

GATHERED INSPIRED SENT



CALLED TO SERVE

ORDER OF FRIAR SERVANTS OF MARY
Vocation Newsletter

On October 3, the Servite community celebrates that liturgical memorial of Blessed Maria Guadalupe Ricart Olmos. Blessed Maria was born on 23 February 1881 at Albal, Valencia. Her devout parents were Francesco Ricart and Maria Olmos who were humble land workers. At her baptism she received the name Maria Francesca. Her father died when she was just four years old; but her childhood and youth were serene enough. Her personal characteristics, which we know from later life including her religious life, were already apparent: directness, liveliness, sense of initiative, along with a capacity for self-discipline and a pointed inclination to prayer and recollection. At eleven, when coming to her First Communion, her Parish Priest Don Vincenzo asked if any of the young candidates might be ready to entrust themselves to God and belong exclusively to God; she promptly replied, "Yes, that is my wish". Very soon Maria Francesca was showing a will to consecrate herself to the Lord, and she was both supported and understood in this by her mother and her younger siblings Antony and Philomena. Quite differently, her older brother Joseph strongly objected to it.

On 11 June 1896 Maria Francesca was welcomed as a postulant in the monastery of the Cloistered Nuns, Servants of Mary

"Our Lady at the Foot of the Cross" in Valencia. When she entered the cloister, somebody unknown to her suggested that the fifteen-year old youngster might have been lured into the convent by deceit; she vigorously responded, "I know very well what I am doing, because it is Jesus who is calling me." And so, Maria Francesca, now known as Sister Maria Guadalupe, made her perpetual vows on 19 June 1900.

Over the years she held a variety of different offices in the monastery: keeper of the wardrobe, mistress of novices, prioress. Her life in the cloister is not marked by extraordinary happenings, but by simplicity and absolutely fidelity, along with a dedication to handing on to the sisters, especially the youngest ones, the specific values of contemplative life: perfect observance, attention to "divine praise," availability and charity and a spirit of penitence. She was most firmly attached to Servite spirituality, and she based her life on constant meditation on the Passion of Christ and the Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin.





In the early years of the political turbulence that led to the Spanish Civil War, she showed herself ready to offer her life for Christ, even by martyrdom; she would urge the novices to ever greater fervour, and would often say, “Let us offer ourselves as victims.” In 1936, like all the sisters, she was forced by the incursions of the militia known as “The Reds” to abandon the monastery. For a while she found refuge with family members. Later she stayed with her sister Philomena; here she continued to offer her own life of prayer and work for the conversion of sinners and the safeguarding of the Catholic faith in Spain.

At midnight on 2 October 1936, four armed militants burst into her sister’s house and ransacked the place in search of arms. All they found was a scapular of Our Lady of Carmel, in the room occupied by Maria Guadalupe. “Are you a nun?” they asked her. In great fear and trembling she answered, “Yes, I am. And if I were born a thousand times, then a thousand times would I become a nun, in the monastery of Our Lady at the Foot of the Cross.” The militants seized her at once, and took her away in a truck into open countryside. Those who saw Maria Guadalupe arrested reported how she went quietly with her killers, saying that she would be offered as a victim for the restoration of Christian religion in Spain and for the return of the Servite Friars to Spain.

As they drove away, Maria Guadalupe spoke peacefully with her killers, telling them that she forgave them because they were opening the gates of heaven for her. When they reached a place near Torre “de Espiôca,” the militants put her to death, for the only reason that “she was a religious and nubile.” They violated her body horribly, as shown in photographs taken by the legal doctor who was appointed to identify the corpses.

The body of Maria Guadalupe was buried in a communal grave in the cemetery of Silla, Valencia. Towards the end of February 1940, once the Civil War was over, it was placed in a vault at the same cemetery. From there, a few days later, it was taken to the cemetery of the monastery. In 1959, after the nuns had moved from Valencia to Mislata, the mortal remains of Maria

Guadalupe were placed, amid solemn ceremonies, next to the high altar of the church in the new monastery.

The process of beatification and canonization of Maria Guadalupe was opened on 20 June 1959. Her status of martyr was officially recognised by a decree of the Supreme Pontiff Pope John Paul II on 28 June 1999.



As the political troubles moved ever closer to the monastery and the lives of her religious sisters, Blessed Maria Guadalupe write “concerning the tribulations that surround, we are in tranquillity. Let happen whatever Jesus will permit for us and only that; we are serene and trustful.” The source of Blessed Maria’s serenity and trust was the relationship that she had with Jesus. As a Catholic woman and a consecrated Servite religious, Blessed Maria fostered a closer, personal relationship with Jesus for He was the center of her life. Experiencing Jesus close to her, she remained calm amid her trials and faithful to Christ who gave her strength in suffering.

For those discerning a vocation to the religious life, a question to prayer over is “how willing am I to give my entire self to Christ?” The question reflects the important fact that the consecrated, religious life is a willingness to make one’s relationship with Christ the center of one’s life. The lives of the saints and blessed of the Servite Order, indeed of the Church, are a reminder that Christ must be the reason for, and if, our discipleship is to be authentic. Jesus is the reason for religious life. Relationship with Jesus and is strength and joy of the religious life. Servites invite you to join us in loving Jesus, serving His people, and finding serenity and truth in our common life founded on Christ.

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