

A NEW DOMINICAN BLESSED

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JUST as nothing awakens the honest pride of a regiment more than the telling of the heroic deeds of a former member, so nothing is more acceptable to a Religious Order than the singling out of one of its glorious dead for special praise. Such action creates an *esprit de corps* among the living; it stresses the obligation of emulating the virtues of the one praised.

Such an honor was conferred and such an obligation imposed on the Order of Preachers when the Holy Father, on the 21st of last December, by confirming the cult of the Holy Dominican Tertiary, Osanna of Cattaro, placed her in the official list of the Church's Blessed.

This latest beatified Dominican was born, November 25, 1493, in the little village of Kumano, not far from the Adriatic seaport of Cattaro, within the confines of that section of the present kingdom of Jugo-Slavia formerly known as Montenegro. Her parents, Kosic by name, among the poorest of the town, were adherents of the Greek Schismatic Church, in which rite the future Blessed was baptized under the name of Catherine.

Her early years were spent tending sheep among her native hills. Since "heaven is around us in our infancy," the soul of the little girl gloried in the beauties of God's creation and naturally rose "from Nature up to Nature's God. . . ." Learning the wonderful story of the Redemption at her mother's knee and being told of the images of the Christ-child and the crucified Saviour to be seen in the churches of Cattaro, her soul was inflamed with desire to go there and "see God," as she put it. She begged and pleaded with her mother to take her, but the latter kept putting her off.

One day, returning with her flock, she noticed, lying on the grass, a little child. Running toward it, she put out her arms to press it to her heart, but just as she thought to grasp it the Infant disappeared, leaving, however, in the soul of the small shepherdess a feeling of consolation and peace. Arriving at home she related her experience, but her mother, thinking she had imagined it from the descriptions she had heard of the Crib, told her to think no more of it since God

did not reveal Himself to their kind. The young Catherine did not doubt the truth of the apparition and it is related that she was favored with similar graces several times during this period of her life.

Her wish to visit Cattaro was finally granted in a manner which permitted her to dwell there permanently. When she was twelve or thirteen her mother secured for her a position as a servant in the family of a pious Catholic lady of that city. Here, beloved for her gentleness and charity by those whom she served, she was able to visit the churches to her heart's content, feasting her eyes upon the holy images she had been told about and praying at the various shrines. She found means, whenever sent on an errand, to pass by some church and stop a minute for a visit.

Even this did not completely satisfy her longing for God. Within her there was growing a desire to give herself entirely to His service, to spend her whole life in contemplation of the intimate beauties of that God she had come to love through His created works. One Good Friday, while listening to a sermon on the Passion, she felt that her vocation was to serve God as a recluse. She consulted two holy religious of the city, one Fr. Vincent Bucchia of the Order of Preachers, the other Fr. Thomas Grubonja, a Friar Minor. After much deliberation and prayer these two agreed to her proposal and obtained the necessary permission of the bishop.

A cell was built adjoining the Church of St. Bartholomew, having a little window through which the occupant could watch the priest at Mass and join in the prayers of the faithful. On the day appointed for her to begin her new mode of life, being conducted in the presence of her whole people to the bishop, before whom she made a promise of stability in the life she had freely chosen, she was led to the cell, the door of which was sealed after her with the bishop's seal. From now on she would depend entirely on the alms of the people for the necessaries of life. During the Ages of Faith this manner of religious life was not uncommon. Some time after this, having been told in a vision that she was to die at the Church of St. Paul, she was transferred to another cell adjoining that church.

Her rule of life was that of the Third Order of St. Dominic, on becoming a member of which she had taken the name of Osanna, in honor of the saintly Dominican Tertiary of that name who had died at Mantua a few years previous, and whose feast we celebrate on the eighteenth of June.

Blessed Osanna persevered as a recluse until her death, fifty-two years later. She dressed in the coarsest of clothing and mortified herself heroically by fast, abstinence and constant penance. God re-

warded her with manifold favors. Our Lord often appeared to her, sometimes under the form of a little Babe, at other times crucified on the Cross or glorious in His Resurrection. But, like many other Saints, she did not enjoy such benefits without conflict with the powers of darkness. Satan tried to shake her firmness by all kinds of torments and vexations. One time, it is related, he even appeared to her under the form of the Blessed Virgin. In this guise he told her that such mortifications were not pleasing to the Lord. By strict obedience to the commands of her confessor, to whom she related the apparition, she was able to discover the imposture and vanquish the Devil.

Though given up entirely to a life lived for God, her charity for her neighbor was not neglected. The fame of her austerity and holiness of life quickly spread and to the holy recluse came those in trouble to ask her advice and beg her prayers. The whole city believed that it had been freed on one occasion from attack by the Turks through her intercession. On another occasion the dreaded plague that was desolating the surrounding country was warded off, and on still another a flood which threatened to destroy the whole city miraculously receded at her prayer. She who had no schooling could interpret Holy Writ with a clarity and skill that put to shame the learning of divines. She who was ignorant, in a worldly sense, was gifted with powers of prophecy, foretelling events which later came true.

Some women of Cattaro, who had enrolled themselves in the Third Order of St. Dominic, regarded her as their spiritual mother and sought her advice on the conduct of their lives. The convent of Sisters that flourished for many centuries at Cattaro always considered Blessed Osanna as their foundress.

Living this life of complete self-immolation for God and neighbor for more than half a century, and suffering a most severe illness with the utmost Christian fortitude, Blessed Osanna passed to her reward, at the age of seventy-two, on the twenty-seventh of April, 1565. For two days unending lines of faithful came to view the remains of the holy religious. Her body was buried first in the Church of St. Paul, but two months later, still incorrupt, it was translated to the Dominican Church of St. Nicholas. This church, at a later period, fell into the hands of Greek schismatics and the remains were again transferred, this time to the collegiate Church of St. Mary of the Stream, where they now rest.

From her saintly death down to the present time her tomb has been a place of pilgrimage not only for Catholics but also for members of the Greek Schismatic Church. She has become one of the most

popular Saints of Montenegro and to her intercession many favors and miracles have been ascribed.

It was to this immemorial cult that the Holy See was asked to give its official sanction in response to requests from the Master General of the Dominicans and from the bishops, priests and faithful of Cattaro and neighboring dioceses. The official Postulator of the Cause was the Rev. Francis M. Guerinni, O. P., while its Relator before the Congregation of Rites was His Eminence, Cardinal Fruhwirth.

What day will be assigned to her feast in the Dominican Calendar has not been announced, but soon the whole Order will annually commemorate the virtues and sanctity of this truly valiant woman.

Blessed Osanna of Cattaro, latest Dominican to be raised to the Church's altars, will, we are confident, beg added graces for her earthly family. This daughter of schismatic parents should prove a powerful advocate before the Throne of Mercy for that cause so dear to the heart of the present Pope, the reunion of Christendom. The new kingdom of Jugo-Slavia, within whose present borders she was born, will also have in her a heavenly protectrix, helping it to win an honored place in the society of nations.

