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Fredrick Nzwili

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Rwandan Cardinal Antoine Kambanda beatified an Italian Cottolengo nun who served in Kenya about 100 years ago. Beatification is one of the final steps toward sainthood.

Sr. Maria Carola Cecchin served in Kenya 1905-1925. The miracle needed for her beatification involved the cure of a stillborn infant, who now is a healthy 9-year-old boy.

"She knew this place well and spent her youth for the Gospel among us here. ... She is a model of missionary of charity," Kambanda told these gathered in Meru, Kenya, on Nov. 5. "When Blessed Sr. Maria Carola Cecchin experienced the great love of Christ, she spared no effort to proclaim the Gospel of God to the nations, to the people who had not yet known Christ."

The fifth of 10 children, Fiorina Cecchin was born April 3, 1877, in Cittadella, Italy. At age 19, she joined the Cottolengo Sisters, and in 1905, she left for Kenya.

Kambanda said Cecchin represented "so many missionaries in that time who accepted to endure all sorts of sacrifices and risks to bring the salvation of God to the missions. They left their country without knowing whether they would ever go back. They made long journeys on the sea, on land and on foot."

Bishop Salesius Mugambi of Meru described the nun as one of the heroines of faith who lived as a missionary in the present-day Muranga, Nyeri and Meru Catholic dioceses.

"Her mission zeal, love and enthusiasm coupled with her charity and love for the poor, particularly in her last years in Tigania parish in Meru Diocese, continue to inspire many Christians to imitate and follow in her faith," Mugambi said.

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In most cases, beatification requires a miracle attributed to the intercession of the person whose sainthood cause is under consideration.

On April 14, 2013, some members of the Cottolengo order helped a Methodist woman give birth along a rainy road. The sisters confirmed that Hilary Msafiri Kiama was stillborn, and they concentrated on saving the mother's life. But one of the sisters prayed to the intercession of Cecchin, and after 30 minutes, the newborn revived.

To be declared a saint, another miracle must be attributed to Cecchin's intercession.

Mother Elda Pezzuto, superior of the Cottolengo Sisters, described Cecchin as someone who cared for the poor.

"With her real maternal tenderness of few words and many actions, she visited the sick in the villages, she cooked for everyone, so that she was called by the people 'Mwari Mwega' [Good Sister]," Pezzuto said, reading the nun's biography. "Today, she remains for us a model of missionary life, for she was respectful of the cultures of the people of Kenya."