 Reading time: 5 min.

On November 25th, 2024, Pope Francis authorised the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints to promulgate the decree regarding the miracle attributed to the intercession of Blessed Maria Troncatti, a professed Sister of the Congregation of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, born in Corteno Golgi (Italy) on February 16th, 1883, and who died in Sucúa (Ecuador) on August 25th, 1969. With this act of the Holy Father, the path to the canonisation of Blessed Maria Troncatti is opened.

Maria Troncatti was born in Corteno Golgi (Brescia) on February 16th, 1883. Devoted to parish catechesis and the sacraments, the adolescent Maria developed a deep Christian sense that opened her to a religious vocation. The *Salesian Bulletin* arrived in Corteno, and Maria thought about her religious vocation. However, out of obedience to her father and the parish priest, she waited until she was of age before asking for admission to the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. She made her first profession in 1908 in Nizza Monferrato. During World War I (1915-1918), Sister Maria attended health assistance courses in Varazze and worked as a Red Cross nurse in the military hospital. During a flood in which she risked drowning, Maria promised the Madonna that if she saved her life, she would go to the missions.

In 1922, Mother General, Caterina Daghero assigned her to the missions in Ecuador. She spent three years in Chunchi. Accompanied by the missionary Bishop Mons. Comin and a small expedition, Sister Maria and two other sisters ventured into the Amazon rainforest. Their mission field was the land of the Shuar Indians, in the south-eastern part of Ecuador. They settled in Macas, a village of colonists surrounded by the collective homes of the Shuar. Together with her sisters, she carried out a difficult work of evangelization amidst various risks, including those posed by forest animals and the dangers of swirling rivers. Macas, Sevilla Don Bosco, and Sucúa are some of the “miracles” still flourishing out of Sister Maria Troncatti’s work: nurse, surgeon and orthopaedic doctor, dentist, and anaesthetist… But above all, she was a catechist and evangeliser, rich in wonderful resources of faith, patience, and fraternal love. Her work for the promotion of Shuar women flourished in hundreds of new Christian families, formed for the first time by the free personal choice of the young spouses. She was nicknamed “the doctor of the jungle”, fighting for human promotion, especially of women. **She was the “little mother” (*madrecita*)**, always eager to reach out not only to the sick but to all those in need of help and hope. From a simple and poor clinic, she founded a real

hospital and personally trained the nurses. With maternal patience, she listened, fostered communion among the people, and educated both natives and colonists in forgiveness. “A glance at the Crucifix gives me life and courage to work”, this is the certainty of faith that sustained her life. In every activity, sacrifice, or danger, she felt supported by the maternal presence of Mary Help of Christians.

On August 25th, 1969, in Sucúa (Ecuador), the small plane carrying Sister Maria Troncatti to the city crashed a few minutes after take-off, on the edge of that jungle which had been for almost half a century her “heart’s homeland”, the space of her tireless donation among the “Shuar”. Sister Maria experienced her last take-off: the one that took her to Paradise! She was 86 years old, all spent as a gift of love. She had offered her life for reconciliation between the colonists and the Shuar. She wrote, “I am increasingly happy with my missionary religious vocation!”

She was declared Venerable on November 12th, 2008, and **beatified during the pontificate of Benedict XVI in Macas (Apostolic Vicariate of Méndez – Ecuador) on November 24th, 2012**. In the beatification homily, Cardinal Angelo Amato outlined her figure as a consecrated and missionary woman. In the ordinariness and simplicity of her maternal and merciful gestures, Card. Amato highlighted the extraordinary nature of the “example of dedication to Jesus and his Gospel of truth and life” for which, more than forty years after her death, she was remembered with gratitude. “Sister Maria, animated by grace, became an untiring messenger of the Gospel, expert in humanity and a profound knower of the human heart. She shared the joys and hopes, the difficulties and sorrows of her brothers and sisters, both great and small. She was able to transform prayer into apostolic zeal and concrete service to others”. Cardinal Amato concluded the homily by reassuring those present, including the Shuar, that “from heaven, Blessed Maria Troncatti continues to watch over your homeland and your families. Let us continue to ask for her intercession, to live in fraternity, concord, and peace. Let us turn to her with confidence, so that she may assist the sick, console the suffering, enlighten parents in the Christian education of their children, and bring harmony to families. Dear faithful, as she was on earth, so from heaven Blessed Maria Troncatti will continue to be our Good Mother”.

The biography written by Sister Domenica Grassiano, “Jungle, Homeland of the Heart”, helped to make the testimony of this great missionary known and to spread her fame of holiness. This Daughter of Mary Help of Christians singularly embodied the pedagogy and spirituality of the preventive system, especially

through that motherhood that marked her entire missionary witness throughout her life.

As a young Sister in the 1920s: while continuing as a nurse, she dedicated particular attention to the oratory girls, especially to a group of them who were rather neglected, noisy, and intolerant of any discipline. Sister Maria welcomed and treated them in such a way that “they had a veneration for her: they knelt before her, so great was their esteem. They felt in her a soul belonging entirely to God and entrusted themselves to her prayer”.

She also reserved **special attention for the postulants**, communicating trust and courage, “Be brave, do not let yourself be taken by regret for what you have left behind… Pray to the Lord, and He will help you realise your vocation”. The forty postulants of that year all reached to receiving the habit and making their profession, attributing this result to Sister Maria’s prayers, which instilled hope, especially when she saw difficulties in adapting to the new way of life or in accepting separation from one’s family.

As Mother of the poor and needy. With her example and message, she reminds us that “we do not only care for the body, but also for the needs of the human soul: for those who suffer from the violation of rights or from a broken love; for those who find themselves in darkness regarding the truth; who suffer from the absence of truth and love. We care for the salvation of people in body and soul”. How many souls she saved! How many children she saved from certain death! How many girls and women she defended in their dignity! How many families she formed and safeguarded in the truth of marital and family love! How many fires of hatred and revenge she extinguished with the strength of patience and the giving of one’s life! And she lived all this with great apostolic and missionary zeal.

The testimony of Father Giovanni Vigna, who worked for 23 years in the same mission, illustrates very well the heart of Sister Maria Troncatti, “Sister Maria stood out for her exquisite motherhood. She found a solution to every problem that proved always the best, in light of the facts. She was always willing to discover the positive side of people. I saw her treat human nature in all its aspects, even the most miserable: she treated them with that excellence and gentleness that were spontaneous and natural in her. She expressed motherhood as affection among the Sisters in the community: it was the vital secret that sustained them, the love that united them to one another; the full sharing of labours, pains, and joys. She

exercised her motherhood especially towards the younger ones. Many Sisters experienced the sweetness and strength of her love. This was also true for the Salesians who frequently fell ill because they did not spare themselves in their work and effort. She cared for them, supported them morally, sensing crises, fatigue, and turmoil. Her transparent soul saw everything through the love of a Father who cares for us and saves us. She served as God’s instrument for wonderful works!”