

the Island of Cuba, by then in the middle of its independence war.

Mother Isabel died in Habana, on 17th of January 1899. She was 62 years old and she had founded the Congregation 22 years ago. A short time for a recent Congregation, but really intense. Her faithfulness and docility to the Holy Spirit and her generous devotion had bore.

In 1961 because of the Cuban revolution by Fidel Castro, the sisters were forced to abandon the educative pastoral field in the Island and got authorization to take with them the venerable mortal remains of Mother Isabel. From then on, they rested in the Chapel of Nuestra Señora del Carmen School in Villaverde Alto, Madrid.

In the sixties, the process of beatification was opened. Coinciding with the first century of her death, in 26th of March 1999, the heroism of her virtues was recognized and she was declared Venerable by Pope John Paul II. Now, one miracle, so recognized by the ecclesiastical authority is lacking for her beatification.

Nowadays, the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus stands still, founded by Venerable Mother Isabel Larrañaga and her Mission is extended in different countries: Spain, Portugal, Chile, Angola, Puerto Rico, Venezuela, Peru, Mozambique, according to the desire of our Founder: *“Our vocation is giving life in whichever part of the world, where there is need of service of God and help to the souls, dedicating ourselves to Christian teaching”*. The Congregation has a wide apostolic work in the Church: educative mission, Evangelization, in the schools, missions, student housings, boarding schools, work in parishes, spiritual assistance to the sick, social work and human promotion, etc.

**That is the life and work of this great woman. Her example continues to be a challenge to the “Corazonista” family. Her work is a living presence of God becoming tenderness, compromise, gesture, Word, LIFE.**



## PRAYER

*Oh God, you granted your servant Isabel Larrañaga, the grace of living intensely united to the Heart of your Son, through a constant prayer, and a particular charity to all. We ask you that, encouraged by her role model, we remain in your love forever and serve our brothers and sisters, with simplicity and happiness. Grant us through her intercession the graces and favors that we plead for. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

*Sacred Heart of Jesus,  
I trust in you.*



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# Venerable Mother Isabel Larrañaga

*Founder of the Congregation  
of Sisters of Charity of  
the Sacred Heart of Jesus*

**ISABEL LARRAÑAGA is one of the women who enlightened with her sanctity the Spanish society of the 19th century. Her life and works left marks on History.**

Isabel de Larrañaga Ramírez was born on 19th of November 1836, in the city of Manila, the Philippines, where her family lived at that time.

Her parents were: Mr. Juan Andrés M<sup>a</sup> de Larrañaga Lasarte, from Urnieta (Guipúzcoa), Spanish army man, and Mrs. Isabel Ramírez Patiño, from Lima (Peru). In 1824 they married in Huancayo. They lived in Spain for some years; and in 1830, Mr. Juan Andrés was sent to the Philippines. God blessed them with several children. Isabel was the youngest. By the end of the year 1838, her father died.

Mrs. Isabel went back to Spain with her children. Isabelita spent her childhood, adolescence and youth between Madrid and Lima. Some of her brothers and sisters died. Adrian and Isabel were the only ones who became adults. Mrs. Isabel Ramírez, gave them all her love and lived devoted to their careful formation especially to Isabelita's, her "baby", as she always called her. She didn't look on the cost of giving her a broad, specific religious and cultural education: Music, painting, languages (French, English, Italian).

Isabelita practiced as a teacher, mostly in Lima. She used to combine her duties at school with her devotion to charity deeds and apostolate: catechism to the children and the young, visiting the sick in hospitals to help them have a peaceful death. Her favorite ones were the poorest.

Ever since her youth, she felt in her soul the religious calling, but she always found in her

mother a strong opposition, although she was a good Christian, she never accepted the idea of separating from her beloved daughter. With the intention of taking her out of her vocational targets, Mrs. Isabel decided to take her to a touristic journey to different places: Cuba, Roma, Spain... At the end, they established in Madrid.

In the capital city of Spain, she resumes her apostolic work: Catechism, giving classes to exposed children, visiting hospitals and offering spiritual attention to the sick. She seeks the will of God concerning about her. Her mother outlines marriage plans, that Isabelita spoils patiently. She wants her heart to belong only to God.

Time goes by and Isabel continues with her constant search of which is the will of God upon her. "Lord, what do you want from me?...“ She searches for support and advice. God has his time for each person.

### Vocation of the Founder

After a very hard trial; and now in her maturity (being 40), the way seems to be opening. She practices spiritual exercises annually, and she knows the spiritual benefit; that this practice offers to a person, and the source of renovation it means for the society. Thus, on 2nd of February 1877, together with three colleagues, she was consecrated to the Lord and opened a house for spiritual retreats in Madrid. At first, they formed an Association or a Pious Union of ladies, Slaves of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, devoting themselves to offer the most adequate conditions for women who wanted to take Spiritual Exercises. Later on, she will orient her work specially to education.

Education is one of the most urgent needs of Spain in the 19th century, mainly in the rural areas and outskirts of the big cities. With a generous devotion and great love to the children and the young, she will start to open schools and boarding schools where she and her religious sisters can be mostly needed: Leganés, Griñón. Torrijos, Madrid, Fuensalida, Villaverde, Cuba. Her love for God and her brothers and sisters has no limits.

What she had started in 1877 as a pious union, consolidated as a Congregation in 1883, with the diocesan approval of the Constitutions and the Congregation, through Archbishop Mons. Juan Ignacio Moreno. From then on, the Congregation continued its way, with a new and beautiful name: "Sisters of Charity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus," as it's distinguished nowadays.

Mother Isabel had to suffer a lot of contradictions, which are a trace of God in her work. She was abandoned by her first colleagues and some sisters afterwards.

New vocations started joining her. The Mission is extending. Mother Isabel multitasking here and there, with her daughters, in attention to the poorest: lacking material goods, but also lack of affection and culture. Her great love is to the children, their comprehensive education, and taking the message of love of the Heart of Jesus to them. She wants her daughters to exercise with children the service of authentic Christian mothers.

The base of her pedagogy is on prevention, with a clear line: To prevent and to love, principles always valid in education. She wants sisters who are educators, to know how to gain the love and respect from the students, through her example of life. To know how to correct moved by a desire of helping, in such a way that the students will feel loved by their teachers. "Harshness will never fill with love to virtue". Hers was always an individual pedagogy and a pedagogy from the heart.

Regardless of her delicate health, she lived fully devoted to others and loved heroically, as she demonstrated in the last years of her life, in