



Marthe Robin

(1902 - 1981)

Declared "Venerable" by the Pope



Press Dossier

“VENERABLE” – A STEP TOWARDS BEATIFICATION

❖ How has Marthe Robin been declared “Venerable”?

The beginning of the process, five years after her death

Marthe Robin died on the 6th Feb., 1981. Five years later, the Foyers de Charité asked the bishop of Valence, Mgr. Marchand, to open the process of beatification. The bishop appointed Fr. Ravanel, a member of the Foyers de Charité, as postulator of the cause. Thus the diocesan investigation with a view to the beatification of the “Servant of God” began in 1986.

The diocesan investigation

Two experts (a theologian and a historian) were nominated to conduct this investigation. The first element to take into account was Marthe Robin’s reputation for sanctity among the Christian population. Then between 1988 and 1996 more than 120 witnesses and experts were consulted. When the investigation was wrapped up, a 17000 page dossier, comprising a critical biography, statements of witnesses, all Marthe’s writings and other documents, was handed in to the Congregation for the Cause of Saints in Rome. At this stage Marthe Robin was called Servant of God.

The examination by the Roman Congregation

On the 24th April 1998, a decree of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints confirmed the validity of the diocesan investigation. Rome then proceeded to prepare documentation to be examined first by historians and theologians, for their critical views, then by the general promoter of the Faith – formerly known as the Devil’s Advocate – whose role is to prepare possible arguments against the beatification or canonisation. Last of all comes the discussion among the cardinals and bishops. The final editing of the *Positio*, a 2000 page summary of the beatification dossier presenting the results of this diocesan investigation, was completed on the 6th May 2010.

By proclaiming Marthe Robin “Venerable”, the Church offers the way she lived the theological virtues (*faith, hope and charity*) and the cardinal virtues (*justice, prudence, courage and temperance*) as a model for Christians. She recognises the **exemplary value of the life of Marthe**, who gave herself totally to God and to others without any trace of egoism, meeting the challenging situations of life with a power beyond the purely human.

Heroic nature of her virtues

It was then for the committee of cardinals and bishops to decide when to submit the case to the Pope with a view to the declaration of the heroic nature of her virtues, that is “*the perfection of human and Christian love, and its expression throughout her life.*” Marthe Robin was declared Venerable by Pope Francis on **7th Nov. 2014.**

❖ What are the next steps?

Recognition of a miracle

The postulator of the Cause for Beatification, Fr. Bernard Peyrous, will soon hand in to Rome a dossier presenting a miracle obtained through the intercession of Marthe Robin. This miracle was first of all the subject of a diocesan investigation, and will be studied by the Roman Congregation for the Causes of Saints with the help of witnesses, documents and scientific expertise.



Beatification

If the commission in charge of this examination recognises the validity of this miracle, the Pope will then be able to decide to declare her “Blessed” on a date of his choosing.

**Press Contact: Ingrid Portier +33 661 108 648 – contact-medias@martherobin.com
<http://www.martherobin.com/site/mentions/presse.htm>**

WHO IS MARTHE ROBIN?

Marthe Robin (1902-1981) is one of the great French spiritual figures of the 20th century. Struck with illness from her youth on, this farmer's daughter received in her house more than 100,000 people. Paralysed in her room for more than 50 years, she has nonetheless, more than thirty years after her death, gained an international influence.



❖ **A peasant girl of the Drôme region**

Born on the 13th March 1902 at Châteauneuf-de-Galaure, a village in the Drôme region, Marthe Robin was a daughter of the soil. From farming stock, she lived by the rhythm of the seasons and the work of the farm, close to nature and animals. Despite fragile health, connected with the typhoid which she contracted at the age of one, she walked some distance to school, to catechism or to undertake farm work, like all the children of her age.

❖ **A simple, joyful and pious childhood**

Marthe received a Christian education. Baptised on the 5th April 1902, she made her first holy communion at the age of ten. She developed an intense personal relationship with God. Full of common sense, she joined a deep spirituality to a realistic attitude to all trials thanks to her rural upbringing. By nature she was playful and quick to enjoy a joke.

*As a little girl,
I loved God
greatly !*

❖ **Struck by sickness from her youth**

As an adolescent, Marthe was struck by encephalitis. She suffered unbearable pains, fainting fits and paralytic episodes without and precise diagnosis being established. The illness developed gradually, one step forwards, two steps back. At the age of 17, her legs became paralysed; at the age of 28 a second attack led to total paralysis of her digestive tract; a third struck her ocular nerves in 1939, at the age of 37. Light gave her great suffering, and she had to live in darkness.



*“Two years ago,
I earnestly desired
to die in order to
see God.[...]”
Now, I sense that
I have a mission to
fulfil. I engage in a
hand-to-hand
struggle with
sickness.”*

❖ **She wanted to give meaning to her life despite her suffering.**

Marthe struggled to regain health. She did needlework in order to buy medicine. She took thermal cures, but in vain. After having hoped for a cure, Marthe experienced discouragement and loneliness. People in the area were taken aback by this unknown illness and stopped coming to see her.

But in 1928, in the very midst of her suffering she underwent an interior change. In the course of a visit from two priests, she had an experience of the infinite love of God for her. This intimate spiritual experience changed her life profoundly.

❖ Given to others till death

Right up to her death in 1981, Marthe would never again leave the darkness of her little room in the farmhouse of "La Plaine." There she received more and more visitors, drawn by her ability to listen and to counsel, and her radiant spiritual influence. In fact Marthe had an intense mystical life. In her flesh and in her soul she experienced an ever greater union with God. In the course of her life she would receive visits from over 100,000 people, and her influence stretched beyond the borders of France and the Catholic Church.

"My adorable Jesus, grant that everyone who comes to me may leave consoled when they weep, uplifted when they are overburdened, joyful for days to come at the recollection of a word, a look, a smile."

TESTIMONY

Louissette: *"I knew Marthe well!"*

"I first met Marthe when I was 21 years old. And I saw her very regularly over several decades, for I became a member of the Foyer de Charité of Châteauneuf-de-Galaure. What impressed me was her humanity. She was very close to each person who came to see her. In fact she united herself to the suffering of the other person and responded to it.

When I had problems, I handed them over to her and she gave me an answer, enabling me to see more clearly how to resolve them, or else I understood that it was something I had to put right in my own heart. One day I said to her, "Marthe, I don't know why I love you so much!" She said to me, "Me too, my dear, I love you very much." I said to her, "But you love everyone equally, like the Lord!" But she said: "The Lord also had his special friends..." She really came down to our level.

Marthe's joy touched me greatly. She was very fond of laughing, and when she sensed we were a bit tense in her presence, she used to say, "I'm going to tell you the last funny story the schoolchildren from St. Bonnet told me – this was the school founded by the Foyer de Charité. She immediately put us at ease. When things are not going so well, I think about Marthe's laughter and joy, and it gives me strength.

Her vocation was to give everything to the Lord. She gave herself to each one and all in a total self-gift to God."

The principal dates of Marthe Robin's life

13 March 1902

Birth in Châteauneuf-de-Galaure [Drôme – France]

1 Dec. 1918

Beginning of her illness

Oct. 1923

Took the cure at Saint-Péray in the Ardèche

1923-1927

Development of the disease

15 Nov. – 4 Dec. 1928

The grace of mystical union

1930 on

Development of Marthe Robin's mystical life

Oct. 1934

Opening of a small parish school by Fr. Faure

10 Feb. 1936

Meeting of Marthe Robin with Fr. Georges Finet

1936

Foundation of the Foyers de Charité

Friday 6 Feb. 1981

Death of Marthe Robin

12 Feb. 1981

Funeral Mass attended by 7000 people.

10 Feb. 1986

Opening of the process of Beatification

MARTHE ROBIN: HER ENORMOUS INFLUENCE

Marthe Robin received and counselled over 100,000 people, including priests, bishops, intellectuals, and founders of communities. She had a profound influence on the Church and the world of her times, right up to the present moment.

❖ A modern vision

In 1932, Marthe became convinced in herself that she was called to create a new work in response to the needs of contemporary society. After beginning with the creation of a school in the village of Châteauneuf in 1934, she founded the first “Foyer de Charité” in 1936 with the help of Fr. Georges Finet, a priest of Lyon.



These Foyers de Charité are a visionary work for our times: a place of prayer and welcome run by single people, couples and priests living in community. More than thirty years later, the Second Vatican Council would stress the dignity and responsibility of all the baptised in the mission of the Church, as well as the universal call to holiness.

for the Church.

After the Second World War, many initiatives sprang up in the French Church as it sought to connect with a world in transition. Marthe followed this movement and encouraged it by receiving, for example, Fr. Epagneul (founder of the rural missionary Brothers), Little Sister Madeleine of Jesus (foundress of the Little Sisters of Charles de Foucauld), or Fr. Talvas (founder of The Nest, to help prostitutes out of their predicament). Marthe was always there to listen and full of good advice.

New movements and communities appeared after Vatican Two. Several of their founders came to meet Marthe Robin, who supported this new springtime in the Church by her prayer. She played a very important role in the birth or development of some of them. That is why she is recognised as an important spiritual figure in the renewal of the Church.

❖ A new inspiration

Communities with links to Marthe Robin

- The Emmanuel
- L'Arche (Jean Vanier)
- The Monastic Fraternities of Jerusalem
- The Beatitudes
- The Community of St. John
- The Little Brothers of Mary, Mother of the Redeemer
- The Little Sisters of Nazareth
- The Missionaries of Our Lady
- The « Fraternité Bethléem-Saint-Benoît »,
- Focolare movement
- (...)

❖ A spiritual figure of the twentieth century

In the course of her life, Marthe Robin received in her room over 100,000 people. Actresses and quite simple people, ministers and lorry drivers, composers, journalists, local farmers, numerous priests and bishops... she received and listened to such different kinds of visitors.

During the Second World War, Marthe began to give advice to several great theologians. Frs. Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, Paul Philippe and André Feuillet came to see this little peasant woman who couldn't even pass her school leaving certificate because of her health problems. They came away conquered by her, going so far as to modify or improve their theological positions.

Marthe Robin also had great friendships with intellectuals of the period such as Paul-Louis Couchoud, a literary figure of great stature, medical doctor and notorious unbeliever up till his conversion, or the philosopher Jean Guilton of the Académie Française.

TESTIMONY

Jean Vanier, founder of l'Arche

Community for disabled people

"When you met Marthe, it was often pitch black. From that room, plunged in darkness, welled up a clear, fresh voice, a kind of brightness. Her voice had the simplicity of a child; she wanted to come across as someone very simple, very ordinary. Marthe made all your preconceived ideas about a very mystical person fall away. What she wanted was a simple, animated and loving encounter. Finally the most important thing was not that much what she said... it was what she was herself: a presence of God, a presence of Jesus. »



MARTHE ROBIN: AN EXTRAORDINARY LIFE IN THE MIDST OF THE ORDINARY

Marthe Robin had intense faith, and experienced numerous mystical phenomena which she was always very reticent about, but which contributed to her influence.

❖ An intense mystical life



At the beginning of her sickness, Marthe Robin had a vision of Our Lady which supported and comforted her. In 1928, it was an apparition of Christ which would shake up her life. She then took the decision to “*hand herself over completely to God*” and to “*offer her sufferings*” in union with him by prayer and love. Her spirituality became more and more centred on the passion of Christ and the Eucharist, with a great closeness to Our Lady. She embarked on a veritable spiritual battle with the forces of evil.

From the 1930s onwards, every Friday Marthe Robin relived the Passion of Christ, first of all spiritually, later in her flesh. In fact she received the stigmata, that is, the wounds reproducing those of Jesus Christ on the Cross.

❖ The Eucharist her only food

“I want to cry out to those who ask me if I eat, that I eat more than them, for I am fed by the Eucharist of the blood and flesh of Jesus. I would like to tell them that it is they who arrest and block the effects of this food in themselves.”

The progressive paralysis of her digestive tract prevented Marthe from eating and drinking. However, she did not die. Each week, the only food she could swallow was the host she received. Holy Communion became her sole food. For Catholics, the “Body of Christ” received in Communion gives life to the soul and even affects the life of the body. Marthe Robin experienced the power of the sacrament of the Eucharist in a very special way.

❖ Inspired words

Many witnesses to conversations with Marthe demonstrate her unique gift of Counsel, her exceptional memory, and her immense compassion. People entrusted many prayer intentions to her as well. The power of her intercession is obvious: even some desperate situations have been resolved and set right after she prayed.

Her numerous reflections on the future of the Church or of France have sometimes been taken as prophecies, but she always rejected this term, preferring a more spiritual vision of the future which always remains in God’s hands.

“As regards the future, you know people attribute many ideas to me about the future. I know nothing, only one thing: the future is Jesus.”

FACTFILE : Stigmatists in the Church

Marthe Robin is not the first person in the Catholic Church to have received the stigmata. Before her, several great men and women of holiness have also experienced this mystery of union with Christ.

St. Francis was the first to receive the stigmata, in 1224.

In the centuries following the death of Francis (1226), there are records of numerous stigmatists, almost always women, of whom the most famous is St. Catherine of Siena (1347-1380). In the twentieth century, the most remarkable figure is undoubtedly Padre Pio (1887-1968); this Italian priest bore the wounds of Christ for more than fifty years. Canonised in 2002, this charismatic saint is a living image of Jesus crucified.



What is a Saint?

Through their baptism in the Holy Spirit, all Christians are called to become saints. However the Catholic Church singles out some deceased Christians whom it means to offer to the faithful as models of life and as intercessors before God, in order to sustain their hope. By a decision of the Pope, she solemnly declares these men and women to be *blessed* by beatification, then through a further process, *saints* by canonisation.

What makes a saint is not extraordinary deeds, nor a great reputation for goodness, nor yet working of miracles, but “the perfection of charity in building others up”, the perfection of love, over a period of time, in conformity to the will of God by the commitment of one’s life in all its aspects.

WHAT IS THE MESSAGE OF MARTHE ROBIN?

❖ A witness of hope



The life of Marthe is a hymn of joy, precisely in the midst of a life full of trials and sufferings. Those who came to see her were often struck by the joy and serenity that they found in her. Her peals of spontaneous laughter sometimes filled her little room. When lived in God and offered in love, suffering is not necessarily a blockage. Marthe's life united the cross and the joy. By placing her suffering in that of Christ, Marthe gave it meaning and transfigured it.

❖ Witness of faith

For Marthe, baptism is, in the life of every Christian, the beginning of what she called "intimate life with God." This sacrament brings with it everything that is necessary for a rich and intense Christian life, with the knowledge of the Faith and with prayer. This life is not reserved for a special category of Christians; it is available to all. Baptism is a springboard to holiness and intimacy with God.

"Our faith must be simple and transparent, pious and intelligent. We must study and reflect if we are to develop convictions and firm ideas, if we are to take the trouble to get to the bottom of ourselves and our beliefs."

Marthe had a very close, concrete and affectionate personal relationship with Our Lady, who often showed herself to her. The motherhood of Our Lady in respect of each one is a reflection of the love of God the Father.

❖ Witness of love

At the heart of Marthe Robin's life there is this passion for the love of God, this ardent desire to make him known as he truly is. Marthe knows herself to be deeply loved by God. She believes it, in spite of everything, in spite of the development of her illness: He will never abandon her. That is the basis of her joy.

Marthe has a very positive vision of the human being. She knew how much we are worth in God's eyes: every person is a child of God, and Jesus has shed his blood for each one. Her own experience and the way she welcomed those who came to see her testify to the grandeur and the dignity of each human being, whatever their life consists of, whatever their weaknesses and limitations. This love and respect for every human being, because she knows them all to be loved by God, was apparent in her way of welcoming those who came to her.

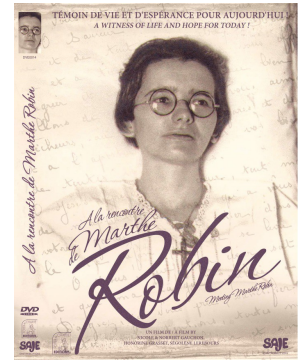
"I would like to be everywhere at once to tell the world over and over again how good is the good God, how much he loves us, and shows his tenderness and compassion to us all."

BOOKS AND RESOURCES

- ❖ **Official website of Marthe Robin:** www.martherobin.com
- ❖ **Website of the Foyers de Charité:** www.foyer-de-charite.com
- ❖ **Movie about Marthe Robin:**

Meeting Marthe Robin (DVD)

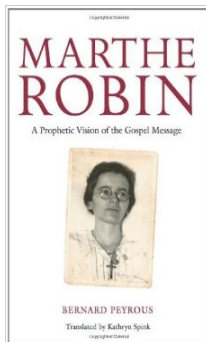
Marthe Robin, one of the greatest spiritual figures of the twentieth century, is a witness of life for today! Discover her human and spiritual journey thanks to explanations from the Postulator of her Cause for Beatification and from specialists in her writings. Let yourself be touched by the living witness of men and women for whom Marthe Robin has become a friend, an elder sister, an intercessor in heaven. Meeting Marthe means welcoming her, still present and active today... "I have only one desire, a great one, a huge one... to love God and make God loved!" As a missionary of Love, Marthe opens up a way of hope to each person.



- ❖ **Books on Marthe Robin:**

Marthe Robin, a Prophetic Vision of the Gospel Message, by Bernard Peyrou,

English translation published by Veritas, 2010
With the help of Marie-Therese Gille.



The appearance in May 2006 of the Life of Marthe Robin by Fr. Bernard Peyrou, marked a step forward in awareness of one of the most fascinating French spiritual figures of the twentieth century.

This exhaustive biography is the result of several years work and meticulous research by the author, a priest and the postulator of her cause for beatification, helped by Marie-Therese Gille, a member of the Foyers de Charite. It is based on hundreds of collected testimonies and access to unpublished letters and writings of Marthe. Robin.

Thank you Marthe!

Éditions Foyer de Charité, 2011.

This is the heartfelt cry we hear from innumerable witnesses coming to our notice at Chateauneuf since 1981. A friend to others while on earth, Marthe is even more so in heaven. On the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of her death, this selection of some of the graces and favours attributed to her demonstrates the affection of those who have been aware of her action in their lives.