

Saint Maria Troncatti
(Italy/Ecuador) 1883-1969

*Red Cross nurse in an Italian military hospital during World War I.¹
From a simple and poor clinic, she managed to establish
a hospital and prepared the nurses herself.²*



Saint Maria Troncatti, religious sister of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (Society of Salesian Sisters), was born on February 16, 1883, in Corteno Golgi, Brescia, Italy, to a large farm family. She cared for her younger brothers and sisters and regularly attended catechism in her parish, developing a deep Christian spirit. She delayed her entry into religious life in obedience to her parish priest. When she was twenty-five, in 1908, Maria made her first profession with the Institute of the Salesian Sisters at Niza Monferrato.

The FMA was a women's Salesian order, founded collaboratively by St. Mary Mazzarello and St. John Bosco in 1872 in Mornese, Italy. Their aim and program was the same as the Salesian male order: the religious perfection of each member by means of observance of the vows, and by an apostolate among the young, especially the more needy. The three guiding lights of their sanctity: the Holy Eucharist, Our Lady, Help of Christians and the Pope. The order received temporary approval in 1911 and definitive approval in 1921.³

During the 1st World War (1914-1919), the FMA assisted the military at the front, and sisters worked as nurses in military hospitals, where the Salesian style was comforting.⁴ Maria took a course in health care in Varazze and worked as a Red Cross nurse in the military hospital. This expertise proved valuable in her future work in the Amazon forest in Ecuador. Following a violent flood, Maria promised the Madonna that if she saved her life she would leave for the missions. Grace obtained, Sister Mary asked the Mother General to go among the lepers.

At the age of 39, in 1922, Mother Caterina Daghero assigned her to the missions of Ecuador where she would work with the Shuar tribe in the Amazon forest. Together with two other Sisters, she began the difficult work of evangelizing, while providing health care. There were many real dangers they faced: beasts of the forest, fast flowing rivers that had to be crossed on fragile bridges made from vines or on the shoulders of the Indians. She earned the esteem of the Shuar when she operated on the chief's daughter, wounded by a bullet, with a penknife. The sisters lived in Macas, a village of settlers surrounded by the collective housing of the Shuar.

Saint Maria Troncatti was called Madrecita. Very successful as a catechist and evangelizer, her faith, patience, and fraternal love resulted in hundreds of new Christian families, formed for the first time by free personal choice of young spouses. Initially establishing a simple and poor clinic, she managed to establish a hospital and there prepared nurses.² She continued this work in Ecuador for 47 years until her death at age 86 in 1969. Saint Maria Troncatti died on August 25, 1969, in a tragic airplane crash in Sucua, Morona-Santiago, Ecuador. She was buried at Macas, in the Province of Morona, Ecuador.⁵

Saint Maria Troncatti was declared venerable with the promulgation of the decree on heroic virtues on November 12, 2008, and beatified on November 24, 2012, both by Pope Benedict XVI.⁶ The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for her beatification was celebrated at Macas, Morona Santiago, Ecuador, presided by Cardinal Angelo Amato, prefect of the Congregation for Causes of the Saints.⁷ She was canonized on October 19, 2025 by Pope Leo XIV at St. Peter's Square, Vatican City. (Memorial - August 25)

“A glance at the Crucifix gives me life and courage to work.”



The following is the English language profile for Maria Troncatti provided by Fr. Pierluigi Cameroni, SDB, Postulator General of the Salesian Congregation and for the Salesian Family, published in *“Come stelle nel cielo”* (*Like Stars in the Heavens*):^{8, 9}

MARIA TRONCATTI,
DAUGHTER OF MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS, BLESSED

Declared Venerable: 8 November 2008

Beatified: 24 November 2012

Canonized: 19 October 2025

Liturgical Celebration: 25 August

On 25 August 1969, in Sucúa (Ecuador), the small aircraft that was carrying Sister Maria Troncatti to the city crashed a few moments after takeoff at the edge of the jungle that had been her "heartland" for almost half a century, place of her tireless giving of self among the "Shuar". Sr Maria had made her final takeoff: one that would lead her to Paradise! She was 86 years of age thoroughly worn out through her gift of love. She used write: "I am happier every day about my religious missionary vocation!"

She was born in Corteno Golgi (Brescia) on 16 February 1883. It was a large family and she grew up happy and busy between the fields and looking after her younger siblings in the climate of warmth and affection created by her parents. She regularly attended parish catechism and the sacraments, and the teenage Maria matured with a deep Christian sense of things that was open to a religious vocation. The Salesian Bulletin used come to Corteno and Maria, with her good sense of Christian values, gave thought to a religious vocation. Out of obedience to her father and the parish priest, however, she waited until becoming an adult before asking to be admitted to the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. She made her first profession in 1908 at Nizza Monferrato. During the First World War (1915-1918) Sr Maria took a number of health care courses at Varazze and worked as a nurse with the Red Cross in the military hospital: an experience that would prove invaluable during her long missionary work in the Amazon region of Ecuador.

Following a violent storm, Maria promised Our Lady that if she saved her life she would leave for the missions. Our Lady heard her and Sr Maria asked the Mother General to go among the lepers. After many years of waiting her request to be a missionary was accepted. Mother General, Caterina Daghero, sent her to the missions in Ecuador in 1922. She would never return home from there. She spent three years at Chunchi.

Accompanied by Salesian missionary Bishop Comin and a small expedition, Sr Maria and another two Sisters entered the Amazon jungle. Their mission field was the territory belonging to the Shuar, in the south-eastern part of Ecuador. As soon as they arrived in Mendez Sr Maria won the respect of the tribe by operating with a pocket knife on the daughter of a chief who

had been wounded by a bullet. The Sisters finally set themselves up on a house on a hill in Macas, a settler village surrounded by Shuar habitations.

She carried out a difficult work of evangelisation with the other Sisters amid risks of every kind, including those coming from animals in the jungle, and the dangerous whirlpools in the rivers that had to be forded or crossed on fragile bridges of liana vines, or on the back of the Shuar themselves. Macas, Sevilla Don Bosco, Sucúa are some of the still flourishing "miracles" wrought by Sr Maria Troncatti's activity: nurse, surgeon, orthopaedist, dentist and anaesthetist, but above all catechist and evangeliser, a person with marvellous resources of faith, patience and love for her brothers and sisters. Gradually, and through hard work, Sr Maria Troncatti went out to the huts to look after the sick; she spoke of Christ in the local language. Her work for the advancement of Shuar women flourished in hundreds of new Christian families, coming for the first time from the free personal choice of the young married couples. She was nicknamed the "Doctor of the Selva", and fought for human advancement, especially of the women. The women gradually began learning to sew, make clothes, keep the house in order; the men learned to cultivate the land. When the smallpox epidemic spread, Sr Maria moved from place to place to fight against the disease, to help and support. She proclaimed and testified to the Father's love in the Ecuadorian jungle or Selva. She was the "madrecita", ever concerned with going out not only to the sick but to all who needed help and hope. From a simple and poor dispensary she went on to found a real hospital and trained the nurses herself. She was a "doctor" for the body and the spirit: while she treated or distributed medicines, she advised and evangelised. With motherly patience she listened, fostered communion between the people and taught forgiveness to both natives and settlers.

"One look at the Crucifix gives me life and courage to work": this was the certainty of faith that sustained her life. In every activity, sacrifice or danger she felt sustained by the motherly presence of Mary Help of Christians. Sr Maria's generous missionary work was expressed through her life given for the evangelisation and human and social advancement of the Shuar people in the Amazon jungle in Ecuador. All her work was marked by the demands of fidelity to God's love. In his name, Sr Maria was transparent understanding and mercy towards all those in need in body and spirit. Her dedication also showed a strong love of fidelity to the Church, which was also expressed in her concern for God's ministers: she was always ready to help them in the difficulties of the mission.

Her body lies in Sucúa, in the Province of Morona (Ecuador). One of the missionaries of that time, Fr Giovanni Vigna, left us with this testimony regarding Sr Maria Troncatti: "She was the very embodiment of simplicity and evangelical shrewdness. With what exquisite motherliness does she win hearts! She finds a solution to every problem which, in the light of the facts, always turns out to be the best solution. She never forgets that she has to deal with weak and sinful human beings. I have seen her treat human nature in all its aspects, even the most miserable: she treats them with the mastery and kindness that is spontaneous and natural to her. What surprises me is that in everything and always she has remained exquisitely the woman. I would say that the more virgin she is, the more she is a mother."

PRAYER

*Merciful Father,
through the work of the Holy Spirit
you raised up motherly charity in
Saint Maria Troncatti, virgin,
in proclaiming Christ to the people.
Grant that we may be
instruments of reconciliation and peace
and grant us the graces that we ask for
through her intercession.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

The following is a description of the miracle attributed to the intercession of Blessed Sister Maria Troncatti by which Pope Francis authorized her canonization:¹⁰

On 25 November 2024, Pope Francis authorized the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints to publish [the Decree](#) for the miracle attributed to the intercession of Blessed [Sister Maria Troncatti](#), born in Córteno Golgi, Brescia, Italy, on 16 February 1883, and died in Sucúa, Ecuador, on 25 August 1969. With this act of the Holy Father, the way is opened for the canonization of this Daughter of Mary Help of Christians, missionary in Ecuador.

The miracle is an extraordinary event that testifies to the value of the invocation and entrustment to God, source of every gift and grace, through the intercession of His Servants.

On 2 February 2015 at 10:00, while Mr. Juwa, of the Shuar population, of the community of Nunkui Nunka (Ecuador), a farmer and carpenter, is working in the Amazon forest to sharpen the blade of a machine, a piece of the grinder breaks and a large fragment of stone hits the right side of his head, causing a deep fracture to his skull with loss of cerebral matter.

He is assisted by his son and two associates, and later by a nurse assistant at the Nunkui Nunka health center who advises Taisha Hospital to send an air ambulance. A stretcher is improvised and, after having crossed the Macuma river in canoe, they arrive after half an hour at the runway of Yasnunka.

Juwa is in very critical condition. He arrives at the hospital of Macas by helicopter and after first aid, he is taken to the hospital of Ambato. Here he arrives at 17:30. An “open brain trauma with exposure of the brain tissue is found, in Glasgow 6T out of 15”. The neurosurgeon points out that the situation is very grave, with serious danger for survival.

After the operation, Juwa is taken to the intensive care unit. He has left hemiplegia and no speech. On 18 February, he is discharged and transported to a rented house in Macas. His brothers-in-law, already before the intervention, had entrusted him to the intercession of Blessed Maria Troncatti, together with the Educating Community of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians of Tuutin Entza, hometown of Juwa.

In addition, in the room at Macas, in front of Juwa’s bed, they place a large painting of the Blessed and encourage him to entrust himself to her, who had worked so hard for the Shuar people. The family is also encouraged to pray to Sister Troncatti for the healing of Juwa. No rehabilitation is carried out.

In the night between the end of March and the beginning of April 2015, Juwa dreams of Sister Maria Troncatti reassuring him of his recovery, promising him that he would talk and walk the following morning. The Blessed asks him where he is hurting and with a cream, she massages his neck and left leg. She assures him that he will start walking again the next day. She then asks him why he does not speak and, with a tap to his mouth, she tells him that the next day he would talk and walk.

She asks him if he has a turtle shell, because she wants to put it where the bone is missing on his head (on the right side of the skull there is a depressed area 12 cm in diameter and 5 cm deep), but Juwa does not have it. She also asks him about a picture of herself that had been folded and placed in a cardboard box when he had changed house. She invites him to put the image back in front of his bed and then says good-bye.

Mr. Juwa woke up and felt cured. His leg didn’t hurt anymore. He asks his wife with signs to help him walk and says a few words. A gradual improvement begins.

After the dream, he experiences an unexpected change in his condition. His family and visitors witness his radical turn. He regains his word first and then his movements. On 5 April 2015, with the help of his brother-in-law, he went to the cathedral of the Puríssima of Macas and returned alone on 6 July 2015 to participate in the Eucharist.

The doctor who operated on him is amazed, because he says that he has before him a dead person who has risen from the dead. He sees him again in 2017 and finds him perfectly healed.

Blessed Maria Troncatti, through the miracle obtained by God through her intercession, confirms her vocation as “mother”, missionary to the Shuar people, to whom she had dedicated her whole life

References:

- 1) "Blessed Maria Troncatti". CatholicSaints.Info. 3 February 2019. Web. 8 December 2021.
<<https://catholicsaints.info/blessed-maria-troncatti/>>
- 2) Agenzia Info Salesiana (ANS).. (23Aug2019). Accessed 5 April 2022.
<https://www.infoans.org/en/sections/special-reports/item/8646-rmg-25-august-50th-anniversary-of-blessed-maria-troncatti-s-death>
- 3) The Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (FMA). <https://salesianmissions.org/about-us/who-we-are/about-st-john-bosco/our-history/the-salesian-family/the-daughters-of-mary-help-of-christians-fma/> Accessed 5 April 2022.
- 4) IFMA. Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and times of Crisis. (11April2021). Accessed 5 April 2022. <https://www.cfgmanet.org/en/ifma-en/daughters-of-mary-help-of-christians-and-times-of-crisis/>
- 5) Salesians of Don Bosco. Blessed Maria Troncatti (1883-1969). (25Aug2015). Accessed 5 April 2022.
<https://www.salesians.org.uk/news/2015/08/blessed-maria-troncatti-1883-1969>.
- 6) Hagiography Circle. Maria Troncatti. Accessed 5 April 2022.
<http://newsaints.faithweb.com/year/1969.htm#Troncatti>
- 7) Catholic New Agency. Ecuador to celebrate beatification of religious missionary. Accessed 5 April 2022. <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/25997/ecuador-to-celebrate-beatification-of-religious-missionary>
- 8) Personal communication with Don Pierluigi Cameroni, Salesian of Don Bosco, 1 October 2022.
- 9) Fr. Pierluigi Cameroni (editor). Postulator General of the Salesian Congregation and for the Salesian Family. Sede Centrale Salesiana, Via Marsala 42, 00185 Rome - Italy. *Come stelle nel cielo* " (Like Stars in the Heavens). Accessed 3 October 2022.
https://www.bosco.link/webzine/79380?fbclid=IwAR3c7aVUJ74OFCGulS6brueUUDPdSEer84Acxb2vS1t7ATyOBnWj3Nuh_6w
- 10) Redazione. Sister Maria Troncatti: the miracle that opens the way to canonization. Istituto Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice, Salesiane di Don Bosco. Accessed 25 October 2025.
<https://www.cfgmanet.org/en/infosphere/sister-maria-troncatti-the-miracle-that-opens-the-way-to-canonization/>

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