

(For Ages Ten and Up)

Mary, Minima, Sister
— A Saint in . . .
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*A Saint in
the City of Flowers*



*The Life of
St. Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi*

by
Sister Mary Minima, Carmelite

Translated by
The Very Rev. Gabriel N. Pausback, O.Carm.

CARMELITE MISSIONS

1527 marks the beginning of recorded Carmelite activity in the New World. In 1572 a monastery, probably the first in the Americas for the Carmelites, was dedicated in Colombia. The foundations for two Carmelite provinces still extant in Brazil were laid after 1580. About 1620, Peter Carranza became the first bishop of Buenos Aires, Argentina, and Anthony Vasquez was gathering material for his fabulous report to the pope. Currently, Carmelites from Spain, Holland, Italy, Germany, Malta, and members of the American Province of the Most Pure Heart of Mary are working in South America.

The American foundations were made in 1949 in Lima, Peru, and Santiago, Chile. In Lima, with some 20,000 souls, there is now a monastery, parish hall (used as the church) and grade school (to foster native vocations). In Santiago the original mission field has been doubled to embrace over 200,000 souls, most of whom are miserably poor; Baptisms alone total 5,000 a year, and here again a school and other necessary buildings are being provided.

Finally, in the spring of 1959, the Prelature of Sicuani, in the mountains of Peru, was entrusted to us. Without a paved road anywhere near, the Rt. Rev. Msgr. Nevin Hayes, O.Carm., and his thirteen priests must yet visit and care for some 300,000 descendants of the Incas.

Prayers, sacrifices (your daily trials willingly accepted), contributions and Mass offerings are needed, oh, so much! Please help!

(See American address on opposite page)

A SAINT IN
THE CITY OF FLOWERS
The Life of
ST. MARY MAGDALENE DE'PAZZI
Carmelite

(For Ages Ten and Up)

by

SISTER MARY MINIMA

a Carmelite of

the Monastery of St. Mary Magdalene de'Pazzi

Translated from the Italian

and Edited by the

Very Rev. Gabriel N. Pausback, O.Carm.

Line Drawings by Ivan V. Eby

1959

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To Stevie,
Connie,
Sandra
and Ann,
who so enthusiastically
assisted the translator,

and with prayerful gratitude to
many, particularly to Ivan V. Eby,
who so generously donated the line
drawings for this booklet.

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In obedience to the decrees of Pope Urban VIII, the translator claims for the wonders and titles herein reported, and not already approved by the Holy See, no other belief than that ordinarily given to human authority.

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CHAPTER I

“Take This and Read It!”

SAINTS are like flowers that heaven sends down to earth and that the earth in turn sends back to heaven. And one of the most beautiful of these heavenly flowers is Saint Mary Magdalene de’Pazzi. At first, however, she was called Catherine, after the great Saint Catherine of Siena.

Our Catherine was born in Florence, “the City of Flowers,” on April 2, 1566. Her parents were Sir Camillus de’Pazzi and Lady Mary de’Buondelmonti—both from families whose names tell of greatness and nobility. In Catherine’s family were also an older brother called Geri and two younger brothers, Alaman and Baccio. But Catherine was the favorite, especially of her father.

She was still a little girl when she began to feel attracted to prayer and the need of long talks alone with God. She would look for the most hidden corners of the house—behind a door, for instance, or between her bed and the curtains around it—and there she prayed on her knees, looking for all the world like an adoring cherub.

Sometimes too her little hands would model a nun’s veil and head-piece and a scapular; dressed in these clothes, she was especially happy to take her place before God. Later her confessor taught her how to meditate on the sufferings of Jesus, and from that time on Catherine spent long hours in this way.

Devotion to the Most Holy Trinity, the greatest of all the mysteries of our holy Faith, was another favorite of Catherine’s even while she was still a child. One day, when she still could scarcely read, she ran to find her mother. She carried a book in her hands and was filled with joy.

“Mamma, Mamma, take this and read it!” she cried.

Lady Mary took the book and began to read. What she read was the Creed of St. Athanasius (something like the Apostles’ Creed), which includes the main teachings of the Church on the grand mystery of the Trinity.

Noisy amusements did not please Catherine. Instead, she preferred talks that were serious and spiritual. For this reason, when her mother and her aunt talked together in this way, Catherine would carefully come closer to them. Then she would hide in the wide folds of their dresses, remaining silent and almost breathless to listen. Sometimes her mother would tell her to go away and play. Catherine would do as she was told, but soon she was back in her hiding place again.

Afterwards, in silence and prayer, she would think over the things she had heard and then ask her mother to explain.

“How can there be three Persons in one God? How is it that God always was and always will be? How can one God be everywhere?”

But Catherine wasn't satisfied with just any kind of answer. She wanted real reasons. Often Lady Mary did not know how to explain such things to her and told her that when she was older she would understand.

When Catherine was seven years old, she began to go to school to the “Poor Nuns,” as they were called; and there she learned to read and write. But that was about all, because in those days girls were not taught as much as they are nowadays. Later Catherine could truly say: “Whatever I know, I have not learned from books, but from prayer at the feet of Jesus Crucified.”

On her way to school Catherine had to pass by the prison, where the sight of those iron bars over the windows made her very sad. And when the poor prisoners begged her for help, she could not say “No,” but gave them her lunch. The little basket that her mother had lovingly packed for her was emptied almost every day, in order to fill the other little basket that the prisoners let down by a cord. Catherine was happy to help these poor people, even if it meant that she had to go hungry during the day.

On the road from Prato to Pistoia one can still see the old Villa of Parugiano, where Catherine spent some of her happiest days. There too is an orange tree that people say was planted by Catherine herself. And there it was, far from the city and in the silence and aloneness of the country, that Catherine felt most at home. Nature talked to her of God and brought a new joy to her heart.



I.V.E64

She Gave Them Her Lunch

One day Catherine was near her mother in the garden. The time was evening, when the sun was setting and tipping the earth with its last rays of gold. The birds seemed to be whispering their night prayers before going to bed. Mother and daughter looked on without saying anything, for in the presence of such beauty one does not talk much.

Suddenly Catherine began to change. Her face became a fiery red. Her heart beat violently. She could not breathe; she could not stay still. Her mother, frightened by this sudden sickness, quickly did what she could. But she could not help her child.

Then Catherine grew quiet again. Her heart beat as usual. The attack had passed.

But what was it? Really, it was a great act of love for God. For when this heavenly fire is burning within us, our weak, human hearts cannot stand the flame.

Though belonging to the nobility, Catherine chose her friends also from among the children of the poor. And to these she would explain the catechism, teaching them how to make the sign of the Cross and how to say the more necessary prayers.

One day the little group took its place in the shade of an old oak tree. Catherine was so busy talking about God that she did not notice the coming storm. When the first raindrops began to fall, the children gathered closer around her in order to stay dry under the leafy branches. A bolt of lightning flashed in the sky and struck with a crash. Then silence.

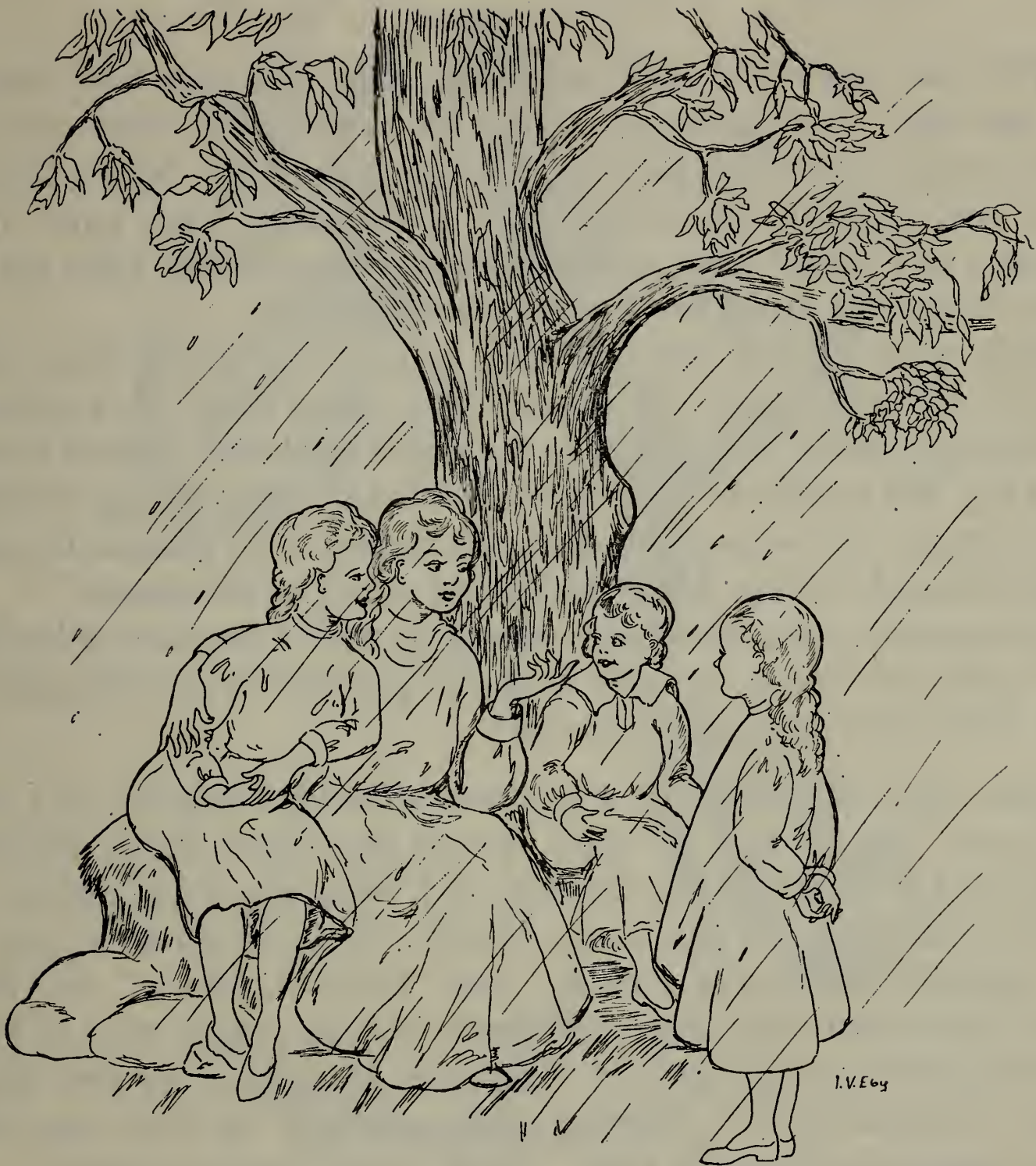
The children pressed in fear around Catherine, who continued smiling and unafraid. Nothing happened to them; but the oak tree showed the mark of the lightning for long years after.

Finally the day would come when Catherine and her mother had to go back to the city.

"Catherine, we must leave," her mother said.

"We have to leave," the child repeated to her little friends. Then she could not say another word, for she was crying.

One time her mother had a good idea. She would take one of those little friends back to the palace with them. And so Joan, a girl about seven or eight years old, became Catherine's constant companion. They were almost like sisters.



Catherine Was So Busy Talking About God

CHAPTER II

“Mamma, You Breathe of Jesus!”

THE time was night, dark and silent. Only the stars were shining and they were far away. Catherine listened, but there wasn't a sound in the magnificent palace. Everyone was asleep. Slowly she slid from bed, carefully she took out of their hiding place some thorn branches and wound them around her head like a crown. Then she fell to her knees and joined her hands in fervent prayer.

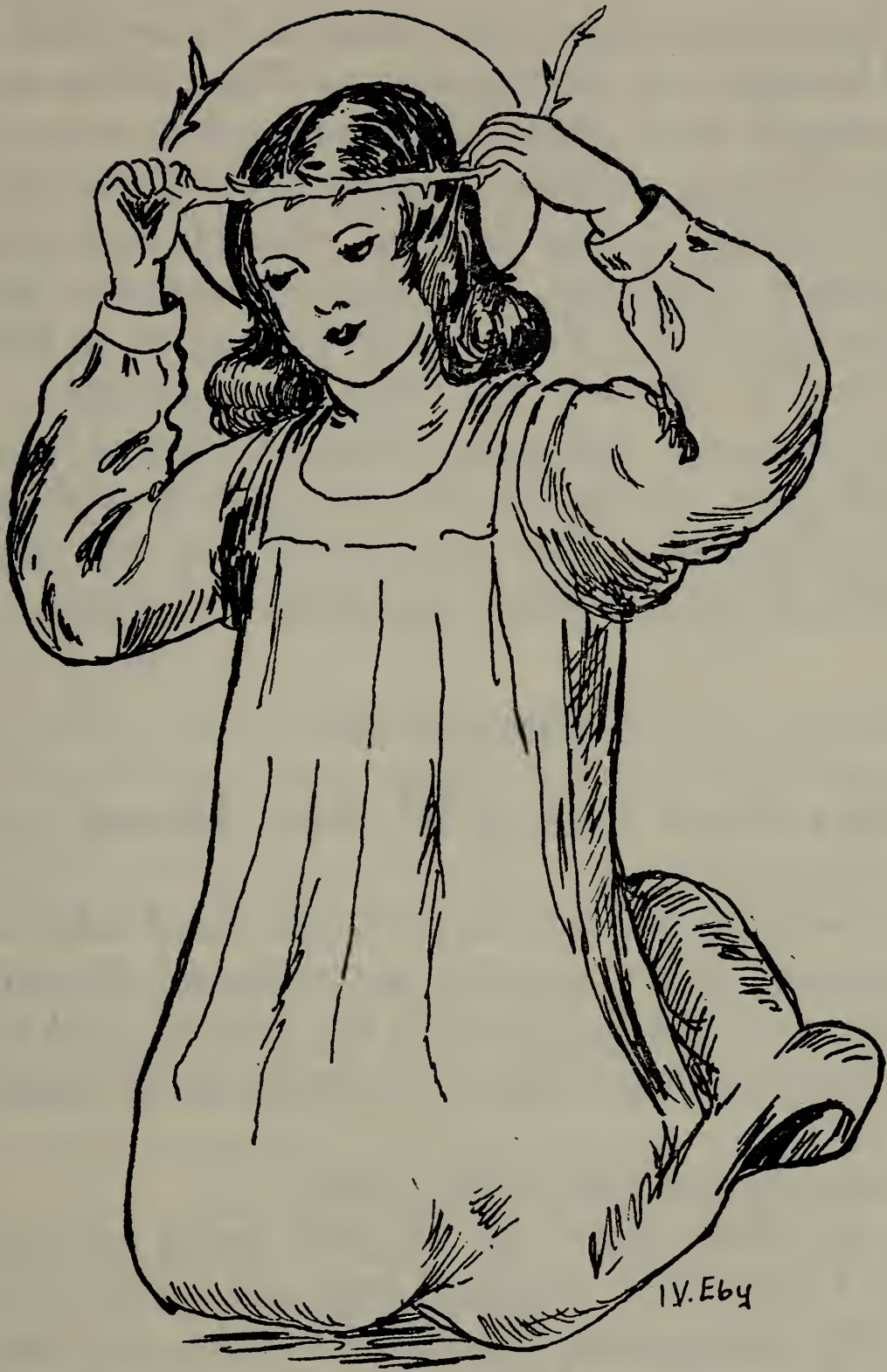
How many persons were suffering pain at that time! How many others were living in sin! How many were raising their voices in hatred and revenge during those hours of the night! Catherine wanted to help them all. She wanted to bring comfort to the sick by suffering for them. By her prayer of love and of sorrow, she wanted to do penance for some of the sin and to bring down pardon and mercy on the sinners.

Such penance for others would always be one of the aims of her life. [We warn our readers, however, that such penances as crowning oneself with thorns are not to be imitated.]

Next came the Eucharist, which had attracted Catherine at a very early age. But she was too small to take part in the Sacred Banquet, so she had to be satisfied by assisting at It with suppressed desire.

This desire was the reason too why her favorite church, among all the beautiful churches of Florence, was “Little St. John's.” For there Holy Communion was given out oftener and the people came to Holy Communion in greater numbers. Catherine, kneeling in the pew closest to the Communion rail, followed with eager eyes the lucky ones who could receive the Heavenly Food. When would her turn come?

Sometimes Catherine could not go to church with her mother. But when Lady Mary reached home, Catherine would recognize at once the Unseen Guest Who had come to live in her mother's heart. Then she would not leave her mother's side. She even climbed into her arms and hid herself on her mother's breast. Lady Mary, wondering at this strange way of acting, asked for the reason and Catherine answered:



She Fell to Her Knees

“Mamma, you breathe of Jesus!”

Finally, when she was ten years old, Catherine received her wish. Clothed in her white veil, she was allowed to approach the altar and receive her Jesus. She hid her face in her hands and thus kept secret the flame of love that was burning her up. What did she say to Jesus? What did He say to her? These things remain their secret.

But a few days later, on Holy Thursday, while Catherine was trying to think of something to give Jesus for what He had given her, she found her answer. That day, after Holy Communion, she solemnly promised Jesus that all her life she would belong only to Him.

Jesus accepted her offering and while angels played a melody on golden harps, He put a ring on her finger. Catherine learned of this only long years later. Meanwhile, she was His bride, and she would be His bride for all eternity. That ring was the first of a long series of heavenly favors, favors that grew even greater and greater.

CHAPTER III

“You Can Cut Off My Head . . .”

WHEN Catherine was sixteen years old, she decided to speak of her vocation. God was calling her to Carmel. But since she was the only daughter of the Pazzi family, her parents could not think of losing their treasure. In fact, they had planned great things for her in the world.

Catherine nevertheless went to her father.

“You can cut off my head,” she affirmed, “but I will never give up my vocation. I have given myself to Jesus and I will never belong to any other.” Her father could do nothing but give in to her.

Lady Mary, however, was different. She thought she loved Catherine too much to let her go. And from the time when she learned of Catherine’s wishes, she seemed to love her daughter more than ever. She wanted Catherine to be with her always, she embraced her more tenderly, she talked with her more than before.

But Catherine saw the trick and was on her guard. She met all her mother’s signs of love with a show of coldness. Her heart ached at this,

as did her mother's; but Catherine never wavered. She belonged to Jesus; only Jesus would have her.

Finally Lady Mary had to yield.

"God is calling you," she said. "Go! But only He can measure my sacrifice, just as He alone can repay me for it." And she herself went with Catherine to the convent of St. Mary of the Angels.

Two months later, on January 30, 1583, Catherine, dressed like a bride, approached the altar. A white veil covered her from head to foot, as if to hide her from every eye; a wreath of orange blossoms adorned her brow. She was a vision of purity and of love, and thus she went to meet her Beloved.

Her golden curls were cut off by the priest. In exchange she received the habit of the Carmelites, the white veil of a novice and a crucifix. This last held the image of the Bridegroom Whom she had chosen above all others; and to Him she promised again to be faithful in a love without limits.

"My only glory, Jesus Crucified!" she exclaimed, with deep emotion.

Meanwhile her name was changed to Mary Magdalene. From now on her special patroness would be that Mary who sat silently listening and loving at the feet of Jesus, that Mary who followed Him bravely to Calvary and even beyond, to His tomb.

The years of the novitiate passed quietly. The strict Carmelite rule seemed all too easy for Sister Mary Magdalene, who was always the first to be ready for work and for prayer. Yet there were also opportunities for sacrifice, especially since the superiors wanted to test the new Sister's real virtue. They knew that it is easy to stay calm and smiling when everything goes the way we like it. But would Sister Mary Magdalene be able to bear up under crosses?

Determined to put her to the test, the Mistress of Novices used humiliations, scoldings, every means that she could. Often she commanded Sister Mary Magdalene to tie a rope around her neck and then kiss the feet of the Sisters. She made her take a basket on her arm, then ask the Sisters one after the other for a piece of bread, for the love of God. She made her sit on the floor in the middle of the dining room to eat. She ordered her to lie flat on the floor at the door of the chapel, so that the Sisters had to step over her when they entered.

Sister Mary Magdalene did not excuse herself from anything; neither did she show any impatience. She suffered, to be sure; but she knew how to rise above her suffering, for the sake of goodness. She was even happy to suffer and to be humbled for Jesus' sake.

Meanwhile a simple country girl had taken the veil in the monastery of St. Mary of the Angels and was told by her confessor to watch the holy novice closely.

"What is her name?" the girl asked.

"Sister Mary Magdalene," was the reply.

But the poor girl could not remember that one name; after all, there were eighty nuns in the monastery and each had a different name. So Sister Mary Archangela (that was her name) began to ask every one for the holy novice. But no one would point her out.

One day she even met Sister Mary Magdalene face to face. She made an extra effort to remember the name that had so often escaped her.

"Are you Sister Mary Magdalene?" she asked anxiously.

"Yes, I am," the Sister replied.

"Then you are the holy novice," declared Sister Mary Archangela.

"I? Oh, no. I am a sinner," answered Sister Mary Magdalene.

Sister Mary Archangela was taken aback. This was not the holy novice. Then it must be some one else with the same name.

Some days later Sister Mary Archangela came into the chapel to assist at Holy Mass, when an unusual brightness caught her eye. In a ring of light she saw a little boy of heavenly beauty romping around Sister Mary Magdalene.

Sister Mary Archangela looked on in amazement. Then she made up her mind to come closer. But the boy was already at the other side of the chapel. She tried to reach him there, but quick as the wind he returned to the first side. His dancing feet seemed not to touch the floor . . . or the floor was bending under his step.

Sister Mary Archangela did not know what to think. She left the chapel in fear, but carrying the holy vision impressed in her mind and heart. Afterwards she tried to recall the scene and to find out what it meant. Then she knew. Sister Mary Magdalene was the holy novice, and Jesus Himself had pointed her out.



She Saw a Little Boy of Heavenly Beauty

CHAPTER IV

“Hypnotized” by God

DURING the first days of March a strange sickness took hold of the saintly novice. Her constant fever, her continual coughing and a nausea that she could not control baffled the doctors. Sister Mary Magdalene was gradually wasting away. So it was decided that she should take her religious vows before the usual time.

Lying on a white stretcher, she was carried into the chapel and to the altar of Our Lady. And there Father Campi, the confessor of the nuns, received her solemn promises. Sister Mary Magdalene was very happy. Finally, her union with Jesus had been approved by Holy Church.

She was carried back to the infirmary and left alone. But when two hours had passed, the Sister-nurse entered the little cell, raised the curtains around the bed and found Sister Mary Magdalene rigid and smiling, her eyes fixed on the crucifix. She was in ecstasy, “hypnotized” by God.

Her Divine Bridegroom, in His love for Sister Mary Magdalene, wanted to celebrate in this solemn and joyful way His union with her. And for forty days afterwards, each morning after Holy Communion, He came to her in this way. She seemed to be leaving earth for heaven.

Her sickness, however, did not lessen. Help from the saints in heaven seemed necessary, if the nuns were to keep their beloved Sister. So the nuns turned to the Blessed Mary Bagnesi, whose incorrupt body they were privileged to have in their monastery.

Then, on June 16, by a miracle, Sister Mary Magdalene was suddenly and completely cured. She was able to take up again the house routine.

For a whole year Jesus continued to shower His favors upon her. He gave her His crown of thorns; He put a wedding ring on her finger; one day He even gave her His heart. These were the same favors that He had given to St. Catherine of Siena some two hundred years before.



Father Campi Received Her Solemn Promises

At the end of the year, however, Jesus prepared her for a terrible test. Now it was her turn to show her love for Him. Jesus seemed to leave her and allowed the devil to come near instead.

And the devil came, to try her in every way he could. Sister Mary Magdalene hardly recognized herself any more. She had the most awful temptations; she even wanted to rebel against her superiors and to leave the convent for good.

Still, though Jesus was asking her to suffer so much, He really did not leave her alone. Sometimes, too, her patron saints came to help her. One day, for example, St. Didacus, who had been a lowly Franciscan lay-brother, appeared to her and with a cross scared away the devils who were tempting her.

Then, while all these trials were going on, God asked still more of Sister Mary Magdalene. She was to go barefoot all year round; she was to wear only one tunic, the poorest in the house; she was not to take anything but bread and water; and she was to sleep only five hours each night.

Sister Mary Magdalene was only twenty years old, but she obeyed God's command and started to live that very strict life. And she continued to live in this way almost to the time of her death, except when the command of her superiors made her relax its strictness.

CHAPTER V

"Do You Love Love?"

FINALLY, after five years, the awful trial ended. Jesus was pleased with the courage of His bride and arranged for a heavenly celebration of her victory. Fourteen saints came down from heaven to rejoice with her. They put a collar of gold around her neck, a crown on her head and a sword at her side. Sister Mary Magdalene was a queen; she had won her war with Satan.

Jesus too had a magnificent gift for her: from then on Sister Mary Magdalene would never lose sight of Him, never forget Him.

"From now on," the future Saint cried joyfully, "whether I walk or stand or work, I shall always see You, my Beloved. . . . Only I am

afraid that seeing You will make me so happy that I shall show my happiness also to outsiders.”

In truth, the flame of love that burned in her heart grew ever hotter. It became a fire that she could no longer hold within her. Often she was impelled to run through the monastery looking for some one to help her love Jesus.

“Do you love Love?” she demanded of the Sisters whom she met. “How do you manage to live? Don’t you feel yourself burning up and dying of love?”

One day, overcome by this fire, she grasped the bell’ropes of the church and rang the bell vigorously.

“Come to love, O souls,” she shouted. “Come to love the Love by Whom you are so much loved.”

Another time, as if she had wings, she flew up to a crucifix placed on a high cornice of the chapel. The space there was hardly wide enough to let a person stand on it. But Sister Mary Magdalene took the body of Jesus from the cross and placed it on her knees; then she took off her veil and used it to dry the sacred image. The veil became wet with sweat.

Sister Mary Magdalene was a help to every one in the convent. She never denied any request that she could fill. But she did like the lowly lay-sisters especially, and she would stay awake all night, doing the work that would take four other Sisters to do. Yet she never seemed to be tired.

And when the bell sounded for baking, Sister Mary Magdalene was always the first to begin. She was also the last to stop and the one who carried the most loads of bread to the distant oven. One time very early in the morning, she had to carry one of those heavy loads of bread down the long flight of steps that led to the oven. It was still somewhat dark. But the Child Jesus appeared at her side with a candle in His hand and lighted the way for her.

With the sick, Sister Mary Magdalene acted like a mother. She hardly wished any one else to take care of them, while she herself did everything she could to help them.

“Oh, Sister Mary Magdalene, I can’t suffer more!” said one of the nuns who was paralyzed and who for many years could not move her

head or her hand; she was filled with pain in all her body.

"Suffer willingly," the Saint replied. "You will see that Jesus will help you."

Then one day Sister Mary Magdalene took a statue of Our Lady and brought it to the suffering nun. She prayed silently before her, made the sign of the Cross with the statue over her and gave her the statue to kiss.

The sick nun felt a breath of life flowing through her stiff limbs. She took hold of the statue with both hands and devoutly kissed its feet. She was cured.

Another time, at night, Sister Mary Magdalene was watching with a Sister who was suffering the greatest pain.

"Pray for me," the Sister said. "I am suffering very much."

Sister Mary Magdalene prayed and the sick nun fell asleep. A short time later she awoke.

"What have you done to me?" she asked in surprise. "I am cured!"

"I only prayed for you," was the Saint's answer.

Her prayer had really worked a miracle; and the next day the nun who had been so ill was up and around, well again.

Once there was a Sister who had to stay awake all night to take care of some emergency. Her head began to ache so much that finally she could not go on. Then she remembered Sister Mary Magdalene.

"If she only knew," the Sister thought. So she went to find her.

And find her she did, in the chapel at the foot of the altar. Sister Mary Magdalene listened to her story, then put her own hand tenderly on the sick nun's head. The headache disappeared.

Another time it was Sister Mary Magdalene's obedience that worked a miracle. A barrel of wine had gone bad in the cellar of the convent. (In Italy, wine is so usual that even the nuns use it at table.) So the Mother Prioress commanded Sister Mary Magdalene to pray that the wine would turn good again.

The Saint, taking the picture of the Franciscan St. Didacus, went down into the cellar. With the picture she made a sign of the Cross in the direction of the barrel. The wine became good again—in fact, very good. And what was more, it cured a sick person who drank some of it for this purpose, because of her confidence in Sister Mary Magdalene.



... Took the Body of Jesus From the Cross

CHAPTER VI

She Was So Beautiful Then . . .

WHEN Sister Mary Magdalene was thirty-one years old, she was elected Mistress of Novices. This meant that it was her work to train the young ladies who wished to become nuns. And how well she did this!

First of all, she was like a mother to them all. She tried to fill the emptiness that they felt in their hearts after leaving their homes and families. She tried to show them that the love of God is even greater than the love of father or mother. And then, when she saw them really separated from the world and happy to be the brides of Jesus, she began to be strict and to test their real virtue.

God gave her the power of reading minds and hearts, and she used this power for the good of her novices. She could see their hidden thoughts, and in this way she was able to give the best possible advice to her beloved daughters.

The novices, on the other hand, liked to see their Mistress in ecstasy. She was so beautiful then, almost like an angel. And they soon learned to have their wish. They had only to talk of the love of God or put a flower into her hand or begin to admire the beauties of nature. That was enough. Sister Mary Magdalene, who saw God and His love in everything that was good and beautiful, immediately went into ecstasy. Then she began to say such wonderful things that the nuns often hurried to get paper and write down everything she said.



She Made a Sign of the Cross

“My Jesus, I Have Never Wanted Anything But You.”

FIVE years before she was to die, God gave Sister Mary Magdalene a very special gift. It was one that she had wanted for a long time, but one that only the saints wish for and appreciate. It was the gift of “naked suffering.”

This means suffering as great as a person can bear, suffering without any good feeling and without any consolation. Sister Mary Magdalene wanted to suffer as Jesus had suffered on the cross, in her body and in her soul; she wanted to feel abandoned, so to say, by God and by creatures. And all this to save souls, as Jesus did.

Souls! They were the purpose of her life, her greatest love after the love of God. Closed up in her cloister and unknown to the world, Sister Mary Magdalene, it might seem, did not know persons outside or had forgotten them. But this was not so. Instead, she loved everybody as if she were their sister and she prayed for everybody too. She offered her strict life, her heroic virtues, her continual penances for the salvation of their souls.

Now, closer to death, she prayed God to grant her finally what she had always asked. God heard her prayer. He allowed her to suffer without receiving any comfort whatsoever.

Her condition became pitiful. All kinds of sickness took hold of her: a continuous fever, persistent coughing and hemorrhages that put her very life in danger. Her teeth caused her pain, all at the same time and with such torture that sometimes she could not keep from weeping and crying aloud.

She was no longer able to take any food. Often she felt as if she would faint. Then, with a smile, she would say to the nuns:

“Here I am in the house of charity and yet I am dying of hunger.”

As long as she could, Sister Mary Magdalene stayed up and around and followed the usual life of the monastery. But finally the command of her superior sent her to bed. She was so thin that her bones came through her skin.

“Any one would say that her whole body was crying to God for mercy,” declared the nuns who lived with her. When they entered the poor cell in which the Saint lived, their hearts were torn with compassion.

Nevertheless, all these bodily pains were as nothing in comparison with the sufferings of her soul. A frightening dryness filled her spirit. Not one ecstasy, not one ray of spiritual light came to her. God seemed to be far off, even to have forgotten her. Sister Mary Magdalene could only cry out:

“I am waiting to see whether God remembers that I am His creature.” She really had her wish—naked suffering.

Meanwhile the devil, who all during her life had been her bitterest enemy, turned with more fury than ever to the attack. He wanted to push the Saint to some impatience or even to despair. He made her believe that her sins had brought her to that sad condition, that God no longer wished to think of her, that she was condemned to hell.

Sister Mary Magdalene, with words that bring tears, called upon God’s mercy.

“You know, my Jesus,” she prayed, “that I have never wanted anything but You. Do not permit me, therefore, to be separated from You forever.”

Still, in the midst of all this suffering, Sister Mary Magdalene never lost her peace of soul. One day, for example, when she had been left alone, they heard her singing with a voice of paradise a little song of St. Francis of Assisi:

“So great is the good that I expect,
That every pain is joy for me.”

All the while, too, the Sisters came to her for help, and she consoled them all.

One of them was so overcome by sadness that she did not know what to do. She too seemed to have been abandoned by God. Then one day she went to visit Sister Mary Magdalene. Hardly had she entered the room, when the Saint sat up in bed and joyfully said to her:

“O Sister Mary Catherine, Jesus loves you.”

These words were enough to bring back peace and quiet to the Sister’s heart.

CHAPTER VIII

“To Suffer, Not to Die . . .”

FROM the day of her First Holy Communion at the age of ten, Sister Mary Magdalene had never missed an opportunity to receive her Jesus. And in the monastery she became the apostle of daily Communion, the ardent lover who could scarcely be separated from the Eucharist.

One day one of the nuns, who had been sick for a long time and could very seldom receive Communion, spoke to Sister Mary Magdalene of her burning desire for the Bread of Angels. Sister Mary Magdalene sympathized with her and did her best to console her.

Then, on the following day it happened. While the long line of nuns took their places in turn at the Communion opening, when the sick nun's turn came, the Host slipped from the fingers of the priest and disappeared. And however much he looked for It, he could not find It. But one of the nuns had seen It float in the air for a moment or two, in the center of a circle of light, and then vanish.

Sometime later the Mother Prioress visited the sick nun and found her very happy.

“What has happened?” the Prioress asked. And the nun replied:

“Yesterday I asked Sister Mary Magdalene to send me Jesus. And this morning, while the Sisters were receiving Holy Communion, I felt Him within me as if I had really received Him.”

Often Sister Mary Magdalene would say to those who had not received Holy Communion that day: “You have missed receiving Love this morning.” Her words were a gentle correction of their negligence or false humility. She herself could not understand how any soul could willingly deprive itself of the visit of God.

When she became sick, however, those Holy Communions cost her much suffering. The morning fast became such a torment to her that



The Host Slipped From the Fingers of the Priest

she often thought that she would die. Yet she never gave up Holy Communion on this account.

"If you tell me to leave off Holy Communion because I am not worthy," she said to her Sisters, "then I will do so. But if you say this because you do not want to see me suffer, then know that I suffer more when I give up this Food of Life."

Neither did those Communions bring her any feeling of joy. But, joyless though they were, these silent visits of her Bridegroom did give her the strength to continue in her suffering and in her love.

In truth, suffering had become her life. She did not wish to die, but only to suffer. "To suffer, not to die" was her motto, and she remained faithful to this motto until her last breath.

"I hope that before you die God will give you some release from suffering," said the priest one day.

"Oh, no! That is not what I want," the Saint answered quickly. "I ask Him only to give me the strength to suffer always."

After five years of sickness, Sister Mary Magdalene knew that death was near. She received the Last Sacraments with wonderful devotion. Then she asked pardon of the Sisters for any wrong she might have done. Then she prepared for the last moment.

The Father Confessor stood by. But as her agony went on and on, he decided to go to the chapel to say Mass. Hardly had he reached the sacristy, however, when he was called back; Sister Mary Magdalene was dying. Suddenly he had an inspiration.

"Tell Sister Mary Magdalene not to die until I have said Mass and given Holy Communion to the nuns," he ordered.

When they relayed the command to Sister Mary Magdalene, she smiled and said:

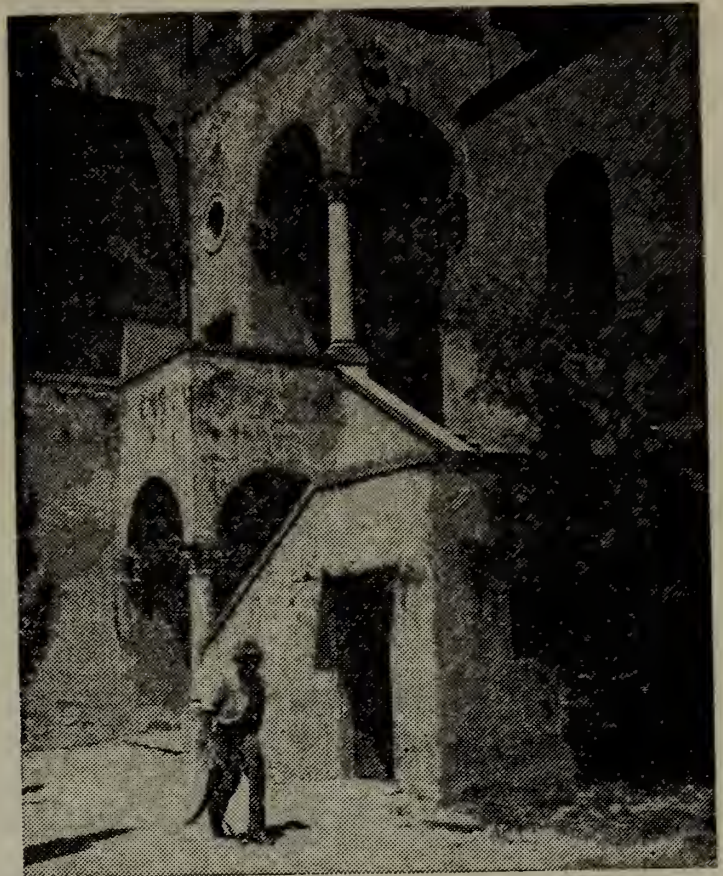
"Blessed be God!" (This was the answer that the Sisters usually gave when they had received a command of their superiors.)

Sister Mary Magdalene kept her word. She was obedient even in the matter of dying. In fact, she seemed to get better.

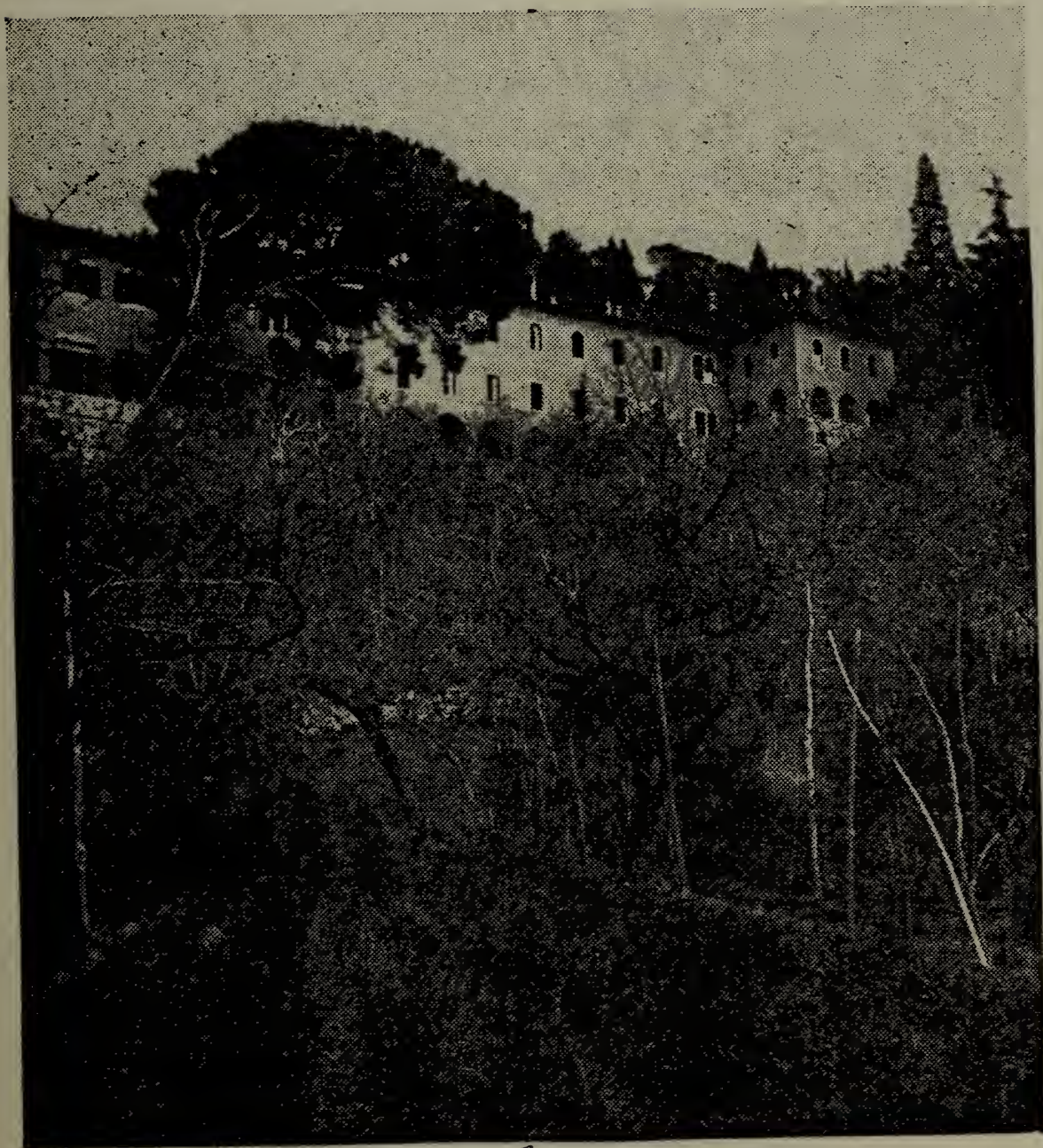
But when the Mass was over and the priest had returned, she again grew worse.

Gathered around her bed, the nuns took turns in singing psalms and

The New Church
Named in Her Honor



On One of the Pleasant Hills



hymns, as she had asked them to do. They could hardly keep from crying.

And so she died, listening to the divine praises that she loved so much. The date was May 25, 1607.

They placed her body in the church, in the midst of candles and flowers.

“The Saint has died!” The people of Florence quickly passed the word along and then came in crowds to honor her. The funeral service was a scene of triumph.

Among the many who came was a young man who was leading an evil life and who through curiosity approached the remains. But Sister Mary Magdalene, model of purity that she was, could not, even in death, bear the sight of such a sinner. She turned her face to the other side.

A great shout went up from the people. A miracle had taken place.

Actually, the miracle was a double one; the young man, sorry for his sins, resolved to change his way and he kept his resolution.

Later, the body of Sister Mary Magdalene was placed under the main altar; then, after some time, the coffin was opened and showed the Saint whole and beautiful, looking as she had at death. Moreover, a mysterious perfume, like the scent of roses and lilies, came from the casket and spread out to a great distance.

In 1626 Sister Mary Magdalene was declared Blessed, and on April 28, 1669, she was proclaimed a Saint.

Today her body, still incorrupt, lies under the main altar of the new church named in her honor. The church itself stands on one of the pleasant hills around the city of Florence, in a place called Careggi. And many are the favors that Saint Mary Magdalene obtains for those who call upon her. These favors prove that in heaven she still continues to love mankind and to pray for all of us before God.

St. Mary Magdalene de’Pazzi, pray for us!

THE END

A HYMN OF GLORY TO MARY

(On the Feast of the Assumption, by St. Mary Magdalene de'Pazzi)

“How glorious you are, O Mary, O glorious Mary! In the beauty of your eyes all paradise delights; even the throne of the Trinity inclines to see . . . Mary is that fountain signed with the immaculate seal of the Eternal Word that declares her Virgin and Mother, Mother and Virgin, the pleasure of the Trinity . . . O garden enclosed, in which is enclosed the Giver of Being, because in Mary God Himself is encompassed! O Mary, you are that gate through which we are led into the heavenly fatherland and through which God has descended to the earth. If there were no Mary, for me there would be no paradise. If there were no Mary, for me there would be no God. If there were no Mary, heaven would not be glorious, because there would be so many vacant places.

“O Mary, when we shall come to honor you no longer with words, but with deeds, not only for an hour, but for eternity, oh, how little we shall appear to have suffered! . . . Oh, why has not every creature, every bride consecrated to Christ and every daughter of Mary not always before her eyes the future life and the great shortness of the present one? . . . They would never offend God, even in the least matter . . . Happy indeed is she who will be present at the crowning of Mary!”

(From SERAPH AMONG ANGELS, a full-length, adult life of St. Mary Magdalene de'Pazzi, by Sister Mary Minima. See back cover.)

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