



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

At about 8:30 this evening, the Father visited the infirmary of our Divine Providence community of Rome, Italy to call to himself our sister:

APREA SR. BERNARDETTA
born in Ponticelli (Naples), Italy on 25 October 1934.

For the past several years, Sr. Bernardetta's physical condition had been steadily declining due to a hardening of the arteries that gradually brought her to the point of complete immobility. At that point, her expressive gaze became her sole means of communication, and she used it to convey her gratitude to her caregivers, her desire not to be a burden to them and her complete self-surrender to their ministrations. She spent the last two years of her life in profound silence, accepting with always greater self-surrender God's mysterious plan for her life.

Sr. Bernardetta's long and difficult illness allowed her to purify herself and offer herself for the good of the many persons the Lord had united to her through the apostolate of suffering. In this sense she was a great Pauline apostle up to the last day of her life. Her apostolic anxiety was such an integral part of her experience that even in these last months she imagined herself to be back in the FSP stockroom, sending out the Gospel to every part of the world. It is consoling to think that her sufferings and self-offering most assuredly helped the Word of God "take wing" so as to touch the hearts of many people whom she will one day meet in heaven.

Sr. Bernardetta was a generous Pauline apostle from the time she entered the Congregation in the community of Rome on 11 November 1952. In that community rich in apostolic initiatives and vocations she made her novitiate, concluding it with her first profession in the Queen of Apostles Sanctuary on 19 March 1956.

As a young professed sister, she was an enthusiastic propagandist of the Word of God in Bologna, Rome and Turin. Afterward, she carried out the book center apostolate in Salerno, Avellino and Cosenza. Following this she worked in the St. Paul Agencies of Bari and Naples. From 1988-1992, she served as a book agent in Naples and Florence, traveling long distances by car to introduce our Pauline editions into secular book shops.

In 1992, Sr. Bernardetta was transferred to the Divine Master community of Via Antonino Pio, Rome, where she worked in the stock room and shipping department. When illness began to undermine her health, she carried out various household duties for as long as her strength permitted.

It was not easy for Sr. Bernardetta to accept an illness that overturned her life and made her increasingly dependent on her sisters for everything. But she embraced this unexpected call of the Lord without complaint, without demands and without a lot of words, in keeping with the quiet restraint and dignity that characterized her entire life.

Today, the vigil of the Liturgical Memorial of Mary's Presentation in the Temple, we want to unite the Blessed Mother's offering of her life to God to Sr. Bernardetta's self-offering: a silent and humble offering of a life overflowing with love, expressed in her desire that the Word of God find a dwelling place among the people of today and incarnate himself in the lives of all those thirsting for the Truth. While we thank Sr. Bernardetta for all the good she sowed among us, we also place her in the arms of Mary, asking her to present our sister to the Father as a sacrifice pleasing to him. Affectionately,

Sr. Anna Maria Parenzan
Vicar General

Rome, 20 November 2009