

Saint Maria Maddalene De'Pazzi

(Catherine de'Pazzi)

Born 2 April 1566, Florence, Italy

Died 25 May 1607, Florence, Italy

The Ecstatic Saint was one of the most important mystics of the Renaissance. She entered the convent of Maria degli Aneli at the age of sixteen, taking the name Maria Maddalena. The convent had been founded by Carmelites, and although no longer under that Rule, the eighty nuns there maintained the austere Carmelite traditions.

During her novitiate, Maria Maddalena fell seriously ill. Because she was expected to die, she was allowed to make her vows early. She immediately went into ecstasy that lasted forty days and concluded with her miraculous recovery. After this, Maria Maddalena had daily visions during which she spoke to the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, but especially the Son, whom she referred to as The Word. When Maria entered a rapture, the other nuns transcribed her utterances, but, like other mystics, she was never satisfied with the hard copy of her experiences. Devils tried to distract her by screaming in her ear, pushing her down stairs, and wrapping themselves around her body like snakes. She threw some out a window and ultimately overcame them all. Maria Maddalena held many important posts in her convent, and was elected superior three years before her death.

Intensely private, Maria Maddalena never wanted her raptures exposed to anyone outside her convent. The transcriptions were not widely circulated during her lifetime, but more than fifty nuns testified during her canonisation inquiry. Her body remains incorrupt and is venerated at the Carmelite Church in Florence.

The Genius of Maria Maddalena de'Pazzi:

Maria Maddalena was known for her common sense. She prayed: "Come Holy Spirit, Spirit of truth. You are the reward of the saints, the comforter of souls, light in the darkness, riches to the poor, treasure to lovers, food for the hungry, comfort to those who are wandering, to sum up, you are the one in whom all treasures are contained."

Reflection:

"In the beginning was the Word, / and the Word was with God, / and the Word was God.

John 1.1

From Gallick, Sarah, [The Big Book of Women Saints](#), p. 158