

Profile

Mother Esperanza of Jesus, née María Josefa Alhama Valera, was born in Santomera, in the province of Murcia, Spain, on the 30th of September 1893 and she was the first of nine siblings. When she was about 7, she was hosted by the Parish Priest and his two unmarried sisters. When she was 12, she had an extraordinary meeting with Saint Teresa of the Child Jesus who told her that she was coming from God almighty to tell her that she had to start spreading the devotion for Merciful Love everywhere in the world.

When she was 21, she left Santomera to devote herself to God. Initially she joined the Daughters of Calvary, a Pious Union which was dying out; later she went to an Institution, the Religious of Mary Immaculate, also known as the Claretian Missionaries. As time went by, the mission that the Divine Providence gave her, became clearer and clearer; in order to be able to dedicate herself to this mission more freely, Mother Esperanza asked the dismissal from the religious vows and on Christmas night 1930 in Madrid, with many obstacles and in extreme poverty, she founded the Handmaids of Merciful Love. Their mission was to spread the Merciful Love like good Father, through merciful work; the new Congregation of the Handmaids opened over ten boarding houses in Northern Spain and they devoted to great humanitarian work, far from any political view.

In 1936, Mother Esperanza left her homeland and she moved to Rome, on Via Casilina. Her stay in Rome lasted fifteen years and there she saw: the organization of a social canteen for many poor, homeless and workers, in the years of the Second World War; the construction of a new house for the Handmaids; the hosting of many young girls in the boarding school and a great mass of pilgrims, during the Holy Year of 1950. In Rome, Mother Esperanza founded the Congregation of the Sons of Merciful Love, on 15th August 1951. Three days later, she finally moved to Collevaleza of Todi in the province of Perugia, where she spent her final thirty years. The years in Collevaleza were the years of spiritual and apostolic growth, where she devoted primarily to start and consolidate her male Congregation, founded with the specific purpose of making sacerdotal brotherhood stronger, working as much as possible towards the clergy and on both the spiritual and material sides. Such an effort was later rewarded with the diocesan approval in 1968.

The years of Collevaleza, were those of the building of the great complex of the Sanctuary of the Merciful Love: here Mother Esperanza presented the message of the Merciful Love to everyone and she offered everyone the Water of the Sanctuary, as a sign and means of the divine Grace with both spiritual and physical benefits.

Before she passed away, she saw two of her Institutions approved by the Pope; she had the immense consolation of meeting Blessed John Paul II in the Sanctuary in November 1981, shortly after he had been attacked in St Peter's Square.

The presence of the Holy Father in this place, his words and actions were the approval for a life spent entirely for the glory of the Merciful Love, for the service

of the Church and the good of souls. Mother Esperanza died peacefully on the 8th of February 1983, when she was almost 90 years old.

Towards Canonization

For the beatification of Mother Esperanza, there have been two canonic processes: the heroic of her virtues (1988 to 2002) and one on a miracle obtained through her intercession (2001 to 2013).

The process on the heroic of virtues (1988-2002)

The diocesan phase

After five years of Mother Esperanza's death, according to the Catholic law, the Religious Family of the Merciful Love asked the Bishop of Orvieto-Todi, Mons. Lucio Grandoni on the 8th of February 1988, to begin the diocesan phase of the canonization process, in which, on the favorable opinion of all Bishops from Umbria and without reservation from the Pope, on the 10th of April 1988, they established the beginning of the Trials, instituted a diocesan tribunal helped by a specific Historic Commission and on the 24th of April 1988, the first session of this Process started in the Crypt of Collevaenza's Basilica.

The diocesan phase of the canonic Process lasted about two years; it finished with another session, chaired by Bishop Mons. Grandoni in the very same place on the 11th of February 1990. In this occasion, he sealed all the material that had been gathered for the Trial, which consisted of 52 volumes, printed in three copies; he decided that the original copy would be given to the diocesan Curia of Orvieto-Todi and the other two to the Congregation of the Cause of the Saints.

The Roman phase

On the 12th of June 1992, the same Congregation established that the diocesan process had legal value; they gave back one copy of the 52 volumes that had been handed in to them; they nominated Mons José Luis Gutiérrez as the Supervisor of the Cause. In this way, the general synthesis of all this material could start; this is also known as the "Positio super virtutibus", written in three volumes with the directions of the Supervisor and handed in to the Dicastero of the Saints on the 12th of June 1993.

There was however time to wait, considered the long waiting list for the Candidates Blesses, in order to face the Trial's exam, which started eight years later. Initially, the Positio was examined for three months under seven Theologies Consultants who voted favorably and unanimously on the 11th of

January of 2002. The entire process was then examined by several Cardinals and Bishops who also voted unanimously and favorably on the 5th of March 2002.

The Decree on the heroic of the virtues

After the two initial phases of the judgment, we finally arrived to the Decree on the Virtues, decided by John Paul II in the Sala Clementina, on the 23rd of April 2002: it offered a synthesis of the life and work of God's Servant; it described the greatness of her spiritual and moral strength; it stressed the heroic of her theological and cardinal virtues and it gave the title of Venerable. 19 years had passed since her death: a short time, when compared to that of most other Trials.

The Process on a Miracle obtained through her (2001-2013) A miracle obtained through her intercession (1999)

The miracle is about a fast, complete, lasting healing that is not considered scientifically explainable, which took place in Cilavegna near Vigevano, in Italy, in 1999. Little Francesco Maria, one a year old, was suffering from multiple protein intolerance. The child, born in July 1998, forty days after the birth manifested the first symptoms of the disease and must be fed with soya milk. Nevertheless, in November 1998 the allergic phenomena continued. In June 1999, it was necessary to further hospitalization.

Coincidentally, watching television, the child's mother learns of Mother Speranza and the water of Merciful Love, and the child begins to drink on June 28.

Sunday, July 4, after five days, on the occasion of the first birthday party, it is found that the child eats any food, no more digestive disorders and skin. On August 25, the lab exam confirms the termination of allergic phenomena and also verifies the normalization of intestinal permeability, which usually persists for life instead, even after the acquisition of food tolerance.

The medical and scientific opinion

The study of this healing has had a long and varied history, with about twenty doctors and experts; two successive passages of the experts examined ex officio; Two meetings of the Medical assessments not completely converged. The Medical Board, held April 1, 2004, believed that the disease consisted just of a food intolerance, a less severe form of allergic disease quite common in the first few months of life that is solved with an adequate period of time. In conclusion, it was agreed unanimously that the healing, although "quite rapid, complete, lasting apparently "was" scientifically explainable."

After this opinion, the postulation provided medical reports and other documents. At this point, the ministry demanded an expert medical advice and

service, for which the healing, because of its speed, "did not seem to be within the usual limits of what is happening in the physio - pathological Clinic" and hence" the case could be taken into consideration".

June 14, 2012 took place, with the authorization of the Congregation, the second meeting of the Medical Board to reconsider the case in light of the new material collected. The positive opinion on the scientific substantiation of the inexplicable healing was given by a qualified majority.

The theological evaluation

After the scientific examination of the Doctors, the spiritual evaluation of the Theological Counselors had to take place, and emerged with a unanimous affirmative vote of 17 November 2012. On June 18, 2013, the official decision of the Cardinals and Bishops was taken. The relationship between healing and the invocation addressed to Mother Esperanza was clear because of the appeal by family members, especially in the five days that the child drank water from the sanctuary before healing. The family environment had a firm conviction to have received the grace of a miraculous healing through the intercession of Mother Esperanza. With moral certainty could therefore be considered supernatural quoad modum healing of Francesco Maria.

The Decree on the beatification

The Decree for the Beatification of the Venerable Mother Esperanza Alhama Valera was signed - during the pontificate of Pope Francis - by the Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, Cardinal Angelo Amato SDB, July 5, 2013. The solemn beatification, which God willing - will take place in Collevaenza on **May 31, 2014.**

THE CHARISMA OF THE MOTHER

The Beatification of Mother Esperanza is a great gift of the Lord. Her life was signed by a specific charisma.

The charisma is always a gift of grace, which the Father gives through His Spirit to each of us according to his inscrutable plan of love, because it highlights the good of the Church and the world a particular aspect of his divine life, that fullness was detected in Jesus.

Mother Esperanza felt that she was called to proclaim, to live and to witness as she writes: ... "God is a Father full of love and mercy, he is not an accountant but forgives and forgets the offenses and the miseries of his children ..."

The code of the message of Merciful Love is guarded by those wonderful words of Mother Esperanza: "God is a Father of kindness who seeks by all means to give comfort, help and make his children happy; He searches for them with untiring love as if he could not be happy without them, the most perverse person, the most miserable, and lost one, is loved tenderly by Jesus who is to him a Father, and a tender Mother..."

Mother Esperanza was the instrument in the hands of God to awaken the announcement of the Merciful Love in man of today, as it as old as the Gospel is. In the comment on the parable of the "Prodigal Son" she emphasizes this fascinating initiative of God, which turns out to be full of merciful love "The Father welcomed the prodigal son with joy, although he was still far off, his father saw him, and, moved by mercy, met him, and fell by his neck and kissed him. God takes the first step to welcome the repentant sinner, hugging with love, not just those going to Him, and without reproach his mistakes, fills him with grace and gifts".

In her diary she wrote: "He dwells within us and seeks our love tenderly, as if he could not live without us..." Hence the wonder of Mother Esperanza that God debases to be "mendigo de amor" beggar of love.

The family of Merciful Love is called to extend in time and space of the charisma of Mother Esperanza, as John Paul II, in November 1979 stressing the topicality, expressed on a visit to the parish of Spinaceto in Rome... "the man intimately needs to be open to God's mercy to feel included in the weakness of his wounded nature, only a Community aware of the fact that Love is Merciful can help humanity; your vocation is strong and with this strong vocation you can bring hope to the world..."

The charisma of Mother Esperanza anticipates that, by a singular divine inspiration, as the Second Vatican Council says regarding the universal call to holiness: God seeks man and calls everyone to holiness.

THE SANCTUARY AND THE NOVENA OF MERCIFUL LOVE

God has chosen a special place, Collevallenza, to ask the Mother to build a sanctuary, beside the bathin-tubs fed by the water of the well was willed by him as a sign of his "merciful love".

As promised, his love and mercy are always here to attract thousands of pilgrims from all over the world. Near the pools Mother Esperanza had erected the statue of Mary Mediatrix, on a high pedestal, as a mother who is waiting to receive her children are suffering in body and spirit with open arms.

Mother Esperanza composed many prayers, among which the Novena to Merciful Love stands out, which offers us a profound meditation on the prayer Our Father, inviting us to a filial abandonment praying that God's will happen.