

JOAN SCOPELLI (14284491)  
Blessed

Joan was born at Reggio Emilia in 1428; her parents were Simon and Catherine. We know little of her early years: she had two sisters, whom she helped to get married, and a brother. Joan herself obtained the permission of her parents to become a Carmelite mantellate, a semi-religious who lived at home. After her parents had died, she joined a lady of modest means, but of great piety, who was thinking of building a monastery. Joan took on the task of looking for a suitable place, when a widow offered herself, two daughters, and her home. They lived together from 1480 until 1484; meanwhile Joan was looking for another place that could serve as a monastery. Two other young girls had already joined them, one in 1458 and the other in 1476. Joan set her eyes on the church of St. Bernard, which belonged to the Humiliati friars; with the support of the bishop, Philip Zoboli, she obtained it from the friars' general on his way through Reggio. The beginnings of the new monastery date from 1485, with the name changed from that of St. Bernard to that of St. Mary of the People (afterwards called of the White Sisters). The inevitable financial difficulties at the beginning were surmounted through the help of a certain Christopher Zoboli. Under Joan's direction more than twenty religious made up the new community, which was entrusted to the care of the Mantuan Congregation of Carmelites and for which the Carmelites provided a confessor in 1487.

God gifted Joan with extraordinary charisms. She herself fostered a deep Marian piety (she venerated the Blessed Virgin with a special «devotion» of her own, called the Tunic of Our Lady /mainly a frequent repetition of «Hail Marys»/) and was animated by an intense spirit of penance. She died on July 9, 1491; her cult began the following year, with the exhumation of her body. In 1500 a public judgment was passed on her life, her virtues and her miracles. During the years 1767-70 the diocesan process for the recognition of cult was held, which met with the approval of Pope Clement XIV on Aug. 24, 1771. After the suppression of the monastery and of the church of the Carmelite nuns in 1797, the body of the blessed was transferred to the cathedral in the year 1803. Her optional memorial is celebrated on July 9.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Abundant biographical material from the archives is found in Saggi, *La Congregazione Mantovana dei Carmelitani sino alla morte del B. Battista Spagnoli (1516)*, Rome 1954, pp. 216-18. V. also *Acta SS. Iulii II* Venice 1747, pp. 728-35; *Vies des Saints*, VII, p. 208.

Louis Saggi