

BRINGING THE CARMELITE SAINTS ALIVE

FOURTEENTH EDITION 2025



IN THIS MONTH OF MAY 2025, WE WILL BE HIGHLIGHTING BLESSED ELIA OF SAINT CLEMENT (1901-1927) WHOSE FEAST DAY IS MAY 29TH



“ALONE AT THE FEET OF MY CRUCIFIED LORD, I LOOKED AT HIM FOR A LONG TIME,
AND AS I LOOKED, I SAW THAT HE WAS MY WHOLE LIFE”

Theodora Fracasso was born on the 17th of January 1901 in Bari, Italy, to Guiseppe Fracasso and Pasqua Cianci. Four days later she was baptized in St. James Church by her uncle, Father Charles Fracasso, chaplain at the cemetery. Theodora was the third of nine children, four of whom died in infancy. Her parents were good practicing Catholics who were very concerned with the human and spiritual development of Theodora and her four remained sisters. Theodora's father worked as a master painter and decorator, while her mother was always busy with work in the home.

When Theodora was five years old, she claimed to have seen a beautiful "Lady" in a dream, who moved among rows of blooming lilies and then suddenly disappeared in a beam of light. From this experience, the young girl promised she would become a nun when she grew up. Theodora was sent to a nursery school run by the Stigmata Sisters, where she continued her education until the third grade.

On the 8th of May 1911, after a long preparation, she made her First Holy Communion. The night before, she had a dream about St. Therese of the Child Jesus who prophesied to her: "You will be a nun like me". Theodora began attending a workshop for sewing and embroidery near the Institute of the Stigmata Sisters, and also entered the Association of Blessed Imelda Lambertini, a Dominican nun with a special devotion to the Eucharist. Later, she joined the "Angelic Army" of St. Thomas Aquinas, gathering together her friends for periodic meditation, prayer and the reading of Sacred Scripture and other spiritual works such as The Eternal Maxims, The Imitation of Christ, The Fifteen Saturdays of Our Lady, The Lives of the Saints and in particular, The Autobiography of St. Therese of the Child Jesus.

In the year 1914 Theodora was accepted and then professed in 1915 as a Third Order Dominican, with a special dispensation because of her young age. At the end of 1917, she decided to seek advice from a Jesuit priest who became her new confessor. A year later, he directed Theodora, along with her friend Clare Bellomo, to the Carmel of St. Joseph in Bari. They went together for the first time in December 1918. On the 8th of April 1920 she entered Carmel and on the 24th of November she took the habit and the name "Sr. Elia of St. Clement". She professed simple vows on the 4th of December 1921, with this phrase in her heart and on her lips: "Alone at the feet of my Crucified Lord, I looked at him for a long time, and as I looked, I saw that he was my whole life".

Besides St. Teresa of Jesus, she took as her guide St. Therese of the Child Jesus, following the "Little way of spiritual childhood" to which she "felt called by the Lord". She made her solemn profession on the 11th of February 1925. In January 1927, Sr. Elia became very ill with the flu and then suffered from intense and frequent headaches; she never complained and bore the pain with no medication. A few days before Christmas of that year, Sr. Elia came down with a violent fever and other disturbances; it was "dismissed" as one of her usual illnesses, but each day her situation was a cause for growing concern.

On the 24th of December, a doctor came to see her; although he diagnosed possible meningitis or encephalitis, he did not consider her clinical situation particularly serious. Only on the following morning were two doctors called to Sr. Elia's bedside who sadly confirmed that her condition was irreversible. St. Elia of St. Clement died on Christmas Day 1927, having predicted that she would die on a feast day.

HERE ARE SOME OF HER MOST BEAUTIFUL WRITINGS:

O sweet hiddenness, I love to pass my days in your shadow and to consume thus my existence, for love of my sweet Lord. At times, thinking of those eternal rewards, so great compared to the slight sacrifices of this life, my soul remains in wonder, and seized by an ardent longing, it throws itself on God, exclaiming: "Oh my good Jesus, I want to reach my goal, the gates of salvation, no matter what the cost. Do not deny me anything; give me suffering. May this be the most intimate martyrdom of my poor heart, hidden from every human glance: a rugged cross is what I ask of you. I want to pass my days here below hanging from this cross."

When we suffer with Jesus, the suffering is delightful; I long to suffer with all my heart, beyond this I no longer want anything.

My Delight, who could ever separate me from You? Who could be capable of breaking these strong chains that keep my heart attached to yours? Perhaps the abandonment of creatures? It is precisely this that unites the soul to its Creator. Perhaps tribulations, suffering, crosses? It is in these thorns that the canticle of the soul that loves you is freest and lightest. Perhaps death? But this will be nothing other than the beginning of true happiness for the soul. Nothing, nothing can separate this soul from You, not even for a brief moment. It was created for You and is lost if it does not abandon itself to You.

My life is love: this sweet nectar surrounds me, this merciful love penetrates me, purifies me, renews me, and I feel it consuming me. The cry of my heart is: "Love of my God, my soul searches for You alone. My soul, suffer and be quiet; love and hope; offer yourself but hide your suffering behind a smile, and always move on. I want to spend my life in deep silence, in the depths of my heart, in order to listen to the gentle voice of my sweet Jesus.

"Souls, I will search for a way to cast you into the sea of Merciful Love: souls of sinners, but above all souls of priests and religious. To this end my existence is slowly disappearing, consumed like the oil of a lamp that watches near the Tabernacle."

I sense the vastness of my soul, its infinite greatness that the immensity of this world cannot contain: it was created to lose itself in You, my God, because you alone are great, infinite and thus You alone can make it completely happy.

OUR CARMELITE MISSION

MAY WE EMBRACE MARY'S PURITY OF HEART (PURITAS CORDIAS), AS SHE HELPS US TO PONDER THE LAW OF THE LORD DAY AND NIGHT ASSISTING US TO BE CONTEMPLATIVES AND TEACHING US TO LISTEN. AS WE WALK IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF OUR FATHER AND LEADER ST. ELIJAH; WITH HIS FLAMING ZEAL AND COURAGE WHICH ALLOWED HIM TO COMBAT THE EVILS OF HIS DAY. MAY WE PRAY THAT HIS PROPHETIC SPIRIT BE AN INTEGRAL PART OF OUR CARMELITE LIFE."

MAY OUR LADY'S MANTLE WRAP YOU ALL WITH HER PRECIOUS LOVE.

ALL THROUGH THE IMMACULATE & SORROWFUL HEART & TEARS OF MARY, ALL THROUGH THE PURE AND CHASTE HEART OF ST. JOSEPH, ALL IN UNION WITH THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS,

YOUR SISTER IN CARMEL,

LINDA

