

## **Excerpts from Butler's *Lives of The Saints***

### **ST CLOELIA BARBIERI, FOUNDER OF THE LITTLE SISTERS OF OUR LADY OF SORROWS (A.D. 1870)**

CLOELIA MARY RACHEL BARBIERI, whose feast is commemorated this day, is one of the least known of the holy men and women who have recently been elevated to the altars as a saint. She was born in the town of Budrie, which lies within the Archdiocese of Bologna in Italy, on 13 February 1847: her father was Joseph Barbieri, her mother Hyacinthia Nanetti. They were a pious but not very wealthy couple, and Joseph's death in 1855 left the family very poor indeed. Cloelia, a very intelligent child, had soon to learn to help provide for her family by the labour of her hands. The following year she was strengthened in her faith by the sacrament of confirmation, and two years after that, as was then the custom, by the reception of Christ in the Eucharist.

These were not easy times for the Church in Italy, a hostile environment to the teaching of the gospel, but Cloelia dedicated herself to passing on to others in the parish her own indomitable faith, and became a catechist. She was lucky in that she had as her parish priest Gaetano Guidi. He saw Cloelia's dedication and her remarkable piety the possibility of leading her to ever greater works for the Church. In particular he suggested that she and a close friend, Teodora Baraldi, should take up the education of the poor girls of the parish. Thus there came into being, little by little, the Little Sisters Of Our Lady of Sorrows. Cloelia and Teodora were soon joined by Orsola Donati and she, together with Cloelia, is considered the true Founder of the Congregation. On 1 May 1868 they set up house together in a very poor dwelling, and it is from that date that the Congregation dates its beginning. Cloelia was at that time little more than 21 years old - the youngest founder of a religious congregation, Pope John Paul II pointed out in his homily at her canonization, in the long history of the Church. From the outset the new Institute had the blessing of the Archbishop of Bologna, Cardinal Lucida Maria Parocchi, and it was he who gave it the name "of Our Lady of Sorrows" after the Marian devotion widely and fervently promoted in that part of Italy. He also suggested that the new congregation put itself under the patronage of St Francis of Paola (cf. 2 April), who had founded the Minim Friars.

Her piety, especially to the person of Christ in the Eucharist, was very deep. Young in years, she attained great heights of contemplation, for she had been devoted to prayer, and even to mortification of the body, from her childhood. She was seen in ecstasy, and credited with the ability to read hearts. Soon after the foundation of the Congregation she was taken ill, but recovered in a manner which seemed little short of miraculous. She died, however, on 13 July 1870, when she was only twenty-three years old, having achieved much for the Church in her very short life. In the course of the ceremony of canonization, which took place in St Peter's Basilica, Rome, on 9 August 1989, Pope John Paul held her up as an example to the Christian world of how the Faith should be nurtured, first in the family and then, as was Cloelia's, within the parish.

### **ST. CAMILLUS DE LELLIS, FOUNDER OF THE MINISTERS OF THE SICK (A.D. 1614)**

CAMILLUS DE LELLIS was born in 1550 at Bocchianico in the Abruzzi, when his mother was nearly sixty. He grew to be a very big man-6ft. 6in. tall and the rest in proportion- and when he was seventeen he went off with his father to fight with the Venetians against the Turks; but soon he had contracted that painful and repulsive disease in his leg that was to afflict him for the rest of his life. In 1571 he was admitted to the San Giacomo hospital for incurables at Rome, as a patient and servant; after nine months he was dismissed, for his quarrelsomeness among other things, and he returned to active service in the Turkish war. Though Camillus habitually referred to himself as a great sinner, his worst disorder was an addiction to gambling. In the autumn of 1574 he gambled away his savings, his arms, everything down to the proverbial shirt, which was stripped off his back in the streets of Naples.

The indigence to which he had reduced himself, and the memory of a vow he had made in a fit of remorse to join the Franciscans, caused him to accept work as a labourer on the new Capuchin buildings at Manfredonia, and there a moving exhortation which the guardian of the friars one day made him completed his conversion. Ruminating on it as he rode upon his business, he at length fell on his knees, and with tears deplored his past unthinking life, and cried to Heaven for mercy. This happened on Candlemas day in the year 1575, the twenty-fifth of his age. He entered the novitiate of the Capuchins, but could not be admitted to profession on account of the disease in his leg. He therefore returned to the hospital of San Giacomo and devoted himself to the service of the sick. The administrators, having been witnesses to his charity and ability, after some time appointed him superintendent of the hospital.

Camillus, grieving to see the unscrupulousness and slackness of hired servants in attending the sick, formed a project of associating for that office some of the attendants who desired to devote themselves to it out of a motive of charity. He found several persons so disposed, but met with great obstacles in the execution of his design, particularly from that jealousy and suspicion that are so often provoked by disinterested reformers. To make himself more useful in spiritually assisting the sick, he resolved, with the approval of his confessor, St Philip Neri, to receive holy orders, and was ordained by the vicegerent of Rome, Thomas Goldwell, Bishop of St Asaph, the exiled last bishop of the old English hierarchy. A certain gentleman of Rome named Fermo Calvi gave him an annuity as his title of ordination.

Camillus decided to sever Connection with San Giacomo and start on his own, though to do so was contrary to the advice of St Philip; so with two companions he laid the foundations of his congregation: he prescribed certain short rules, and they went every day to the great hospital of the Holy Spirit where they served the sick with affection and diligence. In 1585 he hired a larger house, and the success of his undertaking encouraged him to extend his activities: so he ordained that the members of his congregation should bind themselves to serve persons infected with the Plague, prisoners, and those who lie dying in private houses; later, in 1595 and 1601, some of his religious were sent with the troops fighting in Alungary and Croatia, thus forming the first recorded military field ambulance. In 1585 he hired a larger house, and the success of his undertaking encouraged him to extend his activities: so he ordained that the members of his congregation should bind themselves to serve persons infected with the plague, prisoners, and those who lie dying in private houses; later, in 1595 and 1601, some of his religious were sent with the troops fighting in Hungary and Croatia, thus forming the first recorded military field ambulance'

In 1588 Camillus was invited to Naples, and with twelve companions founded there a new house. Certain galleys having the plague on board were forbidden to enter the harbour, so the Ministers of the Sick (the name they took) went on board, and attended them: two of their number died of the pestilence, the first martyrs of charity in this institute. In 1591 Gregory XIV erected this congregation into a religious order, for perpetually serving the sick. The founder was, as has already been said, himself afflicted with many corporal sufferings: the disease in his leg for forty-six years; a rupture for thirty-eight years; two sores in the sole of one of his feet, which gave him great pain; and, for a long time before he died, a distaste for food and inability to retain it. Under this complication of infirmities he would not suffer anyone to wait on him, but sent all his brethren to serve others. St Camillus saw the foundation altogether of fifteen houses of his brothers and eight hospitals, and Almighty God acknowledged his zeal and selflessness by the spirit of prophecy and the gift of miracles, and by many heaven communications and favours.

The saint laid down the canonical leaderships of his order in 1607. Bathe assisted at the general chapter in Rome in 1613, and after it, with the new superior general, visited the houses, giving them his last exhortations. At Genoa he was extremely ill; he recovered so as to be able to finish the Visitation of his hospitals, but soon relapsed, and his life was now despaired of. He received viaticum from the hands of Cardinal Ginnasi, and when he received the last anointing he made a moving exhortation to his brethren; he expired on July 14, 1614, being sixty-four years old. St Camillus de Lellis was canonized in 1746, and was, with St John-of-God, declared patron of the sick by Pope Leo XIII, and of nurses and nursing associations by Pope Pius XI.