

## History



The Order of the Oblate Sisters is a Pontifical Institute of religious women founded in Italy February 2, 1894 by Blessed Mother Teresa Casini. There are about 300 Sisters serving in the countries of Italy, United States, Brazil, Africa, India and Peru. The Generalate is in Rome and the Motherhouse is in Grottaferrata, Italy. The humble beginnings of the Congregation of the Oblate Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus took root within the heart of our revered foundress, Blessed Mother Teresa Casini when the Lord first revealed Himself to her soul.

His Heart was pierced by a thorn and in the depths of her soul could be heard a voice asking her to console Him for the offenses committed by those most dear to him, namely the priests. Jesus drew Teresa to Himself to the degree of which her sole desire was to offer herself in readiness to embrace and welcome all that God permitted in her life including suffering, so as to console the Heart of Jesus. Teresa shared this deep inner sentiment with her confessor.

He eventually encouraged her to share with other young women, this call to console the pierced Heart of Christ through a life dedicated to total self-giving to God for priestly holiness. Thus, the nascent congregation began to take shape in a rented space of two small rooms and a kitchen on June 1, 1888. Teresa Casini and her devout Catholic friend, Clorinda Canestri began to live a humble, austere and prayerful life in common. During these early years, Teresa grew more in love with Jesus and her soul became increasingly sensitive to the pierced Heart of Jesus. Her own heart was enkindled with the desire to respond to Jesus' infinite love for humanity with a corresponding love. Teresa counted it a blessing to encounter any sacrifice, particularly contempt and humiliation. She endeavored to become increasingly exact in her obedience. She resolved to do anything, which she thought would please God.

Eventually Clorinda became very ill and had to return home. Teresa felt a great need to look after her, thus giving up their small quarters. Although Teresa had to shorten her time before the Blessed Sacrament, she knew deep within her heart that she was leaving God for God. Soon Clorinda died and two other young women, asked to join Teresa in her way of life. They rented the house of Phillip Roncaccia, which was large enough to have a small chapel, private residence for the women and a reception area. As Teresa's love for the Heart of Christ deepened, her desire for poverty and simplicity grew. She began to dress in a dark, poorly sewn dress and apron with a handkerchief on her head.



Although she had at one time been a woman from the "upper class" she now preferred to beg for alms to pay the rent each month, gather hedges and bundles of sticks for fire, wash and prepare greens for eating and do all other menial tasks so as to imitate her poor Christ and be in solidarity with the poor. As she journeyed through the streets of Rome begging for charity, she would constantly pray the rosary. Teresa's class-conscious family often rebuked her and accused her of being a cause of great humiliation for the family and before society. Oftentimes, they would avoid her when seeing her on the streets.



Teresa had two desires: to love God totally and to bring souls to the pierced Heart of Jesus. Eventually Teresa sold the small portion of the inheritance from her father's estate and her unit of the family house. With this, she was able to begin construction of the first religious house of the Oblate Sisters. During this challenging period, Teresa's confessor became very disillusioned with her.

She experienced constant anguish and fear of deceiving herself. But, in the depths of her soul, there remained a great calm. The thought of the Heart of Jesus and of the Blessed Sacrament kept her going. She remained in this dark night until the house was completed. Then she along with her two companions, Teresa Canestri and Angelina Mascherucci took possession of the house on October 17 1892. Within a short period of time, three other women joined the group. Teresa's confessor remained in his negative state of mind until one month before the little group would officially be recognized as a congregation of consecrated women within the Church. Cardinal Vanutelli gave permission for the Blessed Sacrament to be reserved in the house and on the morning of February 2, 1894, the Feast of the Purification, the blessing of the Chapel took place with the celebration of the Eucharist with the first six Oblate Sisters - Mother Teresa Casini, Teresa Canestri, Maria Centioni, Assunta Centioni, Cristina Consoli, and Anna Raparelli. In a prayer of praise, Teresa was heard to say, "The work has begun!"

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