

Our Lady of Good Success: Her Importance for Our Time



HISTORY, MIRACLES, PROPHECIES

Fr. Andreas Mählmann, FSSPX
and Elini Felinska

On February 2, 2011, a special jubilee occurred: the 400th anniversary of the blessing and solemn enthronement of the miraculous statue of Our Lady of Good Success in the convent of the Third Order Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception in Quito, Ecuador.

Introduction

This jubilee has more than regional significance, because the Mother of God combined her appearances there with prophecies concerning the 20th and 21st centuries—*our* times! The recipient of these prophecies was a simple nun from the convent just mentioned, Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres. Mary spoke to her, warning about a worldwide crisis of faith and morals that would come over the Church in the 20th century, but also explaining how this crisis would finally end.

Here we offer a partial survey of the events of that time, while encouraging the reader *to participate in the novena in preparation for the anniversary...from January 25 through February 2*. This can be done, for

example, by reciting the Litany of Loreto after the prayer that is reprinted at the end of this article.

Life of the Venerable Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres

Little is known about the life of Mother Mariana. The following information is taken from the notes which a Franciscan priest from Quito, Fr. Manuel Sousa Pereira, published in 1790 and which are being used for the beatification process that was begun in 1986. These notes are available in English under the title *The Admirable Life of Mother Mariana*, translated by Marian Therese Horvat.

Mariana Francisca was born in 1563 in Spain, the first child of

Diego Torres y Cadiz and his wife Maria Berriochoa y Alvaro. She was her parents' pride and joy and at a very early age already showed signs of a special vocation. God revealed to her that she was called to religious life when she was only nine years old.

In the 16th and 17th centuries Spain was ruled by the Habsburgs, who wanted to extend their rule not only in Europe but also on other continents. A half century after Columbus' voyage to the New World, the Spanish Empire took possession of large parts of [North and South] America. After the discovery of Ecuador in 1534, the city of San Francisco de Quito was founded. Twenty years after its founding, several influential and pious Spanish ladies from Quito submitted a request to the Spanish king in which they asked him to establish in their colony the first convent of Third Order Franciscans of the Immaculate Conception in the New World. This congregation had been founded in the 15th century by Beatriz da Silva.

The King of Spain, Philip II, granted the request and assembled a group of founding sisters. He chose as the Superior Mother Maria de Jesus Taboada. Among the founding sisters, Mother Maria de Jesus also recruited *her niece Mariana, who at that time was only 13 years old*, because at that point it was already evident that she had a genuine vocation "to follow the voice of her Beloved" and to enter the convent in the New World. The decision to leave her parents' house was not an easy one for Mariana, but she completely surrendered herself as a burnt offering, since she knew in her heart that God wanted this sacrifice from her.

On December 30, 1576, the founding sisters arrived in Quito. Two months later the monastic foundation took place and the nuns were able to take possession of their convent. The founding sisters

made their profession and Mariana entered the novitiate. After she had followed the religious rule for two years and her obedience and conformity to religious life had been tested, she was allowed to make her profession, in which she received the name Mariana de Jesus.

Over the course of her life Mother Mariana experienced more than 40 apparitions. These concerned her own life, her convent, and especially the Church in the 20th century. Our Lady appeared to Mother Mariana for the first time in 1599. When Mother Mariana asked her who she was, the Mother of God answered that she was *the Mother of Good Success*. In this apparition she prophesied to her, among other things, that the colony would soon become a free republic with the name Ecuador and that an authentically Christian President in the 19th century would consecrate it to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Through this consecration the Catholic religion would be upheld during the unfortunate years that were to come.

Before Our Lady left Mother Mariana, *she ordered her to have a statue made, promising that she would send heavenly aid to complete it*. She also promised that she would help all those who invoked her under the title of "Our Lady of Good Success."

In the years before her death, Mother Mariana devoted herself to the restoration of convent life and the formation of the novices. Her counsel was sought by her sisters in religion and her charity was prized by the inhabitants of Quito. During her long, penitential life she received from God many astonishing gifts of grace: prophecies, ecstasies and visions. On January 16, 1635, she received her eternal reward. In 1885 her completely incorrupt body was exhumed and transferred, along with the likewise incorrupt bodies of seven founding sisters, in the restored crypt of the Convent of the Immaculate Conception in Quito.

The Miraculous Statue of Our Lady of Good Success

The center of Marian devotion in Quito is the life-size statue of Our Lady of Good Success, which is displayed to the faithful three times a year over the altar of the convent Church of the Immaculate Conception. It radiates an extraordinary, supernatural charm that is indescribable.

The story of this miraculous statue began in the late 16th century. Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres (1563-1635) was the Superior of the convent when she received from Our Lady the assignment to have a statue made in which she would be honored under the title of "Our Lady of Good Success." This apparition took place on January 16, 1599. The Mother of God gave detailed instructions: The statue should represent her as Mother Mariana saw her in the apparition, *i.e.* with the Child Jesus on her left arm.

On account of the political unrest at that time, Mother Mariana hesitated to carry out this assignment. The real obstacle, however, was that she did not know how she could have someone produce a statue that was so indescribably beautiful. Our Lady of Good Success then promised that she herself would make sure that the statue would be produced according to her specifications.

According to the tradition, she told Mother Mariana her height by asking the sister to take off her cincture [belt], to hold one end on the ground with her foot and to give her the other end. Mary gave that end to the Child Jesus, whom she was carrying on her arm, who then held it up to the top of her head. The statue is 1.80 meters [5 feet 11 inches] tall, and this height alone makes it quite impressive, especially for the people of Ecuador who, at that time and still today, are rather small in stature.

When Mother Mariana, in keeping with the will of Mary, finally asked permission from the Bishop of Quito, Bishop Salvador de Ribera, he scolded Mother Mariana for not coming to him sooner, for the Mother of God had revealed her wish to him too in a dream.

Our Lady of Good Success herself named the sculptor who was to produce her statue. She gave the reason for her choice: the man whom she had chosen was a practicing Catholic, and that was why he was worthy to make her statue.

Shortly before the statue was completed, the sculptor traveled to Europe to purchase the most precious paints for the faces of the Mother of God and of the Child Jesus. He promised to return by January 16, 1611, and to finish the statue then. On the day before his return a miracle took place:

Mother Mariana was praying at dawn in the upper choir of the church, when suddenly the whole church was brightly illuminated, the tabernacle opened and she saw the Three Persons of the Most Holy Trinity in the Sacred Host. At that moment she recognized the great love of the Most Holy Trinity for the Virgin Mary. Furthermore the nine choirs of angels filled the church with their song in honor of our heavenly Mother. Then the three archangels, Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael, knelt down before the altar. It seemed to Mother Mariana as if they were commanded to show their reverence for the Mother of God. A moment later they were in the choir, where the unfinished statue was being kept. There Mother Mariana saw how the statue was instantaneously completed. St. Francis of Assisi was present also. He took his cincture off and girded the statue with it. *After that the Virgin Mary herself entered into the statue, which you can imagine as the entrance of sunlight into a crystal.* Then she sang the Magnificat. That was how the statue was completed!

When the sculptor and painter returned, he fell on his knees before the statue and testified that no human power, but only a divine power could have finished that statue. He immediately set down in writing his testimony that this work was not his but that of the angels. The document is found today in the archive of the convent. Afterward he went immediately to the Bishop of Quito, who from the beginning had followed the production of the statue with great interest. He too fell to his knees before the statue and likewise wrote a letter testifying that this statue had been transformed overnight and that it was the work of angels.

On February 2, 1611, exactly 400 years ago, Bishop Salvador de Ribera solemnly consecrated the statue and handed over to her both the keys of the convent and also his episcopal crozier; on that occasion he reverently said, "My Lady, I commend to Thee the care of this convent and of my flock!" Our Lady of Good Success had expressed to Mother Mariana the desire to become the Superior of the convent and to remain so until the end of time. The sisters fulfilled her request, and ever since then the statue of Our Lady of Good Success has been enthroned over the Mother Superior's chair in the upper choir of the convent! Three times a year she is removed from this place, which is not accessible to the public, and displayed over the main altar of the church for the veneration of the pilgrims: in the months of May and October and during the Novena to Our Lady of Good Success, that is, from January 25 to February 2, her feast day.

Over the centuries many miracles took place in connection with this statue. One of the most famous occurred in 1941. The Mother Superior of the convent at the time tells the story:

There was an acute danger then that Ecuador would suffer great

territorial losses in a war with Peru. During that period of great turmoil Cardinal Carlos Maria Torres ordered that the miraculous statue of Our Lady of Good Success be brought to the church and that a novena for peace be prayed in its presence. On the fifth night of the novena, while Holy Mass was being said, a miracle occurred at 10:30 p.m.: *At the moment of the Consecration the statute opened and closed her eyes, looked first at the choir, where her daughters were gathered, and then up to heaven.* Many people were present at that Mass and witnessed the miracle, which lasted until 3:00 the following morning. The country's newspapers reported it. On that day the war ended and peace was restored. Some of the witnesses are still alive today.

Prophecies of Our Lady of Good Success That Have Already Been Fulfilled

During her appearances, Our Lady of Good Success prophesied many things about the future of Ecuador, of the convent, and of the Catholic Church. Most of the prophecies have already come true, for example the proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception in 1854 and the dogmatic declaration of the infallibility of the pope in 1870.

In relation to Ecuador she said that during the 19th century there would be a truly Catholic president of strong character. This president would dedicate the country to the unsullied heart of her most holy Son. As a result the Catholic faith in Ecuador would be preserved during the coming years, in which the Church would suffer persecutions. However he would finally be murdered by the enemies of the Church.

These prophecies were fulfilled almost two hundred years later down to the smallest detail: There was a bloody revolution and a civil war, through which the Spanish colony Ecuador became a republic. A bad government followed,



(Above) The incorrupt bodies of Mother Mariana and other Superiors of the convent in a casket in the Convent of the Immaculata Sisters, Quito.

(Left) Main entrance to the Church of the Immaculate Conception, where the miraculous statue is displayed several times a year.

and soon afterward chaos began to spread through the land. The Jesuits were expelled from Ecuador. At that moment of darkness there was, however, a light for Ecuador: in 1860 Don Gabriel Garcia Moreno became President of Ecuador at the age of 39. (He was president from 1860-1865 and from 1869-1875). He re-established the government and important institutions, got rid of the enormous burden of debt and reintroduced stability throughout the country. Garcia Moreno was both a man of action and also a man of great faith, full of the fear of the Lord. One of the first things he did was to enter into a concordat with Rome in which he promised that Ecuador from then on would protect the rights of the Church in Ecuador. The President was murdered on August 6, 1875, on the steps of the cathedral of Quito by enemies of the Church. His last words were, "I am dying, but God does not die."

Prophecies of Our Lady of Good Success Concerning Our Time

As impressive as the fulfillment of these prophecies may be, Our Lady of Good Success made her most important and at the same time most terrifying prophecies about the 20th and 21st centuries! These prophetic messages have a connection with the miraculous comple-

tion of the statue, because Our Lady gave them to Mother Mariana after "entering" the statue. With incredible precision Our Lady of Good Success revealed the whole gamut of the current crisis of faith at the beginning of the 16th century to this unassuming nun.

As a sample of what the Mother of God foretold in Quito about our time, we reprint here quotations from her message:

There will be an almost complete and universal decline in morality. In those unhappy times an unlimited luxury will come about which will lead many, many people astray into sin. How many frivolous souls will be lost forever!...Innocence will not often be found any more in children, nor modesty in women....The Sacrament of Matrimony, which symbolizes the communion of Christ with His Church, will be attacked and profaned. Disgraceful laws will make it very easy to live in sin.... Children will be born without being received into the communion of the Church....The devil will try ceaselessly, through wicked men with great power, to annihilate the Sacrament of Penance. The same will happen with Holy Communion. Ah! How it pains me to have to reveal to you the many horrifying sacrileges that will occur both publicly and also in secret through the profanation of the Holy Eucharist!...During this time people will think little of Extreme Unction, so that many

of them will die without receiving it....The Sacrament of Holy Orders will be ridiculed, suppressed, and despised. The devil will try to persecute the priests of the Lord in every possible way. With subtle cunning he will work to draw them away from the spirit of their vocation and to ruin many of them.

Our Lady of Good Success said that in that time fewer and fewer priests will follow the divine compass, that they will lose their way and fall away from Our Lord, Our Lady, and the Church. They will lose their priestly spirit:

These vicious and immoral priests, who will cause a scandal among the Christian peoples, will stir up the hatred of many bad Catholics and of the enemies of the Roman, Catholic, Apostolic Church so that it falls on all priests. In this situation of utmost affliction within the Church, some who ought to speak will remain mute.

The Mother of God says also, however, that in this time of the crisis in faith foretold for the 20th century, God will send a prelate, *i.e.* a bishop who will renew the Catholic priesthood:

Pray urgently...and ask Our Father in Heaven to put an end to such sinister times as soon as possible for the love of the Eucharistic Heart of my most holy Son, and to send to the Church of that time a prelate who will restore the charac-

ter of his priests. We will equip this son of mine, whom I love exceedingly, with extraordinary abilities, with a humble heart, with docility to divine promptings, together with strength to defend the rights of the Church and a meek and compassionate heart, so that like a second Christ he can care for both the great and the small, without in the least despising even the most unfortunate.

The scales of the sanctuary will be placed in his hand, so that the true weight and measure might prevail again for the worship of God. The lukewarmness of consecrated souls will hinder the swift success of this prelate and at the same time be the reason why Satan will take possession of these countries; he will succeed at everything because so many foreign men without faith, like a black cloud, will darken the pure sky of the republic, which will previously have been consecrated to the most Sacred Heart of my Divine Son. With this cloud all the vices will arise, and because of them all sorts of punishment will overtake them, including plague, famine, conflicts at home and abroad, and the loss of faith, through which a great number of souls will be lost.

A terrible war will break out, in which the blood of friend and foe, of secular and religious priests and also of nuns will flow. This night will be the most terrible, because from a human perspective evil will triumph....

The most encouraging thing about this distressing prophecy of Our Lady, however, is that it does not end with a depressing message:

...Then my hour will come, in which *I will dethrone that proud, damned spirit Satan in an astonishing way. I will crush him under my foot and cast him bound into the abyss of hell* and thus liberate the Church and the fatherland from his cruel tyranny.

Just as in Fatima, Mary announces her triumph, which will come at the moment when apparently no solution remains! That will be for the faithful a great trial, but Mary will intervene miraculously so as to break the power of the Evil One and to free the Church.



Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres

Ecclesial Approval of the Apparitions

Archbishop Salvador de Ribera—the eighth bishop of Quito—was the one who approved the apparitions that had been granted to Mariana. He wanted to know everything about the graces that had been bestowed upon her, and he was impressed and edified. He approved the apparitions and arranged that all the special graces and heavenly apparitions that Mariana received should be written down. All his successors in the episcopal see of Quito followed him in granting this approval. His immediate successor asked Mother Mariana to write an autobiography, and he ordered her spiritual director to compose an account of Mariana's life. All these reports are in the archive of the convent.

Moreover it was determined in 1906—when Mariana's coffin was opened—that her body and the bodies of six other nuns who were foundresses of the convent, are incorrupt. Thus, although Mother Mariana, in keeping with the prophecy, remained unknown until the end of the 20th century, the preservation of her incorrupt remains is still a proof of her sanctity in our time.

In 1968 the Archbishop of Quito, the Most Reverend Antonio Gonzales, introduced the cause of Sister Mariana's beatification. In an episcopal decree he certified the holiness of her life, her heroic practice of the virtues, and also the

authenticity of her charismatic and supernatural gifts!

Another sign in favor of the authenticity of the apparitions was the canonical crowning of Our Lady of Good Success as Queen of Quito in 1991. This coronation of Our Lady was carried out by the local Ordinary on the basis of a papal decree by John Paul II.

Msgr. Luis E. Cadena y Almeida is the postulator of Mother Mariana's cause of beatification. He has written many books about her and also about the revelations. All of these books have received the Church's imprimatur. He devoted one book to the prophetic messages that have already been fulfilled. Only one has not yet come true: Mary's triumph. But the exact fulfillment of what had been foretold in the past gives us hope for the future!

The Jubilee Year 2011: 400 Years of Our Lady of Quito

From January 24 to February 2, 2011, a public novena [was] prayed in Quito in preparation for the feast day of Our Lady of Good Success (on February 2). Mary prophesied that especially from the 20th century on "the Church would go through a difficult crisis," and that she herself would have an important mission *under this title* (of Our Lady of Good Success) *and through this statue*. Let us participate in this novena [during this Jubilee Year] so as to pray to her that the Church will overcome this crisis. ☩

Prayer

O Mary, Our Lady of Good Success, our Queen and our Mother, in the name of Jesus and in His Love we ask you to take charge of our concerns and to bring them to a good success! Pray for us and pray for the Church in her affliction!
Litany of Loreto....