**She died with a smile on her face**

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The Story of Sister Cecilia Maria of the holy Face, who passed away June 23, 2016, and died with a beautiful, serene smile on her face is. In this life story pictures/images went viral all-over social media. So innocent and angelic was her face that all social media outlets and Catholic media outlets posted the story.

Sister Cecilia Maria of the Monastery of saints Teresa and Joseph in Santa Fe, Argentina, showed human beings what it’s like to lovingly go to meet the Lord, with joy filled anticipation, because little by little she had found her way to Him, the way of transfiguration through her suffering, and this completed her task of living and dying in the Lord.

As I read and saw the news of this beautiful young Carmelite nun and her life and death, and her really exquisite expression, I was reminded of St Therese Lisiuex and other past saints whose stories revealed an anticipation and longing to go and meet their eternal Spouse. It also made it difficult for me to write about because many years ago my precious best friend (Caterina) also died young and from cancer and I remember looking at her beautiful face in the coffin and seeing the serene look. No pain or anguish. She had completed her journey. I remember thinking at that time about Ps. 56:13 *for you have delivered my soul from death and prevented my feet from falling.* Or even from Ps 116:8 *return to your rest O my soul, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you.*  These same thoughts I experienced as I read about Sister Cecilia and her accepted sufferings.

Sister Cecilia Maria, Carmelite OCD, died very young (43 years old) and died from a particularly painful cancer, first of the tongue which later metastasized in the lungs and she finally passed away from lung cancer.

Sister Cecilia Maria in her early life became a qualified nurse and was able to use these skills to take care of sick till the time of their passing away. Her mother had encouraged her to learn a trade before she fully considered Carmel. It’s believed that Cecilia Maria first heard a whisper from the Lord at the Carmelite Monastery at Avila and the call, in time, became stronger.

She made her first vows in her twenties and her final vows in 2003. Sister Cecilia Maria was also known for playing the violin beautifully, and as a child loved horse riding. But above all she was known for her beautiful smile which appears to have never have left her face. Even during the painful treatments for her cancer and her last days of life she bore the pain and suffering joyfully whilst offering these sufferings to her Lord whom she understood she would soon meet.

Before she passed away Sister Cecilia wrote specific wishes and instructions for her funeral “I was thinking how I would like my funeral to be. First some intense prayer and then a great celebration for everyone. Don’t forget to pray but don’t forget to celebrate either” she said.

Following her death, her order (Carmelites of St Fe, Argentina) announced her death thus “Just two lines to let you know that our dearly beloved sister gently fell asleep in the Lord after such a painful illness, always borne with joy and her surrender to her Divine spouse. We send you all our affection, grateful for your support and prayer during this time, so painful yet so wonderful at the same time. We believe she flew directly to heaven but we also ask you to not cease commending her to your prayers so from heaven she may repay you. A big hug from her sisters in Santa Fe.”

At her death she died with her ever-beautiful smile on her face, and perhaps her smile was because like her name (Sister Cecilia Maria of the Holy Face) she at last saw the Holy Face of her beloved just as her name sake.

Perhaps what we can read most from the death of this beautiful young saint is first that sainthood is not a thing of the past. We have saints walking in our midst, yet unknowing, because they remain silent and we think and believe that saints have existed in the Church in all other eras but not our own and think or even believe that saints live, love, pray and are different than the rest of us. They walk among us (like their spouse) but remain silent (like their spouse) until they go away. In Sr Cecilia, she left joyfully and left her joy and smile as a memory. In our day of great suffering, we have many saints in our midst but sadly we don’t hear about them. Their work is in silence.

In the manner of her living and dying in Sr Cecilia Maria we can visibly see the work of living and dying in the Lord and see in the manner of her dying a model of great beauty and joyful expectation unlike anguish and fear of those who have not known their true spouse.

It is believed that her cause for beatification is being considered.