

Sofia Cavalletti

AUGUST 21, 1917-AUGUST 23, 2011

"I would like to remind those who attend my funeral that a funeral is a celebration of the resurrection, a profession of faith in life, the Life force, in its being stronger than death. The Christian faith—it could be said—is an obstinate faith; each time it is confronted by death, it proclaims that death does not have the last word. And this is what we believe, what we affirm, and what we want to announce to the world, because we know that there has already been a first victory of life over death in the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

Sofia Cavalletti

Rome, March 14, 1993

He is Risen! Alleluia!

"At midnight the cry rang out: 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!'"
Matthew 25:6 NIRV

Just after midnight, on August 23, 2011, our beloved co-foundress, Sofia Cavalletti, did just that. She went out of this life to meet Him in the Risen Life she had so faithfully announced to children with joy for over fifty years. Her lifelong friend Augusta would say that she went peacefully in her sleep, like a candle that was spent. The Light of Christ in Sofia Cavalletti illuminated the relationship of God with the child for many around the world. This Light will continue to shine for and in those of us who have been blessed to work in the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, this work she began with Gianna Gobbi.

This addition to CGSUSA News is offered as a small remembrance of Sofia. It contains news from our office as well as news from Rome regarding the celebration of her life. We, in collaboration with our publisher, Liturgy Training Publications, are preparing a special Memorial Journal of key articles Sofia has written over the years about Catechesis of the Good Shepherd. It will be available for our members in the Spring as we celebrate the Resurrection of Christ.

There are useful resources available for prayer and further information about Sofia's life and work on our website: http://www.cgsusa.org/about/in_memory_of_sofia_cavalletti.aspx. There is also a memorial video for viewing on YouTube at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nIK-wttlZJ8>.

May we continue to celebrate the Risen Light of our Good Shepherd in Sofia, in the children and in each of us. Together, may we continue to affirm and announce to the world the joy of the Resurrection.

A Letter from Agostino Cardinal Vallini



"It has come to my attention that this afternoon you will be presiding at the Holy Mass for the repose of the soul of Professor Sofia Cavalletti, marking the 30 days since her return to the House of the Father.

On this occasion I wish to unite my prayers to the prayers of all who will gather at the Church of San Giovanni dei Fiorentini, once again entrusting to Jesus the Good Shepherd the blessed soul of this sister of ours who with great generosity has spent herself so that children from the earliest age might discover the beauty and the truth of the Christian faith.

The experience of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd which she promoted and enlivened for many years and which has borne many good fruits in the Christian community, is a testimony to the potential catechesis has of "cutting to the heart" of the human person (Acts 2:37) and causing it to burn with love.

In helping children to know Jesus the Good Shepherd, Sofia Cavalletti has allowed many men and women to discover the infinite love of God who creates, accompanies us even through the dark valley, and leads us to the pastures of eternal life.

Her intuitions remain valid and current right up to today and constitute a valid instrument for announcing the Gospel in our city.

As we thank God for having given her to us and ask the Lord that his goodness and faithfulness companion her always and that she live forever in his house (Ps. 23: 5-6), I invoke God's consoling benediction upon each person present at the Eucharistic Celebration."



"I thank you, Father,
Lord of heaven and earth,
because You have hidden these things
from the wise and the intelligent
and have revealed them to infants;
yes, Father, for such was
Your gracious will."

Luke 10:21

"If we want to help the child draw nearer to God, we should with patience and courage seek to go always closer to the vital nucleus of things. This requires study and prayer. The child will be our teacher if we know how to observe."

Sofia Cavalletti

Remembering Cavalletti: A Life for the Child

Don Andrea Lonardo's article in "Avvenire" September 18, 2011

It is certainly a beautiful thing to be able to say to a child: "Your father and mother love you very much." But what if this doesn't occur? Is a child who is rejected by his parents lost to God? No. God takes his creatures unto himself even if they have missed out on human love. "I have seen many children who are not accepted in their families; however, when they hear the proclamation of the Good Shepherd, who 'calls his own sheep by name,' they open themselves up to an immense enjoyment."

These are the words of Sofia Cavalletti, whom the Lord called to himself this summer after 94 years of life rich in experiences, from that of being assistant to Rabbi Israel Zolli in Talmudic studies, to her work in the Jewish-Christian dialogue, to the work to which she devoted the whole of her life at the Center for the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd. Beyond her studies of Maria Montessori, Sofia learned from her experience that the child needs God.

"In helping the religious life of the child, far from imposing something on the child which is extraneous to his or her nature, we are responding to a silent request from the child," because – she attests – the child is a "metaphysical being," as his or her questions prove: "Who is God? Where was I before I was

born? Who was God with before creation? Where is my grandmother who has died? Do you like life?" In the catechesis which Cavalletti has developed, what stands out is the deep need of the child for what is most essential; it is the heart of things which the child always asks from us. "The great discipline that catechesis with young children asks of us is precisely this: fidelity to what is essential in terms of what themes we choose to present and how we present them. It is clear, especially with the youngest children that the minute we stray into things of secondary importance, we lose them." Following these principles, she succeeded in presenting not only Scripture and liturgy but also Christian prayer and the great themes of the moral life in a way that many children, first of all in parishes of Rome and then throughout the world, could enjoy the beauty of the Christian faith. Sofia's friends will all gather on Friday, September 23 at 5pm for the memorial Mass, marking 30 days after her death, at San Giovanni dei Fiorentini.

The memory of her spurs us to come to know the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd more and more, so that it becomes a treasure and a stimulus on the pathway of the renewal of Christian initiation that awaits us.



I am sharing with you this brief but important "Foglietto" because I wanted to tell you about the Eucharist we celebrated at Sofia's parish church—San Giovanni dei Fiorentini—in order to be in full communion with her 30 days after her death. There were MANY "ex-bambini" (former children of the atrium) there of all ages, many of whom are parents of children currently attending our atria. Also present were a few of Sofia's nieces and, of course, Augusta, Silvana, and Luigi Capogrossi.

The principal celebrant was the auxiliary bishop of the Rome diocese, Most Reverend Tuzia. He recalled having attended Sofia's course for catechists when he had been a young parish priest. The effect of this experience was noticeable in his homily, which he began by pointing out that, amidst the many words of humans, God has a word that is entirely and only his: resurrection. He is the resurrection, and he gives resurrection. He places his own signature at the end of every life. Then he stated that Sofia has given the church the truth of the three "pillars" which are the foundation, not only of the catechesis but of every form of Christian formation: the Bible, the liturgy, and the child. In fact, adults must also "become like children" in order to enter the kingdom. Toward the end of his homily he lifted up and meditated on three fundamental words of the catechesis: creation, covenant, and parousia.

At the beginning of the celebration he had read a letter from Cardinal Vallini that was very rich and meaningful. The other celebrants were the parish priest and Father Giancarlo Pani, as well as the director of the diocesan catechetical office, Don Lonardo, who had written a beautiful article on Sofia and the catechesis for the diocesan newspaper, "Avvenire." There were also very moving testimonies of gratitude from others. Sofia's doctor, Paula, remembered how Sofia had often told her: "I am a pauper immersed in gold." You were all there with us. A hug to you all that is full of parousia longing,

Francesca Cocchini

Upcoming Publications

Sofia Cavalletti was integral to the birth of our association. She shared the hope that such an association would further the work of the religious development of the child. Indeed, the National Association of Catechesis of the Good Shepherd continues today with the same aim: to serve and assist the involvement of children and adults in a common religious experience in which the religious values of childhood, primarily those values of contemplation of and enjoyment of God, are predominant.

We are pleased to announce that before she died, Sofia had revised *History's Golden Thread* and *Living Liturgy*, adding chapters to both books and renaming them as one book with two volumes. The new titles illustrate the unity of Scripture and Liturgy found in the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd. *History's Golden Thread* will be titled: *The History of the Kingdom of God: From Creation to Parousia, Volume I* and *Living Liturgy* will be titled: *The History of the Kingdom of God: Building the Kingdom through Liturgy, Volume II*. Rebekah Rojcewicz and Patricia Coulter have been working on the translations to these revisions. Publication of these books is anticipated in 2012.

In addition, Patricia Coulter has completed work translating a series of Sofia's articles that will be published in a book entitled *Way of Holy Joy: Selected Writings of Sofia Cavalletti*, which will be available in early 2012.



"How remarkable that a person of noble birth, a noted biblical scholar, writer and educator who sat on the Vatican Council for Jewish-Christian relations (the SIDIC) would choose children and their relationship with God as the centerpiece of her life's work. Yet, for over fifty years, Sofia considered her weekly sessions with the children in the atrium to be her most important and engaging work."

Rebekah Rojcewicz

Forward to [The Religious Potential of the Child,](#)

[6-12 Years Old](#)



"I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly".

John 10:10