

TOGETHER pilgrims on the way towards MADRID 2011

Spiritual journey in the company of CA young saints

Ninth stage (February 2011)

TIME TO MEDITATE

John 4,5-42 • THE VIRGIN MARY, THE MOTHER WHOM YOU HAVE GIVEN US FROM THE CROSS, ALWAYS ENCOURAGES US TO DO WHATEVER YOU TELL US

"So he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of land that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there. Jesus, tired from his journey, sat down there at the well. It was about noon. A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." His disciples had gone into the town to buy food. The Samaritan woman said to him, "How can you, a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink?" (For Jews use nothing in common with Samaritans.) Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God and who is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him and he would have given you living water." The woman said to him, "Sir, you do not even have a bucket and the cistern is deep; where then can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us this cistern and drank from it himself with his children and his flocks?" Jesus answered and said to her, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again; but whoever drinks the water I shall give will never thirst; the water I shall give will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may not be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water." Jesus said to her, "Go call your husband and come back." The woman answered and said to him, "I do not have a husband." Jesus answered her, "You are right in saying, 'I do not have a husband.' For you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true." The woman said to him, "Sir, I can see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain; but you people say that the place to worship is in Jerusalem." Jesus said to her, "Believe me, woman, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You people worship what you do not understand; we worship what we understand, because salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth; and indeed the Father seeks such people to worship him. God is Spirit, and those who worship him must worship in Spirit and truth." The woman said to him, "I know that the Messiah is coming, the one called the Anointed; when he comes, he will tell us everything." Jesus said to her, "I am he, the one who is speaking with you."

At that moment his disciples returned, and were amazed that he was talking with a woman, but still no one said, "What are you looking for?" or "Why are you talking with her?" The woman left her water jar and went into the town and said to the people, "Come see a man who told me everything I have done. Could he possibly be the Messiah?" They went out of the town and came to him. Meanwhile, the disciples urged him, "Rabbi, eat." But he said to them, "I have food to eat of which you do not know."

So the disciples said to one another, "Could someone have brought him something to eat?" Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of the one who sent me and to finish his work. [..]"

Many of the Samaritans of that town began to believe in him because of the word of the woman who testified, "He told me everything I have done." When the Samaritans came to him, they invited him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. Many more began to believe in him because of his word, and they said to the woman, "We no longer believe because of your word; for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the savior of the world".

We know what it means to crave for something: the Samaritan woman craved for some water, something which is very concrete. We all know that we are constantly having concrete as well as more complex desires. These desires frighten us because we know that one desire brings others along with it; because desires are a powerful engine which opens new ways. Just like the fox and the grapes, sometimes it is more convenient to choose the easier way out by resigning ourselves. And yet, can we really stop aspiring for great things and still enjoy living?

Two women, the Samaritan woman and Mary, in their diversity, teach us the way of desiring to follow the way which leads us to Jesus; but we must have the courage to enter into dialogue with Him. We should let Him lead us on to circumstances we never imagined, accept and follow His will even when this seems illogic and refrain from trying to run away. We should accept the risky challenges which this strange guide encourages us to face, even if we do not understand what he is leading us to. Like Mary, let us be docile in following His way of poverty and refrain from being upset like the Samaritan woman. Thus we can be sure that Jesus will give heed to our desires.



BLESSÈD MARIA GABRIELLA SAGHEDDU

Short biographical notes

Maria Gabriella was born on the 17th March 1914, in the province of Nuoro. She was the fifth among eight brothers. Through his work as a shepherd, her father earned a decent living for his family. Unfortunately, when the First World War broke out, one of her brothers, Bartholomew, who was just one year old, and her father were killed. At the age of five, it was already evident that Maria Gabriella was naughty, strong-headed and authoritarian. She knew exactly what she wanted and with patience and perseverance she worked until she attained what she wanted.

Her family's financial situation did not permit her to carry on with her studies and she was compelled to start working.

As a child she frequented Saint Catherine's Parish. She was often asked to join the Catholic Action Female Youth Group which was a very strong group, but she always refused. Finally, in 1932, when she felt ready to join the group, she herself asked to be a member.

This was the time when she started feeling her vocation. Maria Gabriella started feeling that the Blessed Virgin Mary was accompanying her. Her faith was maturing and deepening. When she was twenty years old, she felt ready to consecrate her life and stated that she wanted to dedicate herself "fully to God for ever".

Her confessor directed her towards the Order of the Trappistine Nuns and in 1935 she joined the Order at Grottaferrata (RM). She took the habit in 1936. Sister Maria Gabriella distinguished herself by her obedience and humility. The Abbot Couturier, who was promoting the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity all over Europe, was a frequent visitor of the Trappistine Nuns. His words impressed Maria Gabriella. In fact in 1938 she told her abbess and her confessor that she wished to offer her life for Christian Unity. At that time the symptoms of her illness were already evident so she understood that God had accepted her sacrifice. This is why she is referred to Maria Gabriella dell'Unità. She died the following year on the 23rd April, on Good Shepherd Sunday.

Maria Gabriella's Words

«The Lord has put me on this track. I entrust myself to Him in my struggle».

«I saw a large crucifix in front of me...I thought that my sacrifice was nothing compared to His».

«God's will, whatever it may be, is my joy, my delight, my peace».

«Pray for me so that I may always be faithful to the Rules, follow God's will without ever offending Him and thus spend my life joyfully in His house». *(from a letter to members of her family)*

«As you know, the Lord has always bestowed special blessings on me but now, with this illness, He has given me the greatest gift. I abandon myself completely in my Lord's hands and feel that I have gained a lot».

«One should respect Catholic Action. This means that when one enrolls himself in CA, one should commit himself to do what is expected of him and I do not feel worthy of this».

A young person like us

«In order to reaffirm this duty(of Christian Unity) I would like to set before the faithful of the Catholic Church a model which I consider exemplary, the model of a Trappistine Sister, Blessèd Maria Gabriella of Unity, whom I beatified on 25 January 1983. Sister Maria Gabriella, called by her vocation to be apart from the world, devoted her life to meditation and prayer centered on chapter seventeen of Saint John's Gospel, and offered her life for Christian unity. This is truly the cornerstone of all prayer: the total and unconditional offering of one's life to the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit. The example of Sister Maria Gabriella is instructive; it helps us to understand that there are no special times, situations or places of prayer for unity. Christ's prayer to the Father is offered as a model for everyone, always and everywhere».

John Paul II, *from the Encyclical Ut unum sint*, 1995, n. 27

«It is my pleasure to point out to you, especially to young people, who are so keen on competition and sports, the young trappistine nun, on whom we have, today for the first time, bestowed the title of Blessèd. She knew how to make hers the Apostle's exhortation to the faithful in Corinth (1 Cor 9,24): to run in the stadium to win the prize". In her race, which lasted a few years - in the holiness stadium - she succeeded in winning a series of firsts which make her the envy of more qualified champions. Historically, she is in fact, the first member of the Catholic Action Female Youth members to be declared Blessèd, the first from among the young people of Sardinia, the first from among Trappistine Monks and Nuns and the first one from those who worked for Christian Unity».

John Paul II, *Homily during the Beatification Mass*
(and conclusion of the Week of Prayers for Christian Unity), 25 January 1983