

## Prayer of the month • March 2016

### The Dedication Prayer of Saint Colette

O Blessed Jesus, I dedicate myself to you in health, in illness, in my life, in my death, in all my desires, in all my deeds. So that, I may never work henceforth except for your glory, for the salvation of souls, and for that which you have chosen me. From this moment on, dearest Lord, there is nothing which I am not prepared to undertake for love of you.

Saint Colette, 1381-1447



This prayer of dedication is uncompromising, promising dedication, 'in sickness and in health' like the marriage vows. Colette was very strict with herself, and it took her several attempts to find a religious community that suited her. In fact, the one she eventually joined she immediately set about reforming. '*A Dieu playse*' ('As God pleases') was a motto of St Colette's, and her way of life. Not just as *God wills* but as it *pleases* God. The Lord is a God who can be pleased, and who takes delight in his children.

Colette Boellet, was born at Corbie, in Picardy, on 13 January 1381, to Robert Boellet, a carpenter at the Benedictine Abbey of Corbie, and Marguerite Moyon. Her parents seemed unable to have children, but Margerite became pregnant at the age of 60, after praying to Saint Nicholas, and so they called their child Nicole, known affectionately as Nicolette, shortened to Colette. Her parents died in 1399 and then Colette join the Beguines, a lay religious community, but found their way of life too unchallenging. In 1402 she became a Third Order Franciscan, becoming a hermit and living near the Abbey church at Corbie. After four years and several dreams and visions she discerned a calling to reform the Second Order of Saint Francis, and return it to its original Franciscan ideals of poverty and austerity. She therefore transferred to the Poor Clares and began her work at Beaune, in Burgundy. she met with opposition when she tried to reform monasteries in the Paris area, but found greater hospitality further east. She opened her first monastery in 1410, at Besançon, in an almost-abandoned house of Urbanist Poor Clares. Her reform spread from there, and during her lifetime another seventeen monasteries came under the reform. For the monasteries which followed her reform, she prescribed extreme poverty, going barefoot, and the observance of perpetual fasting and abstinence. She died in Ghent, Belgium, on 6 March 1447, at the age of 66. She is invoked by childless couples desiring to become parents, and is also the patroness of expectant mothers, and sick infants. She was canonised in 1807. Her feast day is either 7 February or 6 March.

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