

Prayer

Lord, our God, who chose the blessed Martyrs of Drina, Sisters Jula, Berchmana, Krizina, Antonija and Bernadeta, to receive the grace of a religious vocation, and who gave them the strength to seal with their blood their fidelity and their love for you, grant us also steadfastness in our faith, so that neither suffering nor death will ever let us be parted from you.

Humbly we pray: accept these blessed ones into the throng of the Church's saints, so that we can courageously follow the pattern of their lives, and experience their powerful intercession amid our life's struggles and trials. Through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Persons whose prayers are answered through the intercession of these blessed Martyrs of Drina or who receive some special grace are kindly requested to inform us at one of the following addresses:

Provincial seat of Daughters of Divine Charity
Nova ves 16, 1000 Zagreb, Croatia

Vice postulate of the Martyrs of Drina
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Sr. M. Jula
Ivanišević

Sr. M. Berchmana
Leidenix

Sr. M. Krizina
Bojanc

Sr. M. Antonija
Fabjan

Sr. M. Bernadeta
Banja

Martyrs of Drina

Daughters of Divine Charity

Witnesses of Fidelity

The sisters of the Daughters of Divine Charity opened their convent called Saint Mary's Home at Pale near Sarajevo in 1911. It was originally planned as an oasis for the recovery of sick sisters, who were teachers at Saint Joseph Institute in Sarajevo. Saint Mary's Home became known for its good deeds toward everyone in need who knocked at its door, especially the neighbouring Orthodox residents. This is why it was named the "hospice for poor people".

During the war year of 1941 Sr. M. Jula Ivanišević (Croat, 48 years old), superior of the community, Sr. M. Berchmana Leidenix (Austrian, 76 years old), Sr. M. Krizina Bojanc (Slovene, 56 years old), Sr. M. Antonija Fabjan (Slovene, 34 years old) and Sr. M. Bernadeta Banja (Croat of Hungarian origin, 29 years old) were living in the community in Pale. Through their life and work the sisters witnessed to effective Christian charity in the spirit of their Congregation. They served the sick and generously provided bread for the orphans of the nearby state-run home, making no distinction according to religious or ethnic origin, they also helped the poor. Despite all this, Serbian fighters called "četniks", took the five sisters away against their will and forced them to walk in the direction of Goražde on December 11, 1941.

Their four-day long "way of the cross" in freezing temperatures, under snowy conditions, without proper winter clothing along with offences and threats took them first to Sjetlina, where the 76-year old Sister Berchmana, exhausted from the forced march, was separated from the group and forced to remain behind. The other sisters were then forced to march onward to Goražde where they were placed

in a room on the second floor of the barracks. On that same evening, of December 15, 1941 the četniks broke into their room and assaulted them. In order to defend their human dignity and consecrated chastity, the sisters one by one jumped out through the window. After that they were stabbed with knives and thrown into the River Drina.

Sister Berchmana remained imprisoned at Sjetlina for about ten days. She was told that she would join other sisters at Goražde, but the others had already been killed. Two četniks who had driven her told the villagers that the sister had safely joined the other sisters, while one of them had her rosary around his neck. According to a written statement, she was killed on December 23, 1941.

The fame of the martyr's death of these sisters known as *the Martyrs of Drina* has been spreading from the very beginning. Diocesan Process for their beatification was opened in December 1999 in Sarajevo and was successfully finished three years later. The process is resumed at the Congregation for the Causes of Saints in Rome. In January 2011 Pope Benedict XVI signed a decree on their martyrdom, and 24 September of the same year, in Sarajevo, Sister Jula Ivanisevic and four Sisters were declared blessed.

These five sisters are extraordinary models of fidelity to God and powerful love of those who are in need. We believe that their spilled blood will be the seed of new Christians, as well as new spiritual vocations.

They can also intercede for us in our needs, especially in life's trials and dangers. Many of those who have asked for their intercession are convinced that this is true.