

## M. MARIA JOSEFINA LAMARCA, ss.cc.

(1849-1930)

Teodolina Lamarca was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina on March 4<sup>th</sup>, 1849. Shortly thereafter her family moved to Valparaiso, Chile where her father was charge d'affairs of Argentina. It was a solid Catholic family. Together with her daughters, the mother devoted herself frequently to the poor. Teodolinda's education was entrusted to the Sisters of the Sacred Hearts. At the age of 17 she expressed a desire to become a religious. Her mother, now a widow, had also lost one daughter through death, and the older boys had left for Europe. She opposed her daughter's plans. She traveled with her daughter to Buenos Aires. On her return to Valparaiso, on the advice of her confessor, Teodolinda consented to marry a friend of the family. The man was a prominent Catholic who, with his wealth had contributed much to the Church. Sadly, soon after the wedding he died and the young widow decided to become religious. In May 1879 she entered the novitiate of Valparaiso. Her many friends and relatives refused to leave her in peace. A friend of her mother pleaded with the novice to return home again. Another was reported to have had a revelation stating that God had quite different plans for Teodolina. She was to found a new Chilean Congregation devoted to Adoration. Teodolina refused to relent and asked permission to travel to Europe to finish her novitiate in Picpus.



Together with her mother, the novice arrived in Paris in 1880. On the 29<sup>th</sup> of January, 1881 she professed in Picpus as Sister Maria Josefina. Reconciled to her daughter's choice of life, her mother was so impressed by the solemnity of the profession that she promised to devote herself totally to the service of the poor. The good woman kept her promise.

In the mean time the Superior General of the Sisters, Angele Chauvin, decided to found a house in Spain and chose Maria Josefina for that purpose. Maria Josefina left with the group of Sisters for Torrelavega, Cantabria in 1881. Here the first convent of the Congregation in Spain was found. Some years later the foundress fell so seriously ill that the doctors gave up all hope of her recovery. Through the intercession of Our lady of Perpetual Succour she recovered completely. This strange recovery surprised the doctors and filled the Sisters with joy. In 1898, Maria Josefina opened a house of the Congregation in Madrid (Fuencarral). In December 1904, she opened a house at Santander and in 1915 another house at El Escorial. In her work she was supported by her sister, Mrs. Del Carril, from Paris, who provided a great deal of money for her work.

When Father Mateo Crawley began to preach the Enthronement in Spain he was greatly helped and supported by the Sisters who offered their house in Madrid as the secretariat of the Enthronement. It was through the mediation of Maria Josefina that King Alfonso XIII consecrated his country to the Sacred Hearts in the 'Cerro de los Angeles'. Fathers and Brothers of the Congregation experienced much support from Maria Josefina in the opening of the Scholasticate in El Escorial, and also during the building of the Church devoted to Christ the King in Madrid. Through the intervention of Maria Josefina large sums of money were again received from her sister Mrs. Del Carril. In many ways Maria Josefina committed herself completely to the work of the Congregation in Spain. Thus she merited the honorable title of "Mother of the Congregation in Spain".

She died in Madrid, Spain, on March 5<sup>th</sup>, 1930.

Fragments of a dialogue between two fathers who had been present at the first communion of their little daughters.

"Believe me, I am deeply impressed, not only by the first communion of my daughter, but also because I have experienced something I have never experienced before. Is religion not the same wherever you go? Yes, but here I have found something that really touched me deeply. I did not go to communion with my daughter. For that I cannot do yet. But since I have spoken with Rev. Mother Josefina, I have gone through a complete conversion. I know what this religious was before she entered the convent. I have heard of the works of charity which she started and inspired in Latin America. But when I spoke with her, I saw and experienced the way she speaks of God's work so naturally. That is what touched me most. That religious carries in her heart a Love of God, as deep as the love I myself have for my child. In the future I would love to see my daughter think, believe and live in the same way as this saintly religious thinks, believes and lives."

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