

## *Walking Away from Worldly Fame*

Maria Agnesi was born in Milan, Italy, in the year 1718. Her family quickly discovered that she was a genius.

By age 11, she was fluent in Italian, French, Latin, German, Greek, Hebrew and Spanish. By age 14, she was doing advanced mathematics. And she accomplished this in spite of raising and educating her 19 brothers and sisters after her mother's death.

In 1748, Maria became the first woman to write a mathematics textbook with two volumes, entitled *Basic Principles of Analysis*. It was one of the first textbooks to teach calculus. While most math books of her day were written in Latin, Maria wrote hers in Italian so that it would be accessible to the common people. Her book was praised by the French Academy for its brilliance and clarity, and major universities used her mathematics textbook in their classes.



Pope Benedict XIV appointed Maria as the first woman to teach mathematics at a major university, but she turned down the honor so that she could focus on her true calling, which was advocating for women's education and serving the poor. She founded a hospital in Milan.

Maria could have been one of the most esteemed women of her time, but she chose to live out the rest of her life in service to the needy.

She once wrote, "Man always acts to achieve goals; the goal of the Christian is the glory of God. I hope my studies have brought glory to God, as they were useful to others, and derived from obedience, because that was my Father's will. Now I have found better ways and means to serve God and to be useful to others."

Maria left behind success and honors and a comfortable life to glorify God and serve others. Did she find joy in her decision? She did – indescribable joy because she focused more on the opportunity to serve God and those who needed her than on the life she left behind.

The lesson we can draw from Maria Agnesi's life is this: If we want to see God more clearly, we find Him in serving others.

Life Care and Century Park associates have discovered that truth in the personal satisfaction they receive for the love and care they dispense to those who need it.

*As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace* (1 Peter 4:10 ESV).