

This week we go to a monastery in Agreda, Spain - the Poor Clares of the Immaculate Conception. The original monastery of the first community was said to be founded in the house of the parents of the Venerable Sister Marie of Jesus, on January 13, 1619, by Catalina Arana the Mother of Sister Ma de Jesus, her sister Jerónima and herself, together with three religious ones who came from the San Luis' Convent of Burgos. The claim to fame for this convent was one of the sisters - Venerable Mary of Agreda, born in 1602. At the age of seventeen, she entered the convent and became abbess at the age of 25. She supposedly had experienced many mystical experiences that most people don't, like visions and conversations with Angels, Our Lady, and Our Lord. Her innermost thirst to bring many to the faith is said to have resulted in being given the gift of bilocation, where testimonies have been shared by the Jumano Indians and other Indian tribes of East Texas, New Mexico, and Western Arizona - of a woman in blue, who had taught many of the Native Americans the faith before the arrival of missionaries - all the while remaining in Spain during these occurrences.

These days, Mother Mary Agreda is most known for the book, *The Mystical City of God*, which is roughly 2600 pages long. The book contains enlightenments and conversations with the Blessed Virgin Mary of Her earthly life here on earth that scripture does not normally cover: from Her Immaculate Conception, to Her marriage with St. Joseph, birth of the Christ Child, His Passion - Death - Resurrection, to Her Assumption & Coronation. Out of humility and feeling inadequate for the task, Mother Mary Agreda insistently refused to write the book, but was supposedly insisted by some from up above to do it out of obedience anyway, in which she was promised to receive the grace she needed to write the book with the accuracy that God had desired. The book was considered controversial at the time of writing and still is today, in regards to different examples like Our Lady referring to Herself to Venerable Mary Agreda as the Immaculate Conception (...over 200 years before it became Dogma), have brought many to question the book. Other controversial titles that appeared in her book like "Co-Redemptrix" & "Mediatrix" still have many theologians divided. Lastly, the book being viewed by some as excessive in its devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Yet, a number of popes have intervened and declared that nothing written in the book goes against sacred scripture or Church teaching, so the faithful are permitted to read it, if desired. Twice Venerable Agreda was ordered to write the manuscript: the first copy was ordered to be burned by one spiritual director, the second copy was completed by 1655 and as is the copy used today. Mother Mary of Agreda died on Pentecost morning, May 24, 1665, at 9:00 am, the same time the Holy Spirit was believed to descend upon the Apostles. Many miracles have occurred at her grave and through her intercession, so eight years later she was declared Venerable by Pope Clement X. Her body has remained incorrupt for over four hundred years and has not deteriorated. Her casket was first opened in 1909, then again in 1989, where she was found to be still in the same condition. Her body may be viewed in the Church of the Conceptionists in Agreda, Spain. Many believe that her body has remained unchanged since death as a proof that both her catechesis here in America and manuscript of *The Mystical City of God* are true; others do not, so you can be the judge.

