

Saint Ursula Ledochowska  
(Julia Maria Ledochowska, Maria Ursula of Jesus)  
born 17 April 1865, Loosdorf, Austria  
died 29 May 1939, Rome, Italy

Julia and her sister Maria Theresa (5 July) were born into an old and distinguished Polish family. At age twenty-one, Julia entered an Ursuline convent, taking the name Maria Ursula of Jesus, and spent the next twenty years teaching in a girls' school. The drama of her life began in 1907 when she was sent to Russia to supervise a new school in St. Petersburg.

Ursula established a convent there and then a second convent in Sortavala, Finland, which was then part of Russia. She became an apostle of ecumenism, opening these convents for other faith services and Bible study. When asked her political affiliation, Ursula answered: *"My policy is love."* Not everyone approved, and she was under constant surveillance by the secret police. When World War I broke out, Ursula was expelled from Russia and in 1920, but she had changed and could not return to her former convent. A protestant friend helped her buy a small farm, and in 1923 she founded the Ursulines of the Agonizing Heart of Jesus, known as the Grey Ursulines because of their habits. They bred horses and trained as veterinarians and grooms. The restaurant and catering operation supported four houses of charity in Warsaw.

"She had a genius for friendship," the London Times reported in her death notice. "and her weekly letter never failed in spite of her endless work." Today there are one hundred Grey Ursuline communities in twelve countries. They commemorate Ursula on 29 May.

**The Genius of Ursula Ledochowska:**

Ursula taught her Sisters: *"It is not enough to pray, 'Thy kingdom come,' but to work, so that the Kingdom of God will exist among us today."*

**Reflections:**

*"I will bless the LORD at all times;  
praise will always be in my mouth.  
My soul will glory in the LORD  
that the poor may hear and be glad.  
Magnify the LORD with me;  
let us exhale his name together.  
I sought the LORD,  
who answered me,  
delivered me from all my fears."*

*Psalm 34.2-5*