

However, it was finally realized on May 1st, 1868 when with the bureaucratic and local problems solved, Clelia and her young friends moved into the so-called "teacher's house" where the Workers for Christian Catechism had formerly met. This was the humble beginning of Clelia Barbieri's religious family which later was to be named the religious community of the "Suore minime dell'Addolorata".

"Minime" because of Clelia's devotion to the saint, Minimo Romito di Paola, S. Francesco, patron and provident protector of the young community; dell'Addolorata" because this title of Our Lady of Sorrows was the most loved of all of Our Lady's titles by Clelia Barbieri.

After moving into "the teacher's house", a series of extraordinary events in the form of assistance to the young community occurred which were undoubtedly the work of Divine Providence and without which the group could never have survived. The small group was inspired by Clelia's physical and moral sufferings in her darkest hours and in the absurd humiliations she endured at the hands of those who should have been more understanding. However, her faith and devotion in prayer were always extraordinary.

In the small "Budrie" community there was faith, a desire for God and a missionary zeal full of creativity and imagination. Organizational support was virtually nonexistent. Clelia was the moving spirit.

The small initial group needing catechism and religious instruction grew rapidly as the number of poor, sick and young boys and girls increased.

Slowly, the people began to see Clelia as a leader and teacher of the faith. They started calling her "Mother" although she was only twenty-two years old. They called her with this title until her death which came about very shortly.

The dormant tuberculosis she had always carried, suddenly flared up only two years after she had founded the order.

Clelia died prophesizing to the sister at her bedside, "I'm leaving, but I'll never abandon you. When in that alfalfa field next to the church there will be a new community house, I will no longer be with you...You will grow in number, and you will expand over plains and mountains to work in the vineyard of the Lord. The day will come when here at 'Budrie' many will arrive with carriages and horses..."

And she added, "I'm going to Heaven and all those who will die in our community will enjoy eternal life."

She died on July 13<sup>th</sup>, 1870 with the happiness of one going to meet her Spouse and beloved Lord. Clelia's death prophecy has been fulfilled. The religious order continues to grow. It extends throughout Italy, India and Tanzania.

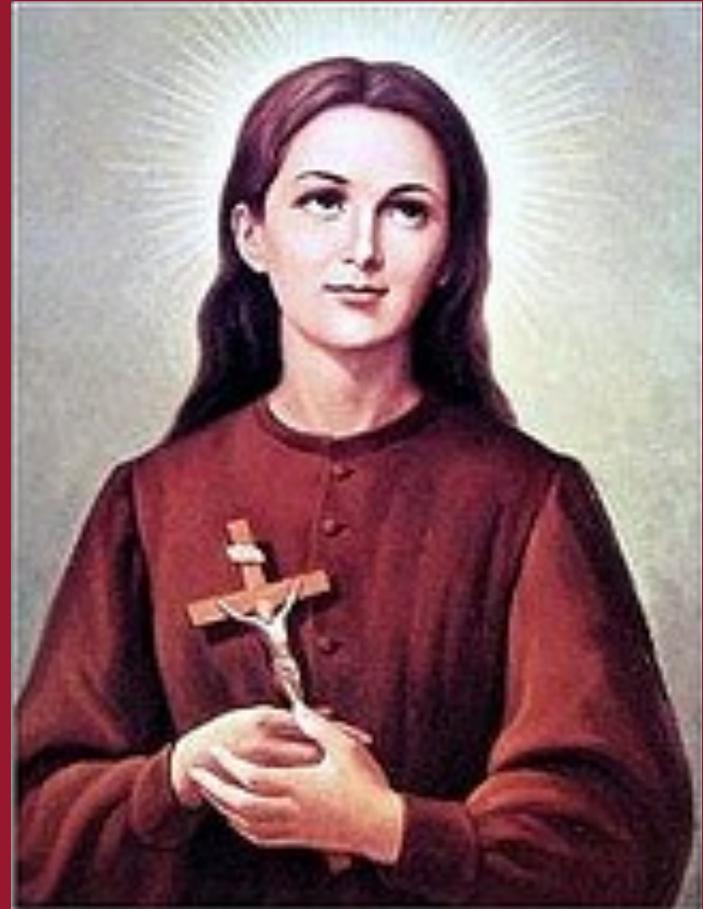
\*[excerpted from: [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va)]

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## *Saint Clelia Barbieri*

**(1847-1870)**

**Feast Day: July 13**



**Since her death, her voice has been heard  
in the houses of her order  
accompanying her Sisters in song.**

## Saint Clelia Barbieri

\*Clelia Barbieri was born to Giacinta Nannetti and Giuseppe Barbieri, on February 13<sup>th</sup>, 1847 in a village called "Budrie" of S. Giovanni in Persiceto in the outskirts of Bologna, Italy and in the Archdiocese of Bologna.

Her parents were of different origins: Giuseppe Barbieri came from perhaps the poorest family of "Budrie" while Giacinta from the most important family in town: he worked as servant for Giacinta's uncle, the district's medical doctor, while she was the daughter of the well-to-do Pietro Nannetti. After her much-contested wedding, the wealthy Giacinta accepted the poverty of a laborer's life and moved from a comfortable home to the humble cottage of her father-in-law, Sante Barbieri; nevertheless forming a family built on the rock of faith and a totally Christian life.

In line with her mother's expressed wish, she was baptized Clelia, Rachele, Maria on the very day of her birth. The mother taught Clelia to love God early in her life placing in her heart the desire for sanctity. One day Clelia asked her, "Mother, how can I become a saint?" In the meantime Clelia also learned the art of sewing, spinning and weaving kemp which was the most important work of the district.

In 1855, during a cholera epidemic the then eight-year-old Clelia lost her father and through the generosity of her uncle, the doctor, she, her mother and younger sister Ernestina moved into a more comfortable house near the parish church.

For Clelia the days became more saintly and dedicated. Anyone who wanted to see her could always find her either at home weaving and sewing or in church praying.

Although it was usual at that time to receive First Communion almost at adulthood, Clelia due to her unusual catechistic preparation and spirituality, made hers on June 17<sup>th</sup>, 1858, at only eleven years of age.

This was a decisive day for Clelia's future since it was then that she had her first mystic experience: exceptional contrition and repentance for her own sins and those of the world.

She underwent anguish and suffering for the sins that crucified Christ and so sorrowed Our Lady. From the day of her First Communion, the crucifix and Our Lady of Sorrows inspired her saintly soul.

At the same time she had a first inspiration as to her future which she perceived as based on prayer and good works.

In adoration before the Holy Tabernacle she was motionless, rapt in prayer, while at home she was the companion and model for the other working girls. Far

more mature than her years, she found in her work the first contact with the girls of "Budrie" where working hemp fibers was the main occupation and where all were engaged in this hard work.

Clelia brought something particularly personal to her little world: she worked with joy and love, praying and thinking of God at all times and even speaking of Him to her companions.

She lived in charity, completely dedicated to loving her fellowmen without restraint. She forgot and even ignored her body. She was happy to belong to the Lord and her happiness rested, in fact, in thinking only of Him. Something, however, compelled her to turn towards her fellowmen, the poorest and most tried, who often waited in vain for some small sign of love and brotherhood.

A fervent faith burned inside her, and she felt that she "must go" to give herself to all of God's poor. She loved that solitude which would permit her to reach God more fully, but she left the protection of her home and went forth inspired by her all-consuming love for mankind.

At this time in history, there existed in the Church a group called "The Christian Catechism Workers" who were mainly men whose aim it was to combat the prevalent religious negligence of the times. At "Budrie" the group was led by an elderly schoolteacher. Clelia aspired and then became one of the Christian Catechism Workers.

Then, at "Budrie" with her acceptance, the catechism group was reborn and attracted others with her very same dedication and faith.

At first, Clelia was admitted as an assistant teacher and was the least important member, but soon her surprising talents and preparation evidenced themselves so that the senior members placed themselves under her leadership.

Having rejected several flattering marriage proposals, the group of young ladies which had sprung up from the Catechism group, elected Clelia as their leader and conceived the idea of a community devoted to an apostolic and contemplative way of life. This was to be a life of service which would spring from the Eucharist with daily Holy Communion and would ennoble itself with the teaching of catechism to the farmers and laborers of the area. The idea could not become a reality immediately due to the political situation at the time of Italy's unification (1866-67).