

Novena to Blessed Elisabetta Sanna



Biographical information

Elisabetta Sanna was born in Codrongianos (Sassari) on April 23rd, 1788. At the age of three months, she lost the ability to raise her arms. She married and raised five children. In 1825, she was widowed and made a vow of chastity; she was spiritual mother to the girls and women of her area. In 1831, having embarked on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, she ended up in Rome, and was unable to return due to grave physical ailments. She dedicated herself totally to prayer and to service of the poor and sick. She was among the first members of the Union of Catholic Apostolate of Saint Vincent Pallotti, her spiritual director. Her dwelling became a shrine of faith and of burning love. She died in Rome on February 17th, 1857 and was buried in the church of SS. Salvatore in Onda. Witnesses confirm and shed light on the words of Saint Vincent Pallotti, reported by Fr. Scapaticci and Fr. Vaccari: “Two people until now have carried our Institute forward: one is, as you have often understood from Fr. Vincent, Elisabetta Sanna, a poor woman; the other is Cardinal Lambruschini”. For this reason the “poor” Servant of God received the privilege of being buried in the church of SS. Salvatore in Onda, near the tomb of Saint Vincent Pallotti. When she died, her reputation for holiness was so great that, just four months after her death, a postulator was named for her cause of beatification, which however lasted more than one and a half centuries. She was declared Blessed on January 27th, 2014. The miracle which finally paved the way for her beatification, approved by Pope Francis on January 22nd, 2016, was the healing of a young Brazilian woman (31 years of age), Suzana Correia da Conceição, of an atrophy of the muscles of the right forearm and hand with grave functional impairment on May 18th, 2008 - Trinity Sunday. On Saturday September 17th, 2016 - 160 years after her death - before the basilica of Saccargia, Cardinal Angelo Amato, prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, presided over the solemn ceremony of the Beatification of Elisabetta Sanna.

Introductory Prayer:

Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, I thank you for having enriched our sister Elisabetta Sanna in a marvellous way with wisdom, counsel and fortitude. Through her merits, I ask you to grant me the grace which I earnestly desire if this is in accordance with your Most Holy Will.

*Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be...
Saint Vincent Pallotti, pray for us!
Blessed Elisabetta Sanna, pray for us!*

First day: wife and mother

From when she was a young girl, Elisabetta desired to become a nun. Having lost the ability to lift her arms, she didn't think of getting married, and yet, as a young woman, many young men wanted to marry her. Thus, on September 13th, 1807, at 19 years of age, she celebrated marriage with a certain Antonio Maria Porcu, a truly good Christian of modest means. Antonio was an exemplary husband and father who loved his wife and trusted her completely. In fact, he said to his friends: “My wife is not like

yours, she is a saint"! Elisabetta would say: "I was not worthy to have such a husband, he was so good". Their family was a model for the entire area. In the following years, seven children were born to them. She spent her days between the house, the education of her children and the land, where she worked without sparing herself. And she also found time for long hours of prayer in church. She didn't fear criticism for the faith which she so publicly professed and lived: "This is my style of life - she responded - it hasn't prevented me from attending to my duties as the mother of a family". She herself prepared her children for Confession and Communion and passed on to them a great love for Jesus, with much tenderness, without ever being sharp. A true education from the heart

Prayer:

O God, sanctifying Spirit, who love the Church your Bride, you poured the flame of your love into the heart of Blessed Elisabetta Sanna and radiated it in her family, the domestic church. I thank you for this exemplary wife and mother, for her encouraging and simple witness. Give to every woman - married, mother, single, consecrated - the grace of being a presence which forms every family, every community, into a cenacle of faith and love, in generous hard work and sanctifying service.

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Second day: widow and bride of Jesus Christ

Of her seven children, two died at a very young age. On January 25th, 1825, her husband Antonio, attended by her, died young. Widowed with five children, the oldest being seventeen, the youngest just three, she felt responsible not only for the administration of the house and land, but above all for their spiritual and temporal education. Maturing in her spiritual path, Elisabetta made a vow of chastity in 1829, with the permission of the Franciscan Lenten preacher, Fr. Luigi Paolo da Ploaghe. She asked her confessor to remind her often that she was a bride of Jesus Christ.

Prayer:

O Lord, You who consoled Mary after the death of Joseph and had compassion on the widow of Nain, grant me the strength to accept my aloneness without losing myself in sadness. As you did for Blessed Elisabetta Sanna, grant me your peace, your strength and your joy, so that I may use them to serve You courageously in serving others - above all in my family, but also with those dear to me who, in your goodness, you place on my path of life, knowing that every day brings me closer to my ultimate encounter with you, together with (name of husband/wife, if applicable)

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Third day: pilgrim

In 1829, the young assistant parish priest, Fr. Giuseppe Valle, arrived in Codrongianos. He became confessor and spiritual director to the Sanna family, in

particular Elisabetta. The Christian life of Elisabetta became even more fervent. During the aforementioned Lenten exercises of that year, the preacher Fr. Luigi Paolo spoke with great fruitfulness about the Holy Land. Together with other women, Elisabetta went to him to know more, and remained so inspired that a very strong desire was kindled in her to go to Palestine to see the places where the Son of God was born and was crucified, feeling called to follow Jesus more closely. Thus, in the first months of 1830, she asked Fr. Giuseppe Valle's permission to go there on pilgrimage. Fr. Valle, after various explanations, said no. Several months passed however, and in July Elisabetta returned to ask him for the desired permission. After deep reflection and prayer, he agreed and decided to accompany her. They began to prepare themselves and their families discretely for the planned journey, hoping that it would help them to grow spiritually and to better serve others. Elisabetta was sure that her mother, then already 65, and her priest brother Fr. Luigi, living in Codrongianos, would be able to take care of her family during the pilgrimage. At the end of June 1831 she, along with Fr. Valle, embarked for Genoa. There the boat for Cyprus was awaiting them. At the last moment, however, Fr. Valle discovered that he lacked the visa for the East. He and Elisabetta then decided to go to Rome, saying: "There too is also Holy land". And so they arrived in Rome on July 23rd, 1831. From the very beginning, this journey had the character of a pilgrimage.

Prayer:

O God, always going out to encounter each person, you enkindled in Blessed Elisabetta's heart the desire to be a pilgrim. I thank you for her encouraging witness. Give me the strength and courage to always go forward to encounter you. Becoming your disciple is the goal of all of my journeying in life. Let me learn to improve, guided by the word of the Gospel. All that I have known and learned now becomes the legacy of my existence, so that I may transmit it through the witness of my life.

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Fourth day: collaborator of Saint Vincent

In Rome, Elisabetta Sanna lived in a tiny dwelling near the Basilica of St. Peter's. In her pilgrimage around the churches of Rome, yearning in prayer, Elisabetta encountered a holy Roman priest, Fr. Vincent Pallotti, in the church of Saint Augustine. When in 1832 he decided to accompany her spiritually, Saint Vincent wrote in her name to her priest brother, explaining to him that his sister could not leave for Sardinia for health reasons, but that she would do so once she improved. The Servant of God, while trying to get better, collaborated with Pallotti through prayer, counsel and help to the most needy. Unfortunately, her health got worse. Pallotti supported her in her treatment and in her spiritual growth, and also found her a small job with Archbishop Giovanni Soglia, the future cardinal, while she awaited some improvement in her health. When in 1838 doctor Petrilli wrote, "I am of the opinion that undertaking another journey by boat could lead her to an even worse condition", Pallotti said to her: "God wants you in Rome". And the Servant of God remained there, until her death in 1857.

Prayer:

O Blessed Elisabetta, help me to be conscious that my happiness is in doing the will of God. I ask you, Lord, to give me the ability to accept all things that happen to me and, with Your help, always to do the best I can every day according to Your will. You can help me - as you did Blessed Elisabetta - to always listen to You and do Your will. Amen.

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Fifth day: woman with a disability who became an apostle

When Elisabetta was only three months old, a smallpox epidemic caused the death of many children in Codrongianos, and she too was infected. She got better, but was left with slightly twisted arms and somewhat stiff joints. This did not prevent her from growing, learning to bear her disability as something natural, to attend to most of the housework, and to always present herself neat and clean. Notwithstanding her physical disability, she became a collaborator in the Union of Catholic Apostolate, founded by St. Vincent Pallotti in Rome. Those who drew near to her would say of her: “She saw God in everything and adored him in everything. The love of God was her life. Every greater interest disappeared in the face of the interests of God”. In fact, Elisabetta herself often used to say: “My God, I love you above all things”.

Prayer:

Blessed Elisabetta who, with great patience and trust in God, bore the physical pains of illness and the mental anguish of not being able to return to Sardinia, obtain for me in my life your surrender to suffering and the ability always to live beneath the gaze of God, in order to become a docile instrument of Providence for the salvation of others. Amen.

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Sixth day: faith in everyday life

Elisabetta received a profound Christian education in her family, about which her brother, Antonio Luigi, clearly spoke. He speaks of prayer together in family, of praying the Rosary, of participation in church functions and of help given to the poor. Elisabetta persevered in this attitude to faith and prayer throughout her life. All of the witnesses said that people only discussed spiritual things with her. When they went to her room, the conversation alternated between religious instruction and prayer. In a letter written to Fr. Giuseppe Valle on May 18th, 1846, Saint Vincent confirmed her spiritual progress with the following phrase: “She continues in good works and I hope that she will reach the perfection desired by God, the Father of Mercies”. Every morning she went to St. Peter’s Basilica. The Basilica was her home. When she died, the cry echoed out: “The saint of St. Peter’s is dead”.

Prayer:

O Blessed Elisabetta, help me to be faithful to my daily duties: to the duty of adoration which is the first necessity of my spiritual life; to the duty which unites me to my neighbour, to the particular duties of my vocation, to the duty of material

and spiritual charity, conscious that dialogue with my neighbour is above all in the fulfilment of my daily duties with a spirit of faith and charity. Amen.

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Seventh day: spiritual mother

Another area of Elisabetta's living out of her faith and love was that of spiritual counsel. She had the gift of spiritual discernment and she used it to help the many people who sought her help. In her poor attic, before the painting of the Madonna *Virgo Potens* (Powerful Virgin), she prayed with her visitors and gave them wise advice. Cardinal Giovanni Soglia also consulted her in certain matters of conscience. Pallotti himself consulted her and brought his spiritual children to listen to her. For this reason, Fr. Rafaele Melia who knew Elisabetta very well, gave her the title of "most attentive mother" of the Union of Catholic Apostolate, and Fr. Ignazio Auconi, his successor in the office of General Superior, confirmed that she had the attentiveness of a mother towards the Work of Pallotti.

Prayer:

O Mary, Powerful Virgin, help our families and communities, above all those who struggle to live in faithfulness, unity and concord! Help consecrated people always to be transparent signs of the love of God. Help priests to be able to communicate the beauty of the mercy of God to all. Help those who govern to know how to always and only seek the good of people. O Powerful Virgin, protect life in all of its forms, ages and situations. Support each one of us so that, through the example of Blessed Elisabetta, we may be able to discern the ways of God and become enthusiastic and credible apostles of the Gospel.

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Eighth day: a great love for the Eucharist

In Codrongianos, Elisabetta took part in the Mass nearly every day. In Rome, she was in St. Peter's Basilica every morning and, if she didn't have other commitments, remained there until the last Mass, because she was convinced that through the Eucharist, we can worthily give to the Lord what we should, through adoration, praise, thanksgiving and prayer. She also encouraged others to go to daily Mass. In a particular way, she adored Jesus in the Eucharist in the churches where the "40 hours of Adoration" were held, and where she remained for a long time, in profound adoration. Fr. Valle said that she managed to receive up to seven Eucharistic blessings in one day. Here the words of Fr. Melia, regarding Elisabetta's love for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist, are proven true: "She was so devoted to and enamoured of it that she would have consecrated her whole life to continuous adoration".

Prayer:

(prayer of Saint Vincent Pallotti before the Blessed Sacrament):
And you, o Seraphim, Cherubim, Thrones, Dominations, Powers, Principalities, Virtues, Archangels and Angels, come to visit the Sacramental Jesus, and adore

him, thank him and love him for me; and you too, o Holy Patriarchs and Prophets, Apostles and Evangelists, and Disciples of the Saviour, o Most Holy Innocents, Most Holy Martyrs, Most Holy Pontiffs, Bishops, Doctors, Most Holy Priests and Levites, Most Holy Confessors, Virgins and Widows, and all you Saints of Paradise, come all of you and visit his most divine Son in the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar and, all together, now and always let us adore him, thank him, and love him.

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Ninth day: The serene hope

To her profound faith and her burning love for the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, Elisabetta added her *serene* and joyful hope. When a certain Luigi Schiboni asked her if he would be saved, she replied: “And do you doubt it? Do you not know that a God died for your soul?” Fr. Filippo Tancioni, secretary to Cardinal Soglia who esteemed Elisabetta as a saint, said that she “had total confidence in being saved by the merits of Jesus Christ ... and sought to inspire the same trust in everyone”. She often repeated: “I trust in the God of Mercy”. In moments of nostalgia for her family in Sardinia she exclaimed, “mercy, mercy”. These and similar exclamations, rooted in her very lively faith and great love for God, developed in her the serene hope to reach Paradise. Thus, even while still in Sardinia, she composed a kind of poetry (Lauda): “*I am completely of God, I am completely of Jesus. I can no longer live far from God. Jesus is my heart, and I am of Jesus!*” She expressed her desire in this serene manner: “*I would like Heaven full, Purgatory emptied, Hell closed*”.

Prayer:

O Blessed Elisabetta Sanna, I admire your courage and constancy in imitating Jesus with faith and serene hope even in the most difficult situations. I am ashamed of my frequent lack of certainty, of my laziness and my lack of coherence: help me to become fully responsible for the gift of faith and thus to always do good with a Christian spirit, so that my neighbour may more easily join with me in praising the Most Blessed Trinity. Amen.

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