

Daily Saints – 15 December



St. Maria Crocifissa Di Rosa

Born: 6 November 1813, Brescia, Napoleonic Kingdom, **Died:** 15 December 1855 (aged 42), Brescia, Kingdom of Lombardy-Venetia, **Venerated in** Roman Catholic Church, **Beatified:** 26 May 1940, Saint Peter's Basilica, Vatican City by Pope Pius XII, **Canonized:** 12 June 1954, Saint Peter's Basilica, Vatican City by Pope Pius XII, **Attributes:** Religious habit, **Patronage:** Ancelle della carità

Maria Crocifissa Di Rosa (6 November 1813 – 15 December 1855) - born as **Paola Francesca Di Rosa** - was an Italian Roman Catholic professed religious and the founder of the Ancelle della carità (1839). Di Rosa worked first at her father's spinning mill where she - with his encouragement - tended to the spiritual and material needs of the female workers while gathering several women to dedicate their collective efforts to caring for the poor; this formed the basis for the establishment of her religious congregation. Her apostolate prioritized tending to the ill in hospitals and to soldiers going to the front. Her beatification was celebrated in mid-1940 and Pope Pius XII (who beatified her) canonized her over a decade later on 12 June 1954.

Paola Francesca Di Rosa was born on 6 November 1813 in Brescia as one of nine children born to the rich industrialist Clemente Di Rosa and Countess Camilla Albani (from the noble Albani line).

Di Rosa was educated by the Visitation Sisters in their convent in Brescia; she left school after her mother died in 1824. She began working in her father's large spinning mill in Acquafredda where she took instant notice of the working conditions; she became the manager when she turned nineteen. She began caring for the female workers and devoted herself to looking after their material and spiritual needs which was something that her father encouraged her to do. Her father began searching for suitors to have her married, but she turned each of them down. Di Rosa was upset that her father did this and confessed her disappointment to the priest Faustino Pinzoni who then spoke to her father to tell him that his daughter had another vocation in mind. Di Rosa lived at home for the next decade increasing her involvement in various forms of social work.

Brescia suffered from a cholera epidemic in 1836 and Di Rosa went to tend to the ill in the local hospital. It was also around this stage that she directed a home for mute and deaf women and in 1840 began gathering a small group of women that would later evolve into her future religious congregation (first entitled a Pious Union). Her order became known as the Ancelle della carità and she later took her religious name and was vested in the habit after undergoing her formation and making her profession in 1852. Di Rosa directed her order to caring for the poor as well the sick since those were the main focus of her religious apostolate; she once said to her colleagues that "**I suffer from seeing suffering**". Her order received papal approval from Pope Pius IX in 1850 after having received diocesan approval from the Bishop of Brescia Carlo Domenico Ferrari in 1843.

War - Social Work – Service done for the military Soldiers

The pounding on the barricaded door of the military hospital sent every heart thudding in terror. In the middle of the war in Brescia (Italy) in 1848, the wounded, sick, and those who cared for them knew what that pounding meant. The shouts from beyond the door came from soldiers, not obeying any command but their inner desire to destroy and plunder. Who could do anything to stop them? The only people here were some Sisters, the Handmaids of Charity, who devoted themselves to helping the sick. The doctors had not even wanted them there. The doctors wanted medical people who were secular and military, not nuns. And in the face of this new danger, they were even more useless! Worse than useless -- because that Paula (as she was known) di Rosa was actually moving to open the door!

When the door swung wide, the soldiers saw their way blocked with a great crucifix held by Paula di Rosa and two candles held by two of the six sisters who stood by her. Suddenly their frenzy to destroy disappeared, and full of shame before this display of courage and faith, they slunk back into the shadows.

Throughout her life, Paula di Rosa was never afraid to open the door to a new opportunity to serve God, especially when she was unsure of what lay beyond. People who didn't know her well must have thought she was too frail and delicate for these ventures, but she came armed not only with her faith but boundless energy, intelligence, and hunger to serve.

She had tackled enormous projects from the time she was seventeen, arranging retreats and special missions for her parish and setting up a women's guild. Because of all she accomplished, when she was only twenty-four, she was asked to be the supervisor of a workhouse for poor girls. After two years, she became concerned because there was no place for the girls to go at the end of the day. The night held special dangers for these girls and Paula wanted to give them a safe place to stay. The trustees refused to provide that place. For Paula the choice was easy -- she once said that she could never go to bed with a clear conscience if she had missed the chance to

do some good. So she quit the workhouse to set up a boardinghouse for poor girls while helping her brother with a school for the deaf.

Di Rosa died at a hospital in Brescia on 15 December 1855 after suffering from a prolonged illness.

The canonization process commenced under Pope Pius X on 10 December 1913 and she became titled as a Servant of God. The confirmation of her life of heroic virtue allowed for Pope Pius XI to title her as Venerable on 10 July 1932 while the papal confirmation of two miracles attributed to her on 25 February 1940 enabled Pope Pius XII to preside over her beatification on 26 May 1940.

Pius XII confirmed two additional miracles attributed to Di Rosa on 17 January 1954 and canonized her as a saint in Saint Peter's Basilica on 12 June 1954.