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Vatican



Blessed Catherine Kasper is pictured in this undated photo provided by the congregation she founded, the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ. Born in1820 in Dernbach, Germany, she will be canonized Oct. 14 at the Vatican. (CNS/courtesy Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ)

by Catholic News Service

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Hundreds of thousands of people around the world will celebrate when Pope Francis formally declares that Pope Paul VI and Archbishop Oscar Romero of San Salvador, El Salvador, are saints.

But smaller groups of pilgrims intend to travel to the Vatican Oct. 14 for the same Mass to celebrate the canonizations of five other holy men and women from Italy, Spain and Germany.

The following are short biographies of the other five:

Blessed Vincenzo Romano

Called "the workers' priest," Romano was born, served and died in Torre del Greco, Italy, a town in the smoking shadow of Vesuvius.

Born in June 3, 1751, in the town near Naples, he was heavily influenced by the teachings of his Neapolitan contemporary, St. Alphonsus Liguori, and was ordained a priest in 1775.

He labored with his fellow townspeople in rebuilding the city after Vesuvius erupted in 1794 and was particularly concerned about the spiritual and physical health of seafarers, requesting there be a priest and a doctor on every boat leaving the city's port for Tunis or Sardinia; his ministry was the precursor to the church's seafarer's chaplaincy.

Known for his phrase, "Do the good well," Romano also produced two booklets to help parishioners understand and participate more fully in the Mass, which was only celebrated in Latin, and to pray the rosary. He died of pneumonia Dec. 20, 1831.

Beatifying the priest in 1963, Blessed Paul VI said, "this simple country priest" should be a model of holiness for all priests because of how he was driven by love in his service and sacrifice for others and for the way he shunned all honors, ambition and wealth.

Blessed Nazaria Ignacia March Mesa

Nazaria Ignacia March Mesa was born Jan. 10, 1889, in Madrid and said she first felt the call to religious life when she received her First Communion.

Hearing a voice say, "You, Nazaria, follow me," she replied, "I will follow you Jesus, as close as a human creature can."

Due to economic hardship, her family moved to Mexico where she went on to join the Little Sisters of the Abandoned Elderly despite her parents' objections, dedicating 12 years of her life to caring for the elderly in Oruro, Bolivia.

After taking part in the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises in 1920, she felt a strong desire to form a group that would be "a crusade of love around the church."

Encouraged by Archbishop Filippo Cortesi, then-apostolic nuncio to Venezuela, Mesa left her congregation in 1925 and founded a new order initially called the religious Congregation of the Missionary Sisters of the Pontifical Crusade.

The congregation's mission, she said, was "in loving, obeying and cooperating with the church in its work of preaching the Gospel to every creature. That is our life, that is who we are."

Three years after receiving diocesan approval, Mesa was elected as the congregation's first superior general in 1930.

Despite her ill health, she traveled to Buenos Aires, Argentina where she lived until her death in 1943.

Several years after her death, her congregation's constitution was approved by the Vatican and the order was renamed the Congregation of the Missionary Crusaders of the Church.

She was beatified Sept. 27, 1992 by St. John Paul II.

Blessed Catherine Kasper

Born May 26, 1820, in Dernbach, Germany, Kasper was one of four children. She also had four step-sisters from her father's first marriage.

Tragedy struck her family when Kasper was 21 years old and her father died. Due to a law dictating that all property belonged to her father's first wife, Kasper -- along with her mother and siblings -- had to move out, and she worked as a farm hand to earn money for her family.

Throughout her life, she had a devotion to helping the poor and the abandoned in her village. Her care for the poor inspired other women to help her and with the encouragement of her spiritual director, she formed a religious congregation, the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ.

Inspired by Mary, whom she referred to as "the first handmaid," she took the name Mother Mary Catherine.

After the first members of the congregation took their vows Aug. 15, 1851, the ministry of the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ spread throughout Germany and around the world, including England, the United States, the Netherlands, India, Mexico, Brazil, Kenya and Nigeria.

Eight years after Pope Leo XIII formally approved the congregation, Kasper died Feb. 2, 1898. She was beatified April 16, 1978, by Paul VI, who will be canonized with her Oct. 14.

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Blessed Francesco Spinelli

Spinelli was born April 14, 1853, in the Milan home of a noble family whom his family served. A biography written by the religious order he founded, the Sisters Adorers of the Blessed Sacrament, said that from a very young age "he demonstrated a particular attraction to the Eucharist and religious practices. He often would gather his friends and lead them in prayer before the tabernacle and an image of Mary."

His health was frail as a child and, when he was 14, he injured his spine in a fall, forcing him to use crutches to walk. But three years later, while praying before a statue of Mary in the parish church of Vergo, he realized he was miraculously cured. "He entered the church with crutches and left without them," his official biography said.

While his parents wanted him to go to university and study medicine, he believed he had a vocation and so, in 1871, he entered the seminary in Bergamo. He was ordained a priest in 1875.

He promoted eucharistic prayer and adoration in his parish. In 1882, one of the women participating in the prayer told him she felt called to devote herself completely to God and to promoting eucharistic adoration. The woman is now known as St. Geltrude Catherine Comensoli and she was the first member of the religious order he founded.

With the encouragement of the bishop of Bergamo, the congregation grew quickly and quickly racked up debts. Spinelli was driven from Bergamo, settling in Cremona and being incardinated as a priest of that diocese. Initially sentenced to five months in jail for bankruptcy, the priest was given a royal pardon. But, in the meantime, the sisters who remained with Comensoli in Bergamo formed their own congregation of Sacramentine sisters. Spinelli's order was re-founded officially in Cremona and the priest remained its superior until his death Feb. 6, 1913. He was beatified by St. John Paul II in 1992.

Blessed Nunzio Sulprizio

Sulprizio was born April 13, 1817, in the Abruzzo region of Italy near Pescara. Both of his parents died when he was an infant and his maternal grandmother, who raised him, died when he was 9.

An uncle took him under his guardianship and had the young boy work for him in his blacksmith shop. However, the work was too strenuous for a boy his age and he developed a problem in his leg, which became gangrenous.

A military colonel took care of Sulprizio, who was eventually hospitalized in Naples. The young teen faced tremendous pain with patience and serenity and offered up his sufferings to God, according to his official biography.

He died in Naples in 1836 at the age of 19 and was declared blessed in 1963 by Blessed Paul VI.

During the beatification ceremony Blessed Paul had said, "Nunzio Sulprizio will tell you that the period of youth should not be considered the age of free passions, of

inevitable falls, of invincible crises, of decadent pessimism, of harmful selfishness. Rather, he will rather tell you how being young is a grace."