

ABBREVIATED

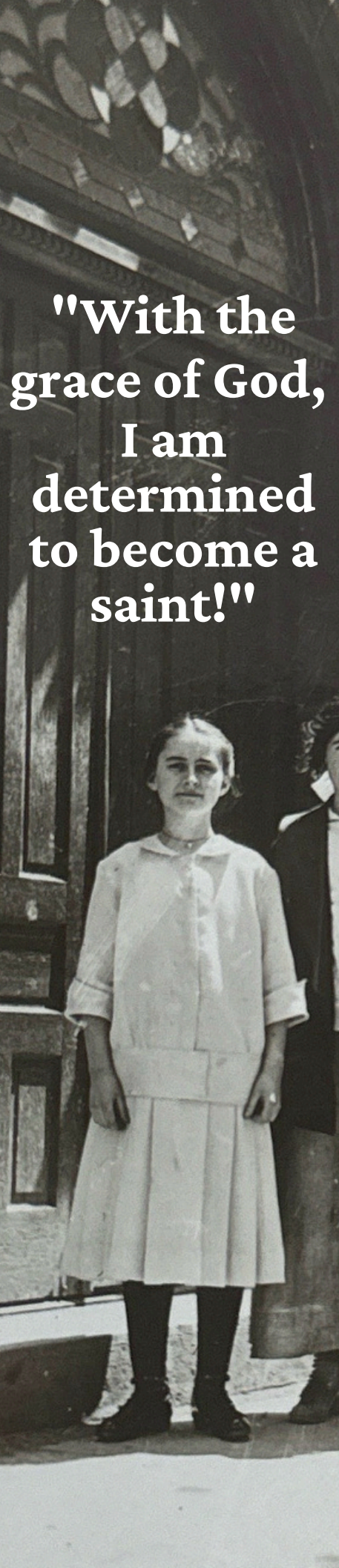
Biography of Sister Annella

The following is a condensed biography of Sister Annella Zervas, excerpted from *Ticket for Eternity* by James Kritzek.

Sister Annella Zervas, OSB, was born Anna Cordelia Zervas on April 7, 1900, in Moorhead, Minnesota. She was the daughter of devout Catholic German and French-Canadian immigrants Hubert and Emma Zervas. Annella was the second of six children in the family, which included an adopted brother and a brother who died shortly after birth. She was very attached to her family, which was a model Christian family. Annella exhibited a deep devotion to prayer and the Eucharist from a young age, showing a



remarkable commitment to her Catholic faith. Even in grade school, she demonstrated a spiritual maturity that set her apart from her peers. Annella had a profound love for the Mass and was a daily communicant from a young age. Her love for the Eucharist grew, and she frequently visited the Tabernacle. She would sacrifice to attend Mass daily, even walking to Mass in the frigid winter months of Fargo-Moorhead. Her understanding of the nature of Christian mortification was being lived out even then.



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Annella felt a strong calling to consecrate her life to God at fifteen. In August 1915, she entered the Order of Saint Benedict at the convent of the Benedictine Sisters at St. Joseph, Minnesota. Her novitiate was marked by gratitude, joy, and homesickness that tempted her to leave. However, she persevered with fervent prayer, willpower, support from her family, and guidance from her spiritual director. On June 17, 1918, she received the Benedictine habit and the name Sister Mary Annella. When her mother remarked that there was no Saint Annella, Annella responded, "Then I shall have to be the first one!" She greatly desired to be a saint. Repeated in her diary was this desire: "With the grace of God, I am determined to become a saint!" Annella made her simple profession on July 11, 1919, and her perpetual vows in July 1922.

Sister Annella's monastic life was filled with spiritual growth and deep happiness. She was known for her seriousness, musical talent, sense of humor, conscientiousness, popularity, artistic abilities, humble and childlike disposition, politeness, and kindness. One of her classmates remarked that she had the sweetest smile she had ever known. Her kindness and obedience endeared her to her parents and friends. She struggled with forgetfulness and was sometimes tempted to leave religious life because of homesickness. Despite these struggles, she was profoundly grateful to the Lord for calling her to be His bride.

Annella understood the importance of religious life and all vocations, praying fervently that no one would miss their vocation as Divine Providence outlined. She was always asking for the grace of perfect resignation and conformity with the holy will of God and was pleased when God was pleased. Annella loved sacred music and was a perfectionist with music. Despite her faults and difficulties, such as being very restless at night and often late to the chapel, she was always grateful for any advice and instruction and was reported to have never said an uncharitable word.



Annella was known to be generous and always helped others. She was greatly aware of God's generosity and wanted to do the little she could on this earth for Him. She always encouraged others in this.

Annella had a great love for Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. Her behavior in the presence of the Eucharistic Lord indicated her living faith in the Real Presence. She knew that Jesus was the only one who truly understood us and could help us. Her devotion to the Virgin Mary was equally profound. Annella loved the Virgin Mary to such an extent that everything—every good work, every prayer, and every pain—passed through the Blessed Virgin's hands into those of Jesus.

About a year after her solemn profession, Annella was struck by a complex combination of afflictions, including severe stomach pain and a rare and painful skin disease, both of which were impossible to diagnose.

Sister Annella's illness reached such an advanced stage that, despite the deep sorrow she felt at the thought of leaving her convent home, it was determined that she would be cared for by her family in their home. This decision, made out of concern for her well-being, came with the permission of the Bishop of Saint Cloud and the Reverend Mother.

She received many medical treatments and visited different hospitals, including the Mayo Clinic, where doctors deemed her condition incurable.



Despite her severe physical suffering, which included violent chills, high temperatures, and painful attacks of itching, scratching, and weeping, her mental faculties always remained intact. The pus-like discharge from the skin disease had a sharp, biting, and decayed odor. Her frail body exfoliated between a pint and a quart a day of skin. At one point, she existed on almost no food.

Her constant cheerfulness and good humor were evident even during her hospital stays. She saw her suffering as a loving cooperation with God in consummating His redemptive love. She never asked to be relieved from the pain, only for the strength to bear it. Her mother remarked that Annella suffered death seven or eight times a day.

Despite her intense suffering, Annella continued to manifest interest in the spiritual welfare of others. Her kindness and politeness manifested in many ways, especially in her interactions with the poorer and less instructed. She remained cheerful and resigned to God's will, always wanting what pleased God. She trusted that God had a very special reason for her suffering and that He would bring it to an end when He wished.

There were different stages to her disease, each involving different levels of pain. She would beg to receive Holy Communion, which was her greatest consolation. In between her physical attacks of pain, Annella would do needlework, meditate on sacred scripture, and sing hymns and parts of vespers. Even in her pain, she would remain calm and never forget to thank others for any service. She had difficulty sleeping and was heard in the middle of the night saying, "All for Jesus, all for Jesus," and making acts of faith, hope, and charity.

Annella had no wish but to live as long as God wanted her to live. She remarked one day, "I am buying my ticket for eternity, and it is well worth the price." Sometimes, even when she didn't think she could bear more pain, she would pray, "Jesus, send me more pain, but give me the strength to bear it!" Annella also suffered from hearing issues, including a constant whistling in her ears. She averted talking about herself, always desiring to speak of heaven. She remarked that she thought it would be too good to be true to be with Jesus and see Him forever. She was so happy when thinking of being united with God forever. She told her mother not to cry but only to thank God.

Sister Annella passed away on the Vigil of the Feast of the Assumption, in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, at the age of twenty-six. Her spiritual director had no doubt about her union with God. After her death, many reported receiving favors and intercessions through her prayers, leading to a growing devotion to Sister Annella. She is remembered as an "apostle of suffering for our day," with her life serving as a testament to radical trust in God and full obedience to His holy will.



AN INVITATION TO The People of God

We invite the people of God to join the Guild in prayer for the beatification and canonization of Sister Annella Zervas, OSB. Please help share her story and witness to her life of holiness. Additionally, your financial support for the cause will assist in advancing the canonical process and making Sister Annella's life known to the world.

GET INVOLVED

- Pray for Sister Annella's Cause**
 - Offer prayers individually or join group efforts. Please see page 13 of this kit for Sister Annella's Beatification and Canonization Prayer.
- Share Her Story**
 - Spread the word with family, friends, and on social media. [Visit here for biography.](#)
- Make a Financial Gift**
 - Support the cause financially or help with fundraising. [Consider making an online gift here.](#)
- Attend Events**
 - Join local or virtual events to learn about Sister Annella and grow in faith. [Find details on upcoming public events here.](#)
- Stay Informed**
 - [Sign up here for updates, and visit the Guild's website for the latest news.](#)



Please mail financial gifts to Sister Annella Guild, 702 Summit Avenue, Crookston, MN 56716, with checks payable to "Sister Annella Guild." Gifts can also be made online at sisterannella.org.