

Brief life sketch

Blessed Sister Zdenka (Cecilia) Schelingová of the Congregation of Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross, was born on 24 December 1916 in Krivá, Orava, Slovakia. From 1922 - 1930 she did her basic schooling there. On 6 July 1931 she joined as a candidate, and on 28 January she entered the novitiate in Podunajské Biskupice. On this occasion Cecilia was given her religious name, Sister Zdenka. On 30 January 1937 she took her first vows, and on 28 January 1943 she made her final profession.

The young sister then worked at first as nurse in Humenné, then in the Government hospital at Bratislava as a Lab Technician and later as an assistant in the X-Ray Department, until her arrest on 29 February 1952.

In 1948 the Communists assumed political power in Czechoslovakia. With this, the Church found itself in an increasingly difficult situation. Sister Zdenka felt herself obligated to stand up for the cause of the Church. Twice she assisted in an undercover operation to liberate imprisoned Catholic priests whose lives were in danger. The first attempt was successful, while the second was set up by the secret police of the state as a trap; those involved fell into it unsuspectingly.

Sr. Zdenka was arrested and jailed in the Palace of Justice at Bratislava, where she was interrogated and tortured. On 17 June 1952 she was sentenced for alleged high treason: 12 years imprisonment, and in addition 10 years loss of all her rights as a citizen.

During her detention pending trial in Bratislava, and later in the prisons of Rimavská, Sobota, Pardubice, Brno and Praha, she suffered severely and patiently.

On 16 April 1955 she was released from prison, sick and broken. On 31 July 1955 she died in the hospital at Trnava in the 39th year of her life, as a consequence of the maltreatment she suffered during her incarceration.

On 16 October 1979 her remains, together with those of ten more sisters, were exhumed and transferred to a community grave of the Holy Cross Sisters at Podunajské Biskupice.

On 14 September 2003 Pope John Paul II declared her "Blessed" during a solemn Beatification Rite in Bratislava.

First Day

**The good intention – source of strength
for the apostolate**

“The Lord is with me as my helper; I can look in triumph on my enemies (Ps118:7)

*“As long as you remain in me and I in you, you bear much fruit; but apart from me you can do nothing.”
(Jn. 15: 5)*

Thoughts from the notes of blessed Sister Zdenka:

“In the morning I resolve to forget myself all day long, and to think more of others. This thought is a source of strength for me. It is not the external activities that make my apostolate effective, but the measure of holiness that I strive to attain.”

“I am seeking sincerely nothing else but what I can give to God; thus, I want to love him more and more. My gifts to him would have little value if he could not find my own self in the gifts.”

“With all my soul I will strive for an attitude that has Jesus alone as the object of love.

I do not want to conquer others for God, unless he has first fully conquered me. I wish to be always united with him, for all my interest is in living for him alone.”

Let us pray:

Lord Jesus, you have given Sr. Zdenka the grace to live for others rather than for herself. She knew she could not serve others effectively, unless you had first fully penetrated her life. By her intercession, give us the grace to live in humble dependence on your grace, and to bear all the difficulties of life in union with you and in the strength of your grace. You who live and reign forever. Amen.

Glory be to the Father ...

Blessed Sister Zdenka, pray for us!

Second Day

The sacrifice of daily duty

“We know that by turning everything to their good, God cooperates with all those who love him.”

(Rom. 8: 28a)

“Work for your salvation in fear and trembling! It is God who, for his own loving purpose, puts both the will and the action into you.” (Phil, 2:12b-13)

Thoughts from the notes of blessed Sr. Zdenka:

My sacrifice, my holy Mass, begins in daily life. From the altar of the Lord I go to the altar of my work. I must be able to continue the sacrifice of the altar in every situation. Joyfully and without fear I fulfill my duties for God, the joy of my youth. What a joy to sing ‘Gloria’, to proclaim Christ, more with my example than with my words. It is Christ whom we must proclaim through our lives, to him we offer the sacrifice of our own will.”
“I fill every hour of my life with the readiness to accept God’s action and his graces.

The first sacrifice on the altar was bloody and painful.

My sacrifice, too, will cost me much, but I want to be generous. I will not do anything without Jesus in my heart, and everything only through him.”

Let us pray:

Jesus, eternal High Priest, Sr. Zdenka united her daily life with your sacrifice and was eager to grow constantly in the spirit of sacrifice. Therefore you accepted her longing to offer herself for the release of priests.

Help us, at her intercession, to give witness to our faith and to the church, to support the sacramental activity of priests through our prayer and sacrifice, for yours is the power and the glory forever. Amen.

Glory be to the Father ...

Blessed Sister Zdenka, pray for us!

Third Day

Desire for recognition, confidence and love

“Remain in my love.” (Jn:15, 9)

“I have come to cast fire upon the earth, and how I wish it were blazing already.” (Lk. 12: 49)

From the notes of blessed Sister Zdenka:

“We come to know Jesus in the measure in which we desire to belong to him.”

“Perfection proceeds from love, and goes hand in hand with giving up all that is transitory.”

“Living in love means casting off all fear as well as the memory of sin. I fail to understand those who are afraid of so tender a friend. Those who love God have neither gloom nor turmoil within themselves. God knows my weakness, of what then shall I be afraid? My sins are immediately destroyed, if I but cast them trustfully into the fire of his love.”

“I know how one can become happy even if one feels miserable, and how one can benefit from one’s need. I will go even further in my security. In addition to being pardoned, I even expect to be rewarded by God.”

“Should the fire of my love ever grow dim and be in danger of dying, I will throw in some blades of straw and I am sure the flame will flare up again. Jesus can do anything. Trust in him works wonders.”

Let us pray:

God of Mercy, you have formed the heart of Sister Zdenka to live a life of love and complete trust. She knew how to be happy in the awareness of her poverty. Help us, at her intercession, that our sins and weaknesses may never dishearten us. Strengthen our trust in your goodness and mercy, for you are the God of Mercy forever.

Amen.

Glory be to the Father ...

Blessed Sister Zdenka, pray for us!

Fourth Day

Devotion to the Eucharist

"I am the living bread that has come down from heaven. Anyone who eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is my flesh for the life of the world." (Jn.6:51)

"For my flesh is real food, and my blood is real drink."
(Jn. 6: 55)

Thoughts from the notes of Sr. Zdenka:

"In the Sacred Host, Jesus is present in his divine poverty, for there he hides not only his divinity, but also his humanity. In the Sacred Host the Word is silent. See here the climax of self-emptying: Christ; for the measure of divine gifts is humility. God gives himself in unbroken communion to the soul that does his will."

"Jesus, now I can see how you give yourself entirely in the Sacred Host. And I also know how humbly you place yourself into the hands of your priests. You make no difference between those who love you, and those who celebrate the holy sacrifice unworthily."

“I beg of you, let my life be entirely like yours in the Blessed Sacrament. For there you emptied yourself completely, and even now, in a mysterious way, you obey the words of the priest.”

“Sacred Heart of Jesus, your precious Blood is the life of my soul. May it no longer be I who live, but you yourself living in me.”

Let us pray:

Jesus, present in the holy Eucharist, you have drawn Sr. Zdenka's heart to your heart. Give us, at her intercession, a living faith in your sacramental presence in the Eucharist, and a sense of respect for those who administer your mysteries. For you are the God who deserves all love, thanksgiving and honor for all eternity. Amen.

Glory be to the Father ...

Blessed Sister Zdenka, pray for us!

Fifth Day

Surrender in suffering

“You have been given the privilege not only of believing in Christ, but of suffering for him as well.”

(Phil. 1:29)

“There is nothing I cannot master with the help of the One who gives me strength.” (Phil.4: 13)

Thoughts from the notes of blessed Sister Zdenka:

“In suffering our senses are opened to the will of God.”

“Suffering in the state of grace is the starting point of great deeds. For this reason I will prostrate myself with all my shortcomings before the door of the divine majesty, through which God is pouring out his graces. In this humble state I will love him dearly and live for him alone.”

“Every person has to open the shackles of suffering, for as long as we remain tied to ourselves we are unable to move. Once we have let go of everything, there will be no shackles any more. The one who loves does not suffer any longer.

Most likely, however, we will suffer as long as we live; yet our sufferings will diminish as our love of God increases.”

“Absolutely nothing, not even the purest love for the most gifted of all God’s creatures, can replace the love of God.”

“Silent and hidden suffering! Silence is the atmosphere that surrounds pain – there was silence on Calvary. When we complain, when we seek relief and consolation, we lose what makes suffering most valuable.”

Let us pray:

Merciful Jesus, Sister Zdenka did not lose the inner security of your presence in the midst of pain. For that reason she was able to bear human torture heroically. Help us, at her intercession, to bear the sufferings and burdens of life with loving surrender, and in the hope of meeting you in glory.

You who live and reign forever and ever. Amen.

Glory be to the Father ...

Blessed Sister Zdenka, pray for us!

Sixth Day

Love of Mary

"I am the handmaid of the Lord; let, what you have said, be done to me." (Lk. 1: 38)

"See, your Mother! And from that moment the disciple made a place for her in his home."

(Jn.19: 27)

Thoughts from the notes of blessed Sister Zdenka:

"After the example of Mary you are to be a daily and uninterrupted FIAT, so as to renew and to carry in your heart the incarnation of God's Son."

"A person who lives by God has received and brought forth his Word in faith, and enlivens it through good works. Our great task in life is to let God be formed in us and become visible through us. How valuable is a person who lives in the spirit of faith! Such an attitude sanctifies imperfect works, too. Life takes on a new meaning if it becomes a total Yes of loving surrender to God. Such a Yes binds us fully to God."

“Great simplicity is more deeply impressive and convincing than something that is artificial and affected.”

“Mary, Mother of fair love, teach me to love Jesus.”

Let us pray:

Lord Jesus, Sister Zdenka was wholly convinced by your Mother’s sacrificial attitude. For this reason she asked you sincerely to support her efforts to follow your Mother in the unconditional fulfillment of your will.

Give us, at Sr.Zdenka’s intercession, a deep love and trust in your holy Mother, for she is a reliable way to you, who live and reign forever and ever. Amen.

Glory be to the Father ...

Blessed Sister Zdenka, pray for us!

Seventh Day

The celebration of Sunday

“Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy.”

(Ex. 20:8)

“Those who keep the Sabbath unprofaned and remain faithful to my covenant, I will bring to my holy mountain; I will give them joy in my house of prayer.”

(Is, 56: 6-7)

Thoughts from the notes of blessed Sister Zdenka:

“The world claims its rights – how much more has God the right do so. All our striving and our efforts are to be God-oriented. To him I will pray, to him I express my trust. For him alone I long. He is my eternal light and my love, for ever new.”

“Sunday offers me the opportunity to bring the cares and troubles and the humdrum of the past week before God. I can lay my head into his hand and receive a wealth of graces and blessings. Sunday is to be totally dedicated to God, with all my heart, will and thoughts.”

**“The people I encounter must be able to sense:
Here is God!”**

**Dear God, do not allow my heart to turn to worldly
things. Lead me ever higher, towards the sun, into
ever brighter light.”**

Let us pray:

Heavenly Father, blessed Sr. Zdenka accepted and experienced Sunday as a grace and a blessing, as a gift to strengthen her life of faith.

Help and protect us Lord, that we may not get trapped in the mentality of our time. Give us the strength to protect Sunday as a holy day. May those who get in touch with our families and with our communities feel: Here is God.

For this grace we ask through Christ, our Lord.
Amen.

Glory be to the Father ...

Blessed Sister Zdenka, pray for us!

Eight Day

Joy in the Lord

"Be always happy in the Lord!" (Phil.4: 4)

"The joy of the Lord is our strength!" (Neh. 8: 10)

Thoughts from the notes of blessed Sister Zdenka:

"Smile! Pluck the flowers of pain with a smile, share your words with a smile. Help others with a smile, accept injustice with a smile, and bear what is untrue about you with a smile! Spread a smile over everything that hurts you; go about with a smile on your lips even when you are sad.

Go to Golgotha with a smile; there you will find him who knew about every lie, malice, falsehood and human error long before you ever got to now about it. He lets you walk in his footsteps.

How ungrateful you would be if you were not to meet everything with a smile."

Let us pray:

God of love, Sister Zdenka loved people and was ever ready to help. She forgave those who hurt her, for she found her joy in you.

Enable us, Lord, at her intercession, to rise above the humiliations and adversities of life. This we ask of you, who are our joy and our hope for all eternity.

Amen.

Glory be to the Father ...

Blessed Sister Zdenka, pray for us!

Ninth Day

Readiness for sacrifice

“Gather before me my faithful ones, who made a covenant with me by sacrifice.” (Ps. 50: 5)

“There is no greater love than this, to give one’s life for one’s friends.” (Jn. 15: 13)

Thoughts from the notes of blessed Sister Zdenka:

“To love the sacrificial wood of the cross, I must acquire the habit of doing everything joyfully, to make thousands of little sacrifices every day, to learn to die daily in my heart, to let it bleed drop by drop in the midst of daily incidents, also under the burden of adversities, sufferings and sacrifices of every kind.

I wish to place myself on the cross, simply and bravely, forgetting myself.”

“I am aware that I am slowly shedding my blood for him, whom I love. Yes, I will always repeat the sacrifice of Christ for someone, first of all for those who wander through life on hidden ways of darkness.

For them I have to stand even more firmly in my place.”

“To console Jesus for the indifference of this world, for the ingratitude of people – this shall be my daily task. I want to do everything for him alone. I give him my smile, too, for only when I am offering him everything without reserve can I truly say that I love him.”

Let us pray:

Lord Jesus, Sr. Zdenka's heart was full of love and of readiness to offer herself for the good of others. She united herself with your sacrifice. Fill us, at her intercession, with the spirit of penance and sacrificial love for others: this we ask of you, who are the source of our peace and of our joy for all eternity. Amen.

Glory be to the Father ...

Blessed Sister Zdenka, pray for us!