



Saints adoring Jesus Resurrected", by Fra Angelico – Detail of the Fiesole Panel, San Marco Museum, Florence (Italy)

Bl. Stephana Quinzani, Sister and Virgin

1457-1530

January 3

Stephana was born in 1457 in the neighborhood of Brescia in Italy. Her parents were of the middle class in life and were both of them fervent in the practice of their religious duties. From her earliest childhood little Stephana continually heard an interior voice repeating to her the words, " Charity, charity, charity I ".

When only five years old she consecrated herself to God with her whole heart, and at the age of seven she made the three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, adding a promise to assume later on the habit of the **Third Order of Saint Dominic**, to which her father belonged. Our Lord then appeared to her, accompanied by His Blessed Mother, Saint Dominic, Saint Thomas Aquinas, and Saint Catharine of Siena, and espoused her to Himself, bestowing on her a magnificent ring, which was seen by many persons. About this time, the Quinzani family removed to Soncino and Stephana placed herself under the spiritual direction of Blessed Matthew Carreri of the Order of Saint Dominic, who one day told her that at his death he should make her his heiress. The child did not then understand the meaning of these words, but, when the servant of God departed this life, she felt her heart painfully and mysteriously wounded, and at the same time Blessed Matthew appeared to her and explained that this was the inheritance he had promised to her. When about twelve years old, she went to hear a sermon on the Feast of Saint Andrew. That great Apostle appeared to her in vision, holding in his hands a large cross, and addressed her in the following words : " Behold, my daughter, the way to heaven. Love God, fear God, honor God; flee from the world and embrace the Cross." Love of the Cross became thenceforth her characteristic virtue, so that it was said of her that there were but two things for which she bore an affection, namely, Holy Communion and sufferings.

In all her visions the Cross bore a remarkable part, and she gave herself up, not only to the practice of the severest austerities, but to an almost uninterrupted meditation on the Passion of her Divine Spouse. She was even permitted in some degree to undergo His sufferings in her own person, participating on Fridays in a mysterious manner in our Lord's agony and sweat of blood, His scourging at the pillar, His crowning with thorns, and His crucifixion. Her confessor, who wrote her life, testified to having seen the sacred stigmata on her hands and feet, and the marks of the crown of thorns upon her head. In one of her raptures she was given to understand that all the angels and saints together, including even Our Blessed Lady herself, are unable to love God as much as He deserves to be loved. Then an abyss of love opened before her eyes, and she cried out, "O my Lord and Redeemer, grant me the grace to love all this love ; otherwise I care not to live." But Our Lord smiled upon her and told her that her wish was an impossible one, as her finite will could not embrace that abyss of infinite love. Nevertheless, to comfort her, He said that He would accept her goodwill, as though she really loved to the extent to which she desired, adding, "Think not that this great abyss of love remains unloved ; for, if creatures cannot love it, it is loved by Me, who am infinite good."

At the age of fifteen Stephana received the habit of the Third Order of Saint Dominic, from which time she devoted herself to the care of the sick and poor in the hospitals and to every kind of active charity. Our Lord was pleased to work many miracles by her hands, multiplying food and money and restoring the sick to health. Blessed Stephana passed to her reward, on 2nd January, A.D. 1530, at the age of seventy-three.