

MOTHER MARIA DEL SOCORRO ASTORGA LICERAS



1- Once upon a time... Mary Claudia Josephine Astorga Liceras. Do you know her? Probably not. I want to tell you her story and I'm sure you'll like it.

2- Mary, "future Mother Mary of help", was born in Archidona, a small town in the province of Malaga, in Spain, on 30th of October 1769, in the bosom of a family of good conditions, which offered her a careful human and Christian education.

3- Her father, Francis Astorga, was a great master builder who made many masterpieces in Archidona, such as the Ochavada square (the most important in the village) and the tower of the church of the Monastery of the Minim Nuns of Saint Francis of Paola.

4- She was only three and a half years old, when her mother died, still young. That is why she didn't remember anything about her, but she filled comfort to hear speak of her virtues and of the education that had began to give her.

5- At the age of five years old, afflicted because her father had remarried and fearful of her stepmother, she dreamed that the Blessed Virgin comforted her with maternal tenderness and took her as a daughter. From that dream she began to love her with whole heart and called her "My sweet Mother". And that filial devotion to the Virgin Mary distinguished her life.

6 -Since her first Communion, at the age of eight years old, began to have greater knowledge of Godly things. She liked to stay alone at home, to kneel on the ground and worship the Blessed Sacrament, since from the window of her house, could see the parish, which was in front, thanking God for having made her neighbor.

7 -From a very young age she knew how to endure with strength everything that made her suffer, accepting it without complaint, to join the sufferings of Jesus.

8 -At the age of fourteen, they made her a marriage proposal and Mary was very troubled without knowing how to respond. She did not discuss it with anyone, not even with her parents, but went crying to her "Sweet Mother", asking for light to know the will of God. As she was praying, she understood that her "Sweet Mother" wanted her to be a nun.

9- With this new light, her desire to be religious increased and, full of fervor, she began to fast more frequently and to secretly keep her food, to give it as alms to the poor.

10 – She therefore decided to talk to her father about the vocation to religious life that she already felt strongly. This one was a man of deep faith, did not object, on the contrary he told her that he was very happy that she wanted to be religious, because if marriage state was good, religious life was better.

11 - But where did the Lord wanted her? The response did not take long. One day, during the novena of St. Francis of Paula, Mary was in the church of the Victory of the Minim Monks and there, while praying before the Blessed Sacrament, asking for light, she was invaded by so much inner recollection that she understood that the Lord wanted her to be a Minim Nun of St. Francis of Paula.

12 - The long-awaited day of her entry into the monastery came on August 28, 1799. The night before, Mary prepared herself with fervor to receive the novice habit of the Minim Nuns. She did not want invitations nor give farewell to her family and friends, rather she preferred to live that transcendental moment of her life in prayer and recollection.

13 -That night she did not sleep and the next morning she got up very early, asked her father for the blessing and went to church to confess and receive the Holy Communion. Upon receiving the Eucharist she felt her beloved lord caress her soul content with her good resolutions.

14 -The Provincial priest of the Minims giving her permission to enter with the Minim Nuns, gave her the name of ‘‘Help’’, saying that this was the name that God wanted her to have, so Mary will be Mother Mary of Help.

15 - Her beloved Spouse prepared her with the gift of inner recollection to her Profession, which celebrated on August 29, 1800. With all fervor she embraced religious life, animated by the desire to fulfill with fidelity the new obligations she had contracted with the Profession!

16 -The first office assigned to her was that of nurse. With heroic charity she assisted the most serious and contagious sisters, who continually requested her, so much so that she barely left her time to go to the community prayer. Despite so much work, she felt full of joy because she contemplated the face of the suffering Jesus in each sick person and could meditate on his Passion.

17 -After the occupation of nurse, she worked as a porter and turner. Every day, before attending to those who came to the revolving window, she prayed to the Lord to help her to be charitable to everyone, especially the poor, and there were so many who came to ask for alms! providing them with great charity with some food, until she deprive her self of her own food.

18 -These offices caused her many dislikes, but Mother Mary of Help knew how to endure everything with patience and sweet meekness. Jesus wanted to unite her to his cross also with many sicknesses, which she always accepted with generosity and a spirit of sacrifice.

19- Her writings are the fruit of obedience to her confessor, who commanded her to write down all her spiritual experiences. In them she exalt and witness to the world the great mercy and goodness of God.

20 - The penitential charism of the Order of the Minims, which is a charism of intercession, reparation and atonement, was strongly marked in Mother Mary of Help, who spent all the time of prayer imploring mercy for sinners.

21 -In February of 1813 her writings were mysteriously interrupted. Why? We don't know. The truth is that Mother Mary of Help died on March 31, 1814 at the age of 44 and left behind her the soft perfume of her holiness.

22- Mother Mary of Help, as the faithful daughter of St. Francis of Paula, took flight to the summit of the mountain of holiness with the wings of love and obedience to the divine will.

23 -Now from heaven she intercedes for us, imploring from God that mercy, which she had contemplated and celebrated so much in all her life.

24 - You also invite her in all your needs with this simple prayer and she will pray for you to her good and merciful God:

25- Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we thank you for the gifts granted to the Servant of God, Mother Mary of Help Astorga Liceras, a Minim nun, who, in the school of Jesus eucharist and following the example of the Blessed Virgin Mary, her "Sweet Mother" and of St. Francis of Paula, bore witness to evangelical life and, inflamed in divine love, she manifested the mercy and goodness of God. We pray that through her intercession you will grant us the grace we ask of you and deign to glorify your Servant and be for all the faithful an example to follow. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

