

a child saint." And a priest who often visited announced: "when someone asks me what I saw in Alexia, the only thing that comes to my mind is this: sanctity."

While at the University Hospital in Navarre, Alexia pronounced these reassuring words: "Believe it or not, God sends the strength you need and even makes you smile about it."

Oxygen relieved some of Alexia's difficulties in breathing, but now she was apparently going blind. Despite this, she seemed aware that her guardian angel, whom she had named Hugo, sometimes left her side, but she exclaimed, "I know! We'll go to Heaven together, and when we get there I won't mind if he wants to be with the other angels."

During Alexia's last moments her mother asked her, "Alexia, do you love Jesus?" The answer was a firm, "Yes." Then she was asked, "and are you happy?" Alexia once again answered, "Yes" and breathed her last. It was December 5, 1985.

After her death one of the doctors predicted to the family, "Someday we shall see this child honored on the altars of the Church."

Biographies of Alexia were soon written and spread throughout the world, resulting in countless letters being sent to the family for more information. Prayer cards were printed, while Alexia's prayer, "May I always do what You want," was adopted by many.

Documents are now being prepared for the introduction of a cause for beatification.



## **Heavenly Help for Those Who Suffer from**

### ***Spinal Problems***

### ***Seek the intercession of Servant of God Alexia Gonzalez-Barros***



**(1971—1985)**

## Servant of God Alexia Gonzalez-Barros (1971-1985)

Alexia had the good fortune to be born into a loving and deeply religious family. Her parents gave their seven children a well-rounded Catholic education. While Alexia participated in all the prayers and devotions of the family, she was still a normal girl who liked nice clothes, attended movies and loved sailing. She was a regular girl in all respects, yet her sanctity in the face of an agonizing illness is now being recognized around the world.

Since Alexia was born several years after the sixth child, she was the darling of the family, but despite the attention and love she received, she never took advantage of it. She was generous with her brothers and sisters, as well as with her classmates when she started school at the age of four. At the age of six, Alexia made her first Confession and frequently recited the Rosary. One day Alexia's mother, after seeing her daughter make two very reverential genuflections before the tabernacle, asked Alexia about her action. Alexia's reply was startling: "I tell Him things, Mommy. I say: 'Jesus, may I always do what You want.'" This phrase would be repeated by Alexia throughout her brief life.

All went well until the spring of 1984, when Alexia was thirteen. It was then that the healthy looking girl started speaking of having back pains. Nothing appeared on the x-rays, but when she mentioned that "I can't move my hand," more x-rays followed. It was then that the doctor discovered that Alexia's spinal column was damaged in such a way that if she moved, paralysis would result. Thus began a veritable martyrdom for the young girl.

Alexia's first operation lasted four hours and consisted of implanting a portion of her hip bone into her spinal column to secure a break that had been discovered. To avoid pressure, she was placed in a traction device that kept her spinal column extended. Despite these treatments, she often endured painful arm cramps, and her weak legs gradually became paralyzed. Nevertheless, in spite of all this, Alexia's spirits remained high.

Because her condition did not improve, Alexia was then examined by a different set of doctors. They discovered a tumor in the cervical vertebrae that had not been detected earlier and which was pressing on the spinal column. A second operation was necessary to remove the tumor. To prepare for this, Alexia confessed her faults, received Holy Communion and prayed quietly for over half an hour. Later she prayed: "Jesus, I want You to cure me. I want to get well. But if You don't want it that way, then I want to do what You want."

This second operation lasted three hours. Afterwards, it was found that the tumor was malignant. Soon after, Alexia mentioned that the incision made during the first operation was hurting badly. Since that incision had never healed, it was now

carefully examined. This examination revealed that pieces of gauze had been left in the wound during the first operation.

Eight days after the operation, the diagnosis was made that Alexia had Ewing's Sarcoma, an extremely grave but curable cancer. As part of her treatment, Alexia was given large amounts of medications which produced nausea, vomiting and leg cramps. Then she was fitted with a head to shoulder brace. While enduring her pains she was heard to repeatedly pray: "Jesus, may I always do what You want."

Many difficulties arose during Alexia's treatment: a catheter had to be inserted into the jugular vein; punctures with large needles had to be made in her back, causing wounds which promptly festered; and sores appeared in her mouth and throat, making it difficult for her to speak and eat.

Yet another operation was scheduled, this time to correct the first grafting and to destroy any residue from the tumor. On the morning of the operation, Alexia devoutly received Holy Communion and then endured seventeen hours in the operating room. After this, she was placed in a partial cast with a metallic crown around her head which was held in place by four screws embedded in his skull

Finally, a fourth operation became necessary; it lasted eight hours. Afterwards, Alexia still had to wear the cast and the metallic crown, and they were new surgical wounds at the back of her neck and on her hip, both of which refused to heal. The brave little girl endured everything with patience and not a word of complaint – a very surprising situation, since she was enduring oppressive heat, immobility, potent medications, unbearable headaches, chemotherapy, the uncomfortable partial brace, the metallic crown and numerous injections.

It was soon discovered that a condition known as metastasis in the meninges had developed. This was a hopeless condition.

Alexia again excepted her condition with its grim prognosis and continued her customary prayers. Her mother placed a scapular of Our lady of Mount Carmel around her daughter's neck and placed in her hands a rosary. The hospital chaplain heard her Confession, gave her Holy Communion and administered the Sacraments of Confirmation and Anointing of the Sick, which Alexia received with keen attention. She made frequent spiritual communions, and because of her difficulty in swallowing, she received only small pieces of the Blessed Sacrament.

During her final days, her sanctity was observed by all who came in contact with her. One doctor exclaimed as he left the room, "This is the anteroom to Heaven." A non-practicing Catholic nurse once remarked, "I can't enter that room. How can one die with so much joy?" Another declared, "She is