

GABRIELLE MAILLET: MARIANIST LAY HOLINESS

All the causes for sainthood promoted so far by the Marianist Postulator correspond to Marianist men and women religious and to one student (Faustino). There has been no Marianist layperson proposed for canonized sainthood. However, in the lay branch we find a great figure of intense spiritual life: Miss Gabrielle Maillet (Paris 1904-Bordeaux 1944).

Gabrielle Maillet was a consecrated Marianist of the lay affiliate groups connected to the Oratory of La Madeleine in Bordeaux during the difficult years of the Second World War. Gabrielle was noted for her intense spiritual life. In Bordeaux, she entrusted herself to the spiritual guidance of Marianist Father Herbert G. Kramer, consecrating herself with private vows on August 15, 1939, the Solemnity of the Assumption. Sustained by an intense life of prayer and Christian virtues, in the context of the violence of the world war, she identified herself with the suffering Christ, making her life and death an offering for peace: "The most important thing is love, giving oneself, being humble and weeping at the foot of the Cross. For me, everything at the foot of the cross is peace and clarity".

Gabrielle was in frail health, with deep-set eyes and a serious expression. Endowed with a lively intelligence and a passion for study, she pursued her academic training in an exceptional manner, always with various interruptions due to her fragile health. From a young age, grief touched her heart, as she had witnessed the death of her mother and her two beloved sisters Maria and Georgette. Due to family circumstances, she moved to Bordeaux in 1936, where she graduated from the School of Letters.

Because of her intellectual gifts, kindness, understanding, deep religious spirit and her complete dedication to her students, her life is reminiscent of that of St. Edith Stein (1891-1942). She longed to consecrate herself to God and thought of becoming a Carmelite. However, because of her vocation as a teacher, she decided to dedicate herself to the human and spiritual formation of her students. They all admired the clarity of her explanations, her generosity, great indulgence and authority. She was the only teacher whom the children respected. They did not play any pranks in her class, because she knew how to make the lessons interesting and how to broaden the horizons of their knowledge. Above all, the deep inner life of their young teacher impressed them. They said that she was a saint. Her soul was marked by pain. The 1940-1941-1942 school years were very hard due to the war. The work multiplied: She even taught 38 hours of classes a week, undermining her health. She had a weak heart and underwent several operations. Gabrielle always remained calm, peaceful and resigned in the face of trials. "My vocation is suffering," she said, always with a smile on her face. She died on March 1, 1944. Upon her death, one of her students wrote: "It seems to me that we may as well pray to her."

The admiration for Gabrielle was so deeply felt that five years after her death Father Kramer published the book *Crucified With Christ* (New York, 1949), in which he dedicated a chapter to Mademoiselle Maillet. The chapter title, *A Heart to Love and Suffer*, synthesizes Gabrielle Millet's spiritual personality. Five years later, Mrs. Odette Buzy published in the international review of Marianist religious, *L'Apôtre de Marie* (number 376 of March-April 1954,

pages 188-195. 206-210), an extensive spiritual sketch, entitled *Gabrielle Maillet. Professeur de langues classiques (1904-1944)*. Gabrielle Maillet made Blessed Chaminade's project of gathering a nation of saints a reality.