

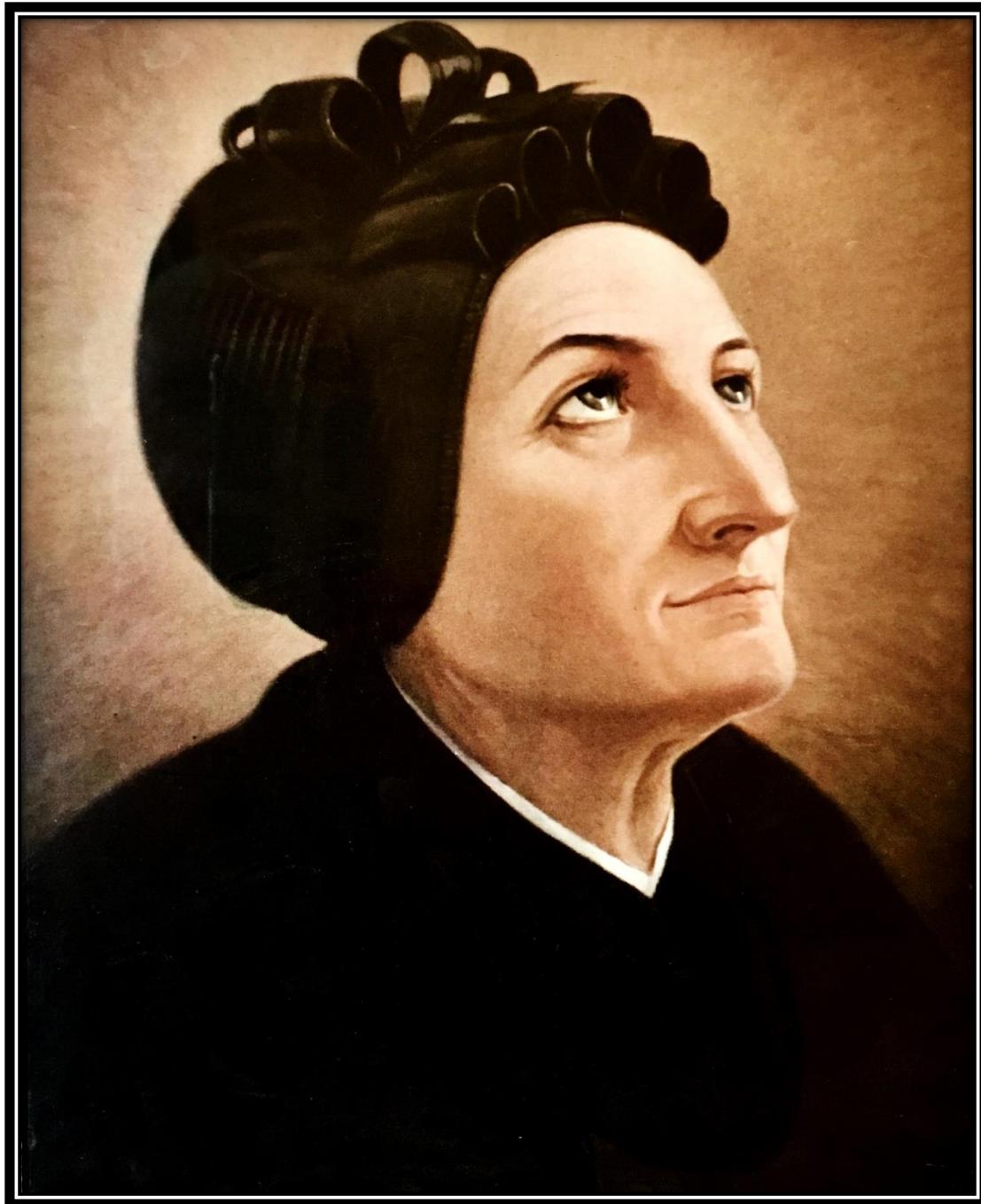
# SACRAMENTO DIOCESAN ARCHIVES

Vol 7

Father John E Boll

No 4

## *History of the Canossian Sisters And their Coming to the Diocese of Sacramento*



*Mother Magdalene of Canossa*

## MAGDALENE OF CANOSSA, FOUNDRESS OF THE CANOSSIAN SISTERS

Magdalene of Canossa was born into a noble and wealthy family in Verona, Italy on March 1, 1774. She was a woman who believed deeply in the love of Jesus and felt she was sent by the Holy Spirit to those most in need. She served them with a mother's heart and an apostle's zeal.

She experienced a number of painful events in her life: her father's death, her mother's second marriage, illness and misunderstanding. But the Lord guided her toward unforeseen paths on which Magdalene tentatively set out. Drawn by the love of God, at the age of seventeen she planned to consecrate her life to God and twice tried her vocation as a Carmelite.



She returned to her family but because of sad events and the tragic political circumstances at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, she nurtured her true vocation in the depth of her heart and went on with life in the Canossa Palace, shouldering the burden of running her family's large estate.

Moved by God's love for the human race as revealed by Jesus' complete surrender of himself on the cross and the example of Mary, the Sorrowful Mother, Magdalene responded to the cry of the poor, hungry for food, instruction, understanding and the Word of God. She discovered the poor in the suburbs of Verona where the echoes of the French Revolution lingered. The occupation of

various foreign powers and the Verona uprising left evident signs of devastation and much human suffering.

Magdalene sought and found her first companions who were called to follow Christ who himself was poor, chaste and obedient. These companions would be sent as witnesses of the Lord's unconditional love for all people.



Photo taken from the web

**The Canossa Palace, Verona, Italy**

## MAGDALENE BEGINS HER COMMUNITY

In 1808, Magdalene overcame her family's opposition and left the Canossa Palace once and for all to begin her work in the poorest district of Verona where she knew it was the will of God to serve the neediest persons with the loving heart of Christ.

The Holy Spirit guided Magdalene to the poor in other cities: Venice, Milan, Bergamo and Trent. In only a few decades the number of her houses increased and her religious family grew in the service of the Kingdom of God.

### **THE FIVE SPECIFIC AREAS OF MINISTRY FOR CANOSSIANS**

Magdalene, together with her companions, became witnesses of God's love in five specific areas:

- Charity schools, providing an all-around formation geared to pupils' status in life
- Catechesis, given to all classes of people, with special attention to those most ignorant of the faith
- Support to women patients in the hospital
- Residential seminars to train young teachers for rural areas and valuable helpers for parish priests in their pastoral activities.
- Yearly courses of Spiritual Exercises for Ladies of the nobility, with the aim of deepening their spiritual life and involving them in various charitable works.

### **THE DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY RECEIVE ECCLESIASTICAL APPROVAL**

Between 1819 and 1820, the Institute of the Daughters of Charity received its ecclesiastical approval in the various dioceses where the communities were present. Pope Leo XII approved the Rule of the Institute with the brief papal letter, *Si Nobis*, dated December 23, 1828.

### **SONS OF CHARITY ESTABLISHED**

Toward the end of her life, after unsuccessful attempts, Magdalene was able to start the male branch of the Institute which she had planned to set up from the very beginning. On May 23, 1831, Mother Magdalene began the first Oratory of the Sons of Charity for the Christian formation of boys and men. She entrusted this group to the Venetian priest Don Francesco Luzzo, with the help of two laymen from Bergamo, Giuseppe Carsana and Benedetto Belloni.

Magdalene's very active and fruitful life ended in Verona on April 10, 1835, the Friday of Passion Week, lovingly surrounded by her Daughters of Charity. She was 61 at the time of her death.

### **CANONIZATION OF MAGDALENE OF CANOSSA**

Magdalene of Canossa was beatified on December 7, 1941 by Pope Pius XII and canonized a saint by Pope John Paul II on October 2, 1988.

### **THE CANOSSIAN MISSION**

Mother Magdalene's motto was "Above all make Jesus Christ known!" This heartfelt concern of Magdalene was the great inheritance that the Daughters and Sons of Charity are called to live, a life of complete availability to God and service towards others, willing to go to the most distant countries for the sake of this holy work.

The Daughters of Charity traveled to the Far East in 1860. Today there are about 3000 sisters throughout the world, grouped into 24 provinces. The Sons of Charity number about 300 and work in various cities in Italy, Latin America, the Philippines, India and East Timor.

In many places where the Canossian Sisters and Priests work to spread the Gospel of Christ, they have formed lay groups that follow the charism of Magdalene of Canossa and live the Christian faith by giving witness to charity in the world.



#### Canossian Missions in the Continents of the World

#### THE CANOSSIAN SISTERS COME TO ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO



### Canossian Chapel at Cristo Rey Retreat Center, Albuquerque, New Mexico

On August 17, 1961, four Canossian sisters came to Albuquerque, New Mexico and began teaching at Annunciation Parish School which had 500 students. By 1968 there were seven Canossian sisters working at the school. The Sisters desired to extend their pastoral and catechetical ministries beyond their commitment to parish school. The Mother General advised them to focus on teaching religious education in the school and to leave the administration and teaching of other subjects to the lay teaching staff. Besides teaching religious education in the school, the sisters were also in charge of faith formation for the more than 700 students who attended public school.

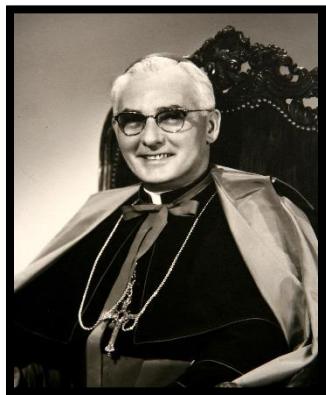
### THE CANOSSIAN SISTERS COME TO SUTTER CREEK

Sister Catherine Cappello wrote to Norma Cappello, the wife of her cousin Vic who lives in Sacramento, telling Norma that the Canossian Sisters in Albuquerque were interested in coming to California to do catechetical work which is one of the main charisms of the Canossian community. The Canossians were interested in expanding their ministry in either San Francisco or Sacramento. Sister Catherine sent a packet of information about the Canossians to Norma and asked her to let the Canossians' interest in coming to the Diocese of Sacramento be made known.

When Norma received the information from Sister Catherine, she took it to her pastor, Father Patrick O'Neill, at Saint Anne's Parish in South Sacramento. After receiving no response from Sacramento, Sister Catherine contacted Norma again to let her know that the Canossians had heard nothing from Sacramento.

Norma immediately contacted Jean Tamaki, Bishop Bell's secretary, and told her of the Canossian Sisters' interest in coming to the diocese. Jean immediately set up an appointment for Norma to meet with the bishop. Norma told Bishop Bell about the Canossians' desire to

come to Sacramento and he was very interested in having the sisters come. He immediately made contact with Mother Antonietta Colombo, the superior of the Albuquerque Canossian Community.



In August 1968, Mother Antonietta, together with Sister Louise Giugni, came to Sacramento to meet Bishop Bell. After seeing the local situation and informing her major superiors, the Canossians agreed to send three sisters the following year to start a catechetical center to serve Amador County.

### Bishop Alden J Bell

Bishop Bell made arrangements with Father Niall Harrington, pastor of Immaculate Conception Parish in Sutter Creek, for the sisters to come to Sutter Creek to oversee catechetical instruction of children in all three parishes in Amador County.

On October 7, 1969, the Sisters left Albuquerque for California, arriving on October 8, the Feast of the Holy Rosary, after a day's journey. Sisters Teresa Bonaventura and Catherine Cappello formed the new community. Sister Louise Giugni accompanied the two sisters to California and soon after Sister Mary Ann Farina arrived in Sutter Creek as the third community member.

Photo by John E Boll



### Immaculate Conception Church, Sutter Creek

The newly arrived sisters were given a small house in Sutter Creek where they lived. They taught students in five centers in Amador County: Immaculate Conception Church, Sutter Creek; Saint Patrick Church, Jackson; Saint Mary of the Mountains Church, Plymouth; Sacred Heart Church, Ione; Saint Bernard Church, Volcano; and Our Lady of the Pines Church, Pioneer.



Photo by John E Boll

### Saint Patrick Church, Jackson



Our Lady of the Pines Church, Pioneer



Bernard Church, Volcano

Saint



### **Saint Mary of the Mountains Church, Plymouth**



### **Sacred Heart Church, Ione**

While in Sutter Creek, the three parishes of Sutter Creek, Jackson and Ione decided to build a convent in Jackson for the sisters. When the sisters moved to the new convent, Bishop Alden Bell, accompanied by his secretary, Father James Kidder, came to Jackson to bless the new convent.

### **THE CANOSSIANS ASSIST IN OTHER PARISHES**

In 1972, more Canossian sisters arrived in Sacramento and took up residence in the convent at Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, succeeding the Blessed Sacrament Sisters who left the diocese. The sisters concentrated their work in three parishes, Our Lady of Lourdes in Sacramento and its mission in Rio Linda, Saint Joseph in Lincoln and its two missions in Wheatland and Nicolaus, and the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament in Sacramento.



### **Canossian Convent at Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, Sacramento**

In 1980, Monsignor Cornelius Higgins asked the Canossian Mother General for the service of the Canossian Sisters in Knights Landing. In September 1980 the sisters began to work at Saint Paul Parish in Knights Landing and in September 1981 they assumed the role of directing religious education at the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament Parish in Sacramento. The sisters live at the Canossian convent at Our Lady of Lourdes Convent and commute to the outlying parishes.

### **THE CANOSSIAN SISTERS MINISTER IN SAN FRANCISCO**

In 1984, Mother General felt it important that the Canossian Sisters move to a larger community where they could teach more children. Consequently, the Canossians accepted the request to direct the Religious Education program at Holy Name Parish in San Francisco. They also work with the Chinese community and serve in the ministry to shut-in and elderly at the parish. In 1991, the Canossian Sisters ended their ministry in Amador County and left the convent in Jackson.

### **LAY CANOSSIANS**

Following the tradition of Magdalene of Canossa, the Canossian Sisters developed groups of Lay Canossians who follow the charism of the Canossian Sisters. To become a Lay Canossian, a person goes through a two year formation period before making a promise to be a lay Canossian. There are some 50 lay Canossians in the Diocese of Sacramento and many serve in the ministries of lector, catechist and Eucharistic Minister.

The Canossians were involved in the Holy Childhood Association, now called the Missionary Childhood Association. It is part of the Propagation of the Faith and children in faith formation bring coins and give the money for needy children all over the world. Through the years,

significant funds have been raised to help poor children throughout the world. The Canossians have benefactors who help them in the bi-annual variety sale that raises funds for this cause.

### **CANOSSIAN SISTERS TODAY**

After nearly a half century in the Diocese of Sacramento, the Canossian Sisters continue to oversee catechetical instruction for children and adults at the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament, Sacramento, Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, Sacramento, and Saint John Vianney Parish in Rancho Cordova.

### **CANOSSIAN SISTERS WHO HAVE SERVED IN THE DIOCESE OF SACRAMENTO**

#### **Canossian sisters who ministered in Amador County from 1969 to 1991:**

Sisters Teresa Bonaventura, Catherine Cappello, Mary Ann Farina, Angela Furia, Connie Martinez, Josephine De Girostiza, Lucy Pavesi, Felicity Brusadelli, Teresa Celine Norris, Genevieve Aldeghi and Candida Elburgho.

#### **Canossian Sisters who served Saint Joseph Parish, Lincoln:**

Sisters Teresa Bonaventura, Felicity Brusadelli, Catherine Cappello, Elisa Grignoli, Catherine Domenighini, Angela Furia and Alicia Hengemühle.

#### **Canossian Sisters who taught classes at Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, Sacramento:**

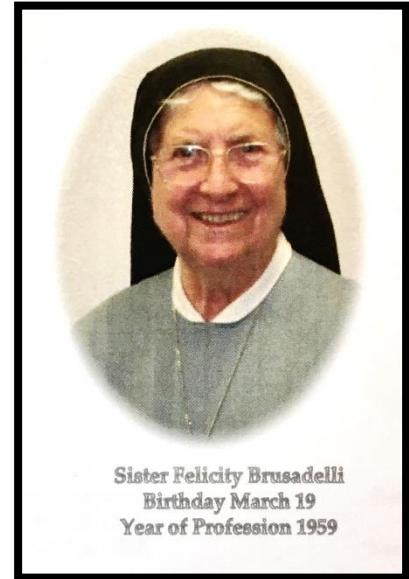
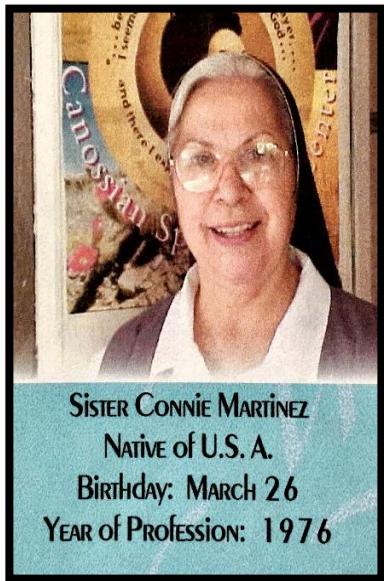
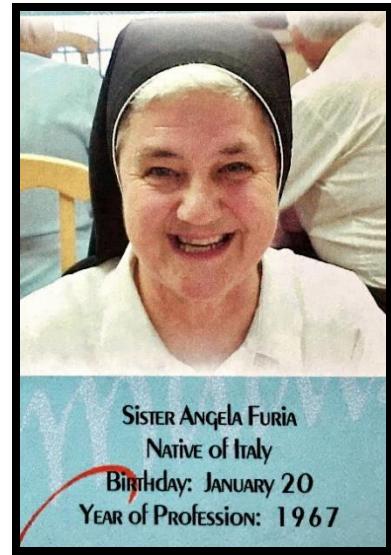
Sisters Josephine De Gorostiza, Catherine Domenighini, Teresa Bonaventura, Marie Johnson, Connie Martinez, Beatrice Maher, Elizabeth Chambers, Norma Hernandez, Angela Furia, Maria Hsu, Lucy Yau, Lucy Pavesi, Felicity Brusadelli, Genevieve Aldeghi, Teresa Celine Norris, Lisa M Doty, Linda Carandang, Josefina Peralta, Catherine Cappello, Mariangela Casagrande and Candida Elburgho.

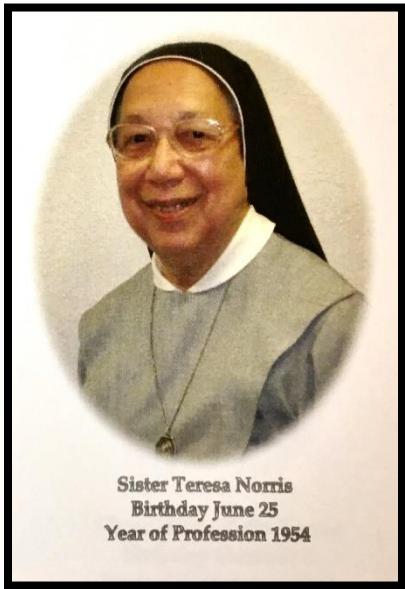
#### **Canossian Sisters who have served at the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament, Sacramento:**

Sisters Teresa Bonaventura, Mariangela Casagrande, Elizabeth Chambers, Angela Furia and Genevieve Aldeghi.

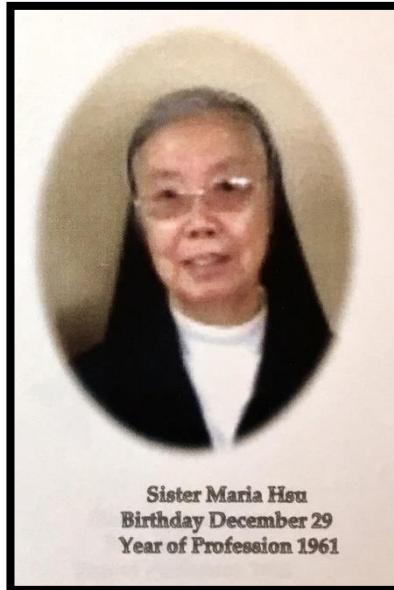
#### **Canossians serving Saint John Vianney Parish, Rancho Cordova:** Sister Josefina Peralta.

*Canossian Sisters who have served  
Parishes in the Diocese of Sacramento*





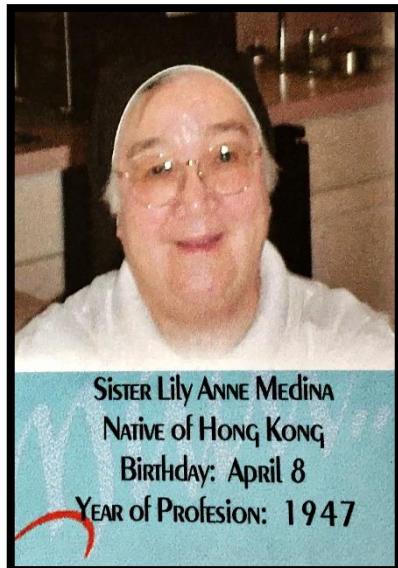
Sister Teresa Norris  
Birthday June 25  
Year of Profession 1954



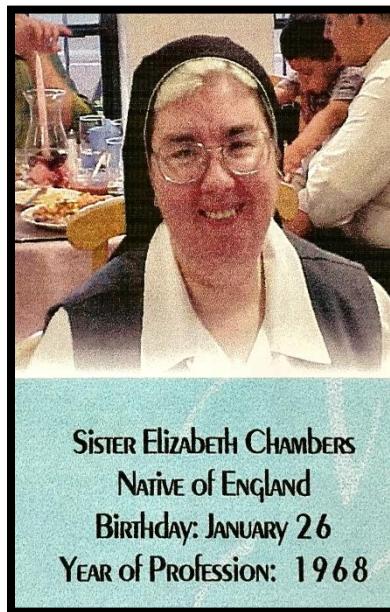
Sister Maria Hsu  
Birthday December 29  
Year of Profession 1961



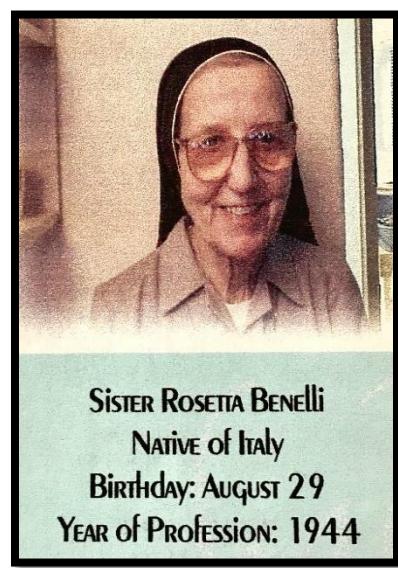
SISTER MARIANGELA CASSAGRANDE  
Native of Italy  
Birthday: June 18  
YEAR OF PROFESSION: 1965



SISTER Lily ANNE MEDINA  
Native of Hong Kong  
Birthday: April 8  
YEAR OF PROFESSION: 1947



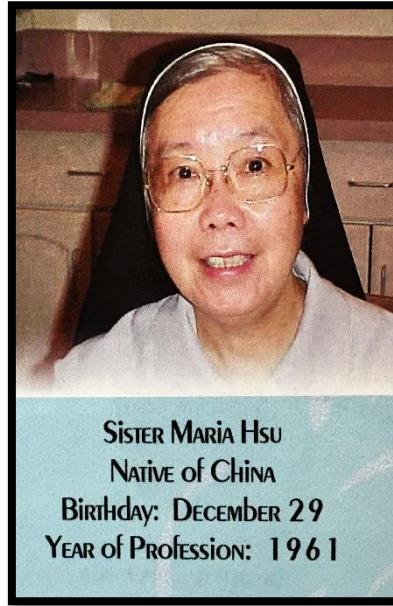
SISTER Elizabeth CHAMBERS  
Native of England  
Birthday: January 26  
YEAR OF PROFESSION: 1968



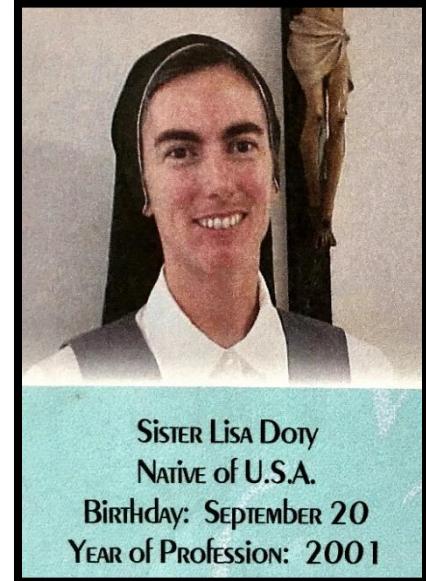
SISTER ROSETTA BENELLI  
Native of Italy  
Birthday: August 29  
YEAR OF PROFESSION: 1944



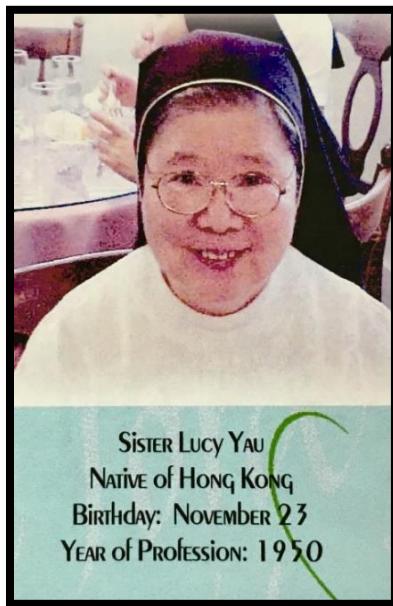
**Sister Linda Carandang**  
Birthday February 25  
Year of Profession 1972



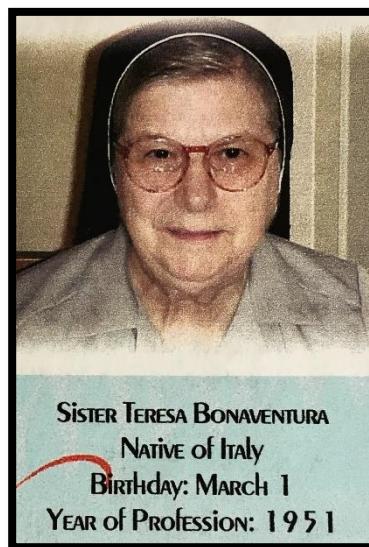
**SISTER MARIA HSU**  
Native of China  
Birthday: December 29  
Year of Profession: 1961



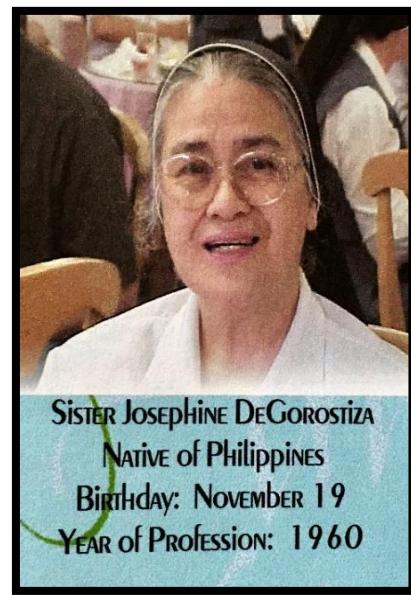
**SISTER LISA DOTY**  
Native of U.S.A.  
Birthday: September 20  
Year of Profession: 2001



**SISTER LUCY YAU**  
Native of Hong Kong  
Birthday: November 23  
Year of Profession: 1950



**SISTER TERESA BONAVENTURA**  
Native of Italy  
Birthday: March 1  
Year of Profession: 1951



**SISTER JOSEPHINE DEGOROSTIZA**  
Native of Philippines  
Birthday: November 19  
Year of Profession: 1960

+



**Sister Alicia Hengemühle**  
**Native of Argentina**  
**Birthday: January 8**  
**Year of Profession: 1974**

# 55 Years Anniversary

August 17, 1961 - August 17, 2016

## Those Gone To The Father

Mother Antonietta Colombo

Mother Ada Nardi

Mother María Valsecchi

Sister Louise Giugni

Sister Dorothy Brown

Sister Josephine Palmery

Sister Beatrice Maher

Sister Antonietta Liatí

Sister Candida Elburgo

Sister Marie Johnson

Sister Helen Butt

Sister Mary Radaelli

Sister Lucy Yau

Sister Lilianne Medina

Sister Norma Hernandez

Sister Rosetta Benelli

*Be at Rest and in Peace*



Photo by John E Boll

**Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Sacramento**



Photo by John E Boll

**Sisters' Chapel, Our Lady of Lourdes Convent, Sacramento**



Blessing of new classrooms at Saint Joseph Parish, Lincoln



Photos courtesy of the Canossian Sisters



Gathering of Canossian Associates



Bishop William Weigand joins in the 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Founding of the Canossians



Sister Felicity celebrates her Golden Jubilee as a Canossian Sister



Celebrating Baby Jacinta's second birthday with Sisters Linda, Teresa, Jenny and Felicity



**Bishop Myron Cotta with Sisters Teresa, Elisa and Jenny at the Cathedral**

## ***The Life of Canossian Sister Saint Josephine Margaret Bakhita***

Josephine Margaret Bakhita was born around 1869 in the village of Olgossa in the Darfur region of Sudan. She was a member of the Daju people and her uncle was a tribal chief. Due to her family lineage, she grew up happy and relatively prosperous, saying that as a child she did not know suffering.

Historians believe that sometime in February 1877, Josephine was kidnapped by Arab slave traders. Although she was just a child, she was forced to walk barefoot over 600 miles to a slave market in El Obeid. She was bought and sold at least twice during the grueling journey.

For the next 12 years she would be bought, sold and given away over a dozen times. She spent so much time in captivity that she forgot her original name.

As a slave, her experiences varied from fair treatment to cruel. Her first owner, a wealthy Arab, gave her to his daughters as a maid. The assignment was easy until she offended her owner's son, possibly for the crime of breaking a vase. As punishment, she was beaten so severely she was incapacitated for a month. After that, she was sold.

One of her owners was a Turkish general who gave her to his wife and mother-in-law who both beat her daily. Josephine wrote that as soon as one wound would heal, they would inflict another.

She told about how the general's wife ordered her to be scarred. As her mistress watched, ready with a whip, another woman drew patterns on her skin with flour, then cut into her flesh with a blade. She rubbed the wounds with salt to make the scars permanent. Bakhita would suffer a total of 114 scars from this abuse.

In 1883, the Turkish general sold her to the Italian Vice Consul, Callisto Legani. He was a much kinder master and he did not beat her. When it was time for him to return to Italy, she begged to be taken with him, and he agreed.

After a long and dangerous journey across Sudan, the Red Sea, and the Mediterranean, they arrived in Italy. She was given away to another family as a gift and she served them as a nanny.

Her new family also had dealings in Sudan and when her mistress decided to travel to Sudan without Josephine, she placed her in the custody of the Canossian Sisters in Venice.



*Saint Josephine Margaret Bakhita*

While she was in the custody of the sisters, she came to learn about God. According to Josephine, she had always known about God, who created all things, but she did not know who He was. The sisters answered her questions. She was deeply moved by her time with the sisters and discerned a call to follow Christ.

When her mistress returned from Sudan, Josephine refused to leave. Her mistress spent three days trying to persuade her to leave the sisters, but Josephine remained steadfast. This caused the superior of the Institute for Baptismal Candidates among the sisters to complain to Italian authorities on Josephine's behalf.

The case went to court, and the court found that slavery had been outlawed in Sudan before Josephine was born, so she could not be lawfully made a slave. She was declared free. For the first time in her life, Josephine was free and could choose what to do with her life. She chose to remain with the Canossian Sisters.

She was baptized on January 9, 1890 and took the name of Josephine Margaret and Fortunata. (Fortunata is the Latin translation for her Arabic name, Bakhita). She also received the sacraments of First Holy Communion and confirmation on that same day. These sacraments of initiation into the Church were always given together in the early Church and the archbishop who administered the sacraments to her was none other than Giuseppe Sarto, the Cardinal Patriarch of Venice, who would later become Pope Pius X.

Josephine became a novice with the Canossian Daughters of Charity religious order on December 7, 1893, and took her final vows on December 8, 1896. She was eventually assigned to a convent in Schio, Vicenza. For the next 42 years of her life, she worked as a cook and a doorkeeper at the convent. She also traveled and visited other convents telling her story to other sisters and preparing them for work in Africa.

She was known for her gentle voice and smile. She was gentle and charismatic, and was often referred to lovingly as the "little brown sister" or honorably as the "black mother." When speaking of her enslavement, she often professed she would thank her kidnappers. Had she not been kidnapped, she might never have come to know Jesus Christ and entered His Church.

During World War II, the people of the village of Schio regarded her as their protector. And although bombs fell on their village, not one citizen died. In her later years, she began to suffer physical pain and was forced to use a wheelchair. But she always remained cheerful. If anyone asked her how she was, she would reply, "As the master desires."

On the evening of February 8, 1947, Josephine spoke her last words, "Our Lady, Our Lady!" She then died. Her body lay on display for three days afterwards.

In 1958, the process of canonization began for Josephine under Pope John XXIII. On December 1, 1978, Pope John Paul II declared her venerable. Sadly, the news of her beatification in 1992 was censored in Sudan. But just nine months later, Pope John Paul II visited Sudan and honored her publicly. He canonized her on October 1, 2000 in an outdoor Mass in the Piazza in front of Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome. Saint Josephine Bakhita is the patron saint of Sudan and her feast day is celebrated on February 8.



Photos by John E Boll

### Saint Peter's Basilica, Rome where Sister Bakhita was canonized

Photo by John E Boll



**Castle San Angelo on the Tiber River, Rome**