

ISTITUTO PIA SOCIETÀ
FIGLIE DI S. PAOLO
CASA GENERALIZIA
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Dearest Sisters,

At 3:00 p.m. yesterday, local time, one of the members of our James Alberione community, Albano, Italy left this world to return to the house of the Father:

RAGNO GIOVANNA – SR. RAFFAELLA
born in Cassano Murge (Bari), Italy on 15 January 1932.

The words Sr. Raffaella wrote when she celebrated her 75th birthday sum up her whole “salvation story”: “I am very happy to have entrusted myself to Jesus, my Master and the Lord of my life,” she said. “What can I give him in return for this gift? My own gift is very simple: it is that of a life overflowing with prayer, affection and docility.” With this great yearning to dedicate herself to the Lord, Sr. Raffaella entered the Congregation in Rome on 9 August 1952. She underwent her initial formation in this large community, concluding her novitiate with her first profession on 19 March 1956. Immediately afterward, she was sent to Caltanissetta to carry out capillary and collective diffusion. After her perpetual profession, made in Rome in 1960, she worked in the book centers of Trent, Nuoro and Rimini successively.

In 1976, Sr. Raffaella began a rich time of apostolic activity in the FSP Book Agencies of Bologna, Florence and Rome. Together with the other sisters who were carrying out this new and important mode of diffusion and collaboration with our SSP brothers, she tirelessly visited numerous book stores in the Emilia, Tuscany and Lazio regions. Over the years, the owners of these book shops became not only clients but also friends and collaborators with whom she dialogued, helping them to participate more and more in the grace of the Pauline mission that she herself had received.

Sr. Raffaella also served a three-year term as superior of the Via dell’Arcadia community, Rome, the home base of all the FSPs who carried out this important apostolate.

In 1986, she was transferred to Foggia and then to Taranto to work in the book center—a service to which she dedicated herself without reserve. She made a great effort to get to know the content of the material she was diffusing so as to carry out this apostolate effectively by directing people to the books adapted to their particular situations. In Verona, where she lived for ten years (2001-2011), she is remembered for her ability to present new material to parish priests, organize parish book displays and maintain and restock parish book deposits with titles that provided people with the chance to grow in their faith and form mentalities always more in keeping with the values of the Gospel.

For Sr. Raffaella, *apostolate* and *community* were inseparable binomials. She made no distinction between the work she carried out in the book center and her service in the kitchen or in the performance of other domestic activities. A trustworthy and responsible person, she was always ready to quietly assist her superiors. Her good heart, which saw beauty in all things, was completely focused on the Pauline mission. When the Congregation launched its Missionary Project, she wrote to the Superior General: “I say very willingly: *Send me!* I am in the hands of the Lord—may he do whatever he wants with me. I empathize very deeply with the problems of our beloved Congregation.”

The Lord forged Sr. Raffaella’s personality, making it ever-more beautiful, especially in the last years of her life in which she suffered from a debilitating form of diabetes and other health issues that caused her to lose both her sight and her hearing. In 2012, she was transferred to the James Alberione community, Albano. Her intimacy with the Lord, the motivating force of her life, enabled her to accept her sufferings peacefully, in an attitude of self-offering. In 2013, she wrote: “I feel a powerful sense of belonging to our beloved Congregation, for which I offer everything sent to me by the Lord and Master of my life. I entrust everything to the Spirit of God, the author of the mystery of the Incarnation in the womb of Mary. I ask her to obtain for me the gifts of silence, humility and the ability to listen to others.”

Just a few days ago, Sr. Raffaella’s physical condition worsened due to heart problems. The cardiac imbalances increased, paving the way to the final crisis that led to her long-awaited meeting with Jesus Master. Today, the vigil of the Ascension of the Lord, let us entrust our dear sister to the Father’s loving embrace and ask him to allow her to celebrate this Liturgy in all its fullness in heaven.

Affectionately,


Sr. Anna Maria Parezan
Superior General

Rome, 27 May 2017