Canossian Daughters of Charity

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Canossian Sisters
- Cristo Rey Province

The Canossian Daughters of Charity, Servants of the Poor, are an international congregation of women founded by St. Magdalene of Canossa, who was canonized in 1988.

Our actions arise from our identity born of Christ crucified, the Greatest Love. We are called to journey in simplicity, sharing a common life at the service of our brothers and sisters on every continent.

Through ministries of education, human promotion, evangelization, faith formation, and pastoral care among the suffering, we strive to touch each person with the love of God. Our motto is to “make Jesus known and loved,” especially to those in most need.

Almighty and Eternal God, you have given us your saints to enlighten and support us in our human weakness. Deign to answer our prayer through the intercession and merits of Saint Magdalene of Canossa. Give us the grace to follow Christ, humble and poor. Help us to be faithful to His Word, so that we may reach you and one day share in your glory, together with all the Saints. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.
HER BIRTHPLACE
Magdalene of Canossa started her charitable works at the age of 34, after a long struggle and search for God’s will for her.

She was born in Verona, Italy, on March 1, 1774, to a rich and noble family. Through painful events like the death of her father, the departure of her mother, sickness, and misunderstandings, the Lord guided her towards unexpected paths which Magdalene tried hard to understand.

HER LIFE
At 17, she believed she was called to the life of the cloister and attempted to join the Carmelites twice, but the Spirit of God urged her interiorly to give herself to the service of the most needy persons whom the convent grills prevented her from reaching out to.

She returned home and, forced by the sorrowful family circumstances and tragic historical events of the 18th century, she concealed in her heart her dream of offering herself to God and neighbor. She lived in the Canossa Palace, accepting the administration of the huge family patrimony.

HER DREAM
In the midst of her tireless activities and heavy family responsibilities, Magdalene found the time to intensify her prayer, the daily contemplation of the Love of Christ on the Cross and of the Mother of Sorrows.

Inflamed by the same fire of God’s love, she opened herself to the cry of the poor, hungering for bread, instruction and God.

Magdalene looked from her magnificent palace at the misery of the peripheral districts of Verona, where the impact of the French Revolution, the alternating domination of foreign emperors, and the Veronese Pasch, had left evident signs of devastation and human suffering.

HER ACCOMPLISHMENTS
In the face of so many needs, Magdalene felt unequal to the task. She sought and found her first companions who welcomed the invitation to share her life of poverty and unconditional charity.

In 1808, having overcome the final resistances from her family, she left the Canossa Palace to initiate, in Verona, what she interiorly felt was God’s will: to serve Christ in the poor.

Charity is like a fire that ever spreads out and Magdalene opened her heart to the urgent needs of other towns like Venice, Milan, Bergamo, and Trent, where in a few decades, she founded Houses and sent her Daughters who had grown in number.

Magdalene obtained the approval of the Rules in 1828.

She died in Verona, assisted by her Daughters on Passion Friday, April 10, 1835.

On December 7, 1941, she was proclaimed Blessed by Pope Pius XII. She was declared a Saint by Pope John Paul II on October 2, 1988.

MOTHER OPEN TO THE WORLD
The spirit of the Daughters of Charity “is that of being detached from everything … and ready for the divine service and to go anywhere, even to the remotest Country.”

St. Magdalene

“In 1860, animated by the spirit of Magdalene, the Daughters of Charity sailed for the East to spread the “good news” among the people who had not yet heard the proclamation of the Gospel.

Today, the Institute of the Daughters of Charity is present in all five continents.

The Sisters number about 3,000, constituting 22 provinces and work on spreading the Kingdom of God.

SONS OF CHARITY
Magdalene of Canossa is Mother not only to her Daughters but also to her Sons.

While remaining one community of religious for almost a century, experiencing the uncertainty of survival, they succeeded through many difficulties to keep alive the ideal of Magdalene and to transmit, as precious heritage, a spirit of humble and generous service to the poor and little ones.

Today, the Sons of Charity are steadily increasing in numbers, bringing the name and love of God to all in Italy and abroad.

CANOSSIAN LAY FAMILY
It is Magdalene’s apostolic invitation to all the lay people, who, in sympathy with her charism rooted in the Spirit of Jesus Crucified, wish to collaborate in their state in life and workplace to spread the Kingdom of God.