurses assembled at Castel Gondolfo on August 27, 1935 for the II World Congress of Catholic Nurses (www.ciciams.org / www.nacn-usa.org): *to first and foremost bring the Christian supernatural, Christ to our patients, bring salvation to souls*. May it also help nursing students with your Nursing History course. Source: Diana L. Ruzicka (2022). *The Book of Nurse Saints*. Available at www.lulu.com/spotlight/Ruzicka