

Venerable Mother Clelia Merloni
Foundress of the Congregation of the Apostles of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

Exile and Return

After the unexpected death of Bishop Scalabrini in 1905, the Motherhouse was transferred to Alessandria where additional trials awaited the Foundress. A victim of calumny and wicked scheming, she lost her good standing and authority within the Congregation. In 1911, the Holy See removed her from leadership and named Superior General Mother Marcellina Vigano who would lead the Congregation to greater apostolic expansion in Italy and abroad.

Venerable Mother Clelia pronounced a resigned "fiat" and withdrew in silence and prayer, always maintaining her courageous and dignified manner. In 1916, after serious and agonizing discernment, she requested and received a dispensation from her religious vows. Having obtained the dispensation, she left the Congregation and began a long and painful period of exile.

On February 28, 1928, after many years of exile, she humbly requested and obtained permission to reenter the Congregation she had founded and with whom she had always longed to be reunited.

On March 7 she was welcomed at the Generalate in Rome. The Superior General announced the news to all the houses in a circular letter which reads: Our most ardent desires have finally been fulfilled!...Our beloved Mother Foundress is once again with us as of the seventh of this month. The Sacred Heart has restored her health so that she may now enjoy here in the Motherhouse, surrounded by the love of her daughters, that peace and quiet which she needs so much, after so many trials and sorrows.

Venerable Mother Clelia spent her final two years among her beloved daughters in prayer and meditation. During this time she longed to be eternally united with Jesus and the encounter with the Bridegroom took place on November 21, 1930, when she was 69 years old. It was Friday, the day dedicated to the Sacred Heart and also the feast of the Presentation of Mary in the Temple. Like the Virgin Mary, Venerable Mother Clelia was brought into the house of the Lord.

Venerable Mother Clelia's body was buried in the Campo Verano Cemetery, and in 1945 it was exhumed and found to be intact. Her remains were then transferred to the Generalate chapel where they await the future resurrection and also their glorification here on earth if the Sacred Heart of Jesus so desires.

On May 20, 1989, the edict for the Cause of Canonization of Venerable Mother Clelia Merloni was issued by His Eminence Cardinal Ugo Poletti, Vicar General of the Diocese of Rome; the opening of the trial took place in the Diocesan Tribunal of Rome on June 18, 1990.

Venerable Mother Clelia lives on in her Congregation not only in the memory and love of her daughters but also in the apostolic ministry of all her Sisters serving throughout the world. She lives on to the degree that every Apostle, impelled by her love for God and for all people, becomes a faithful daughter of Venerable Mother Clelia:

- an Apostle like the first Apostles
- an Apostle of love
- an Apostle of reparation