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**Mother Maria
Crocifissa
Costantini
(of Jesus)**

**Co-foundress of the
Passionist Nuns.**

*Sr. Luzia Maura
(of the Sacred Hearts), C.P.*

Jubilaeum

Mother Maria Crocifissa of Jesus, (Faustina Geltrude Costantini), was born in Corneto, today Tarquinia (Viterbo), on 18 August 1713. She had a very fair complexion, was gentle by nature, quiet, humble, meek, devoted, and compassionate toward those most in need and those who were suffering.

EARLY FAMILY LIFE (1713-1733)

As a child she attended the School of the Religious Teachers Filippini where, together with the other students, she developed a great devotion to Jesus Crucified, was taught meditative prayer, the practice of Christian virtues, doing small penances for the love of Jesus, and even asking the Crucified to make them partakers of his suffering through sharing some hidden wound. (cf. Vita della Serva di Dio Lucia Filippini; Roma 1868, pg. 63-64; Positio Doc. III; Bergamaschi II, pg. 21-35). Faustina was exemplary in all these practices. At the age of fourteen, the Lord granted her the grace of a vocation to religious life. She responded promptly to her

call, however due to her young age, her mother did not give her consent.

At the age of 17, her mother died, as Jesus had revealed to her. Consequently she had to assume responsibility for the care of her house and be a surrogate mother to her younger brothers. She entrusted herself totally to the Virgin Mary-- *“Most beloved mother, since I have lost my earthly mother, from now on I take you as my Mother. Tell me that you accept me as your daughter.”* In fact, Mary made her feel that she was her mother throughout her life.

The Benedictine monastery (1733-1771)

In August 1733, at the age of 20, she entered the Monastery of the Benedictine Order. In November of the same year, she received the habit and the name of Maria Candida Crocifissa. She made Solemn Profession the following year. In the monastery, all of her attention was directed toward clothing herself with Christ, meditating and reflecting on his most holy life and Passion, and living in a great spirit of charity and penance. Thus she arrived at the age of 24, when she met St. Paul of the Cross, the “Patriarch of the Passion” and entrusted herself to his spiritual care.

Four years later, Jesus cured her of a mortal illness on the condition that she participate in the foundation of a monastery dedicated to his Passion. She made herself totally available to the Lord. Years passed and God tested her as He did Abraham. She renewed her promise again and again but did not receive any further enlightenment about it, nor did she receive the means to participate in it any way. Her holy director sought to strengthen her faith, stating that she would be the first to wear the holy habit of the Passion.

The young nun wanted to be, in fact, crucified with Christ. She asked Jesus to share with her all the pain He had endured. The Lord granted her all that He could in two ways—actively, through the harsh penances and the most painful bodily mortifications that He indicated, and passively through great sufferings and painful martyrdom of soul and body.

God, who chooses the weak to confuse the strong (1Cor 1:27) and enables us for the mission He asks of us, in addition to her Guardian Angel, assigned her as a defender, the Archangel St. Michael. He granted her many mystical gifts and graces, revealing to her the trials she would have to endure and assur-

ing her of his help when they arrived. Once, when the spirits of hell assaulted her with great fury and rage, Jesus said to her-- “Come, hide in the crevice of the rock” (Cant. 2:14). Suddenly she felt drawn to and protected in his open side, as the demons fled into hell. Thus she learned to always take refuge in the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

She experienced an impetuous breath of the Holy Spirit that opened the depths of her soul, enlightening her and instilling in her vigor and courage. On another occasion, the Holy Spirit covered her like a cloud of very white snow, which cancellare, as it melted, purified, cleansed, and refreshed her soul. Then she saw burning darts of fire rushing towards her and wounding her heart. (Doc. XLVI)

Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament strongly attracted his spouse to himself. Consequently, she would spend many hours of the day and night in front of the Tabernacle and made numerous visits to Him, during which she received many graces.



THE PASSIONIST MONASTERY (1771-1787)

Finally the day dawned that the Lord had prepared –3 May 1771– for the Foundation of the Institute of the Passionist Nuns. Mother Mary Crucified dressed in the holy Habit of the Passion and received the surname “of Jesus”. Then the Vestition of her ten companions took place and she was entrusted with the presidency of the Community and the formation of the novices, as a representative of Our Lady of Sorrows. The Holy Founder was fully satisfied with the comportment of his disciple. The following year, with the other Sisters, including her two blood sisters, approved nuns of the former Benedictine monastery, she professed Vows.

Mother Mary Crucified fully assumed the tenor of life of the new Institute and abandoned all extraordinary penances, practicing only those prescribed by the Rule, as the Lord had commanded her to do. Her participation in Jesus’ sufferings was also more passive, but no less challenging. This had already been anticipated in prophetic visions. In one of them, the Child Jesus invited her to put her feet where He placed his own and led her into a vast desert. He immediately disappeared leaving her alone in the greatest affliction. In another, the Divine Infant took her by the hand and graciously led her away from the shore, walking over the waters, suddenly leaving her alone in the middle of the waves. When she was already on the crest of a wave, he became visible in the distance, on a rock, watching over her. She then realized that she had to cross over oceans of great labors and tribulations, dense darkness, aridity, terrible desolations and spiritual abandonment, horrendous diabolical temptations, persecutions, suffering, and illness.

A contemporary religious related that, in the midst of so much suffering – which included a hidden wound she had since childhood and blindness – she was always gentle and affable, possessing a serene joy, and that she willingly laughed when the appropriate occasions presented themselves (Positio Doc).

On 16 November 1787, at the age of 74, she departed to share the glory of her Divine Spouse. “When she died... she looked like another person and was more beautiful after she died, than when she was alive and healthy...” (Positio XLVI). Many people received great graces and healing from serious illnesses thanks to her intercession. The Church recognized her heroic virtues and bestowed upon her the title of “Venerable.” We invite you, as St. Gabriel of the Sorrowful Virgin advised St. Gemma Galgani to



“read the life of Maria Crucified; it will give you encouragement and a lot of strength.”

Additionally, we also invite you to consider what her first biographer and spiritual director, Fr. Giammaria Cioni (of St. Ignatio Martyri) wrote-- *“Here... I present the admirable life of Mother Mary Crucified of Jesus, so that, through this worthy example, you may learn the way and the practical means of exercising with dignity the holy virtues and imitating the most holy life of Jesus, which she faithfully practiced...”* (Positio Doc. XLVI).