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## **Russia: Saratov, diocesan phase of Gertrude Detzel's beatification process has started. "A lay faithful with a desire for holiness"**

The story of a laywoman who consecrated her whole life to the preaching of the Gospel, despite the persecution and forced labour she had to endure, is now the object of study and investigation to determine whether she should be canonised. For Gertrude Detzel, who was born into a Catholic family of German settlers in the diocese of Saratov in 1904 and died in Karaganda in 1971, the diocesan phase of the beatification process started on Sunday, 26 January, with a solemn celebration in the Saratov Cathedral. "It was a historic moment", Bishop Clemens Pickel of Saratov, who concelebrated with Bishop Adelio dell'Oro of Karaganda, wrote in his blog. At the beginning of Mass, the postulator of the process, Father Sergei Babadzhanyan, commenting on Gertrude Detzel's biography, spoke of the "desire for holiness of this Catholic lay faithful, who attributed great importance throughout her life to the proclamation of the Gospel and her personal relationship with God, who was the centre of her life". Arrested on 7 September 1949, she was tried and sentenced to 10 years' forced labour, before being released in 1954 on an amnesty. "This German woman must be released as soon as possible, or everyone else here, by looking at her, will take to prayer", a prison chief wrote. Gertrude lived the rest of her life in Karaganda, spending her days in prayer and supporting illegal groups of believers. "Work begins now", Mgr. Pickel went on to write: "Let us seek eyewitnesses and Christians who have a prayer relationship with Gertrude Detzel".

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