

ISTITUTO PIA SOCIETÀ
FIGLIE DI S. PAOLO
CASA GENERALIZIA
Via S. Giovanni Eudes, 25
00163 Roma
Tel. 06.661 3039 - Fax 06.661 57 208



Dearest Sisters,

At about 6:15 this morning, the Feast of St. Bartholomew, the Divine Master visited our James Alberione community of Albano, Italy to call to himself one of our most fervent Pauline apostles:

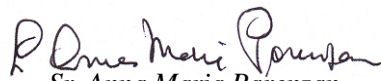
BALLINI SR. MARIA ROSA
born in Grezzana (Verona), Italy on 17 June 1935.

We can't possibly count the number of Bibles Sr. M. Rosa diffused in English-speaking Africa, especially after the launching of the *African Bible* on the occasion of the great Jubilee of 2000. From 2000-2005, Sr. M. Rosa organized formation weeks and biblical animations in five Ethiopian dioceses, as well as in Eritrea, Kenya, Zambia, Tanzania and Ghana. But even before this, from 1989-1999, she had already offered many African bishops the chance to set up book outlets in their dioceses: an activity that she sustained by training the staff herself and accompanying diffusion by means of regular visits, annual meetings, and formation-information bulletins. After opening many book outlets in Kenya, Sr. M. Rosa dedicated all her energy to concretizing this same apostolic service in Tanzania, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, Swaziland, Namibia and Malawi. Even this very condensed data testifies to our sister's great passion for the apostolate—a passion that caused her to rise above the fatigue, health problems and the disadvantages of the often difficult itineraries that went hand-in-hand with this mission. Like the great prophets of old, her heart burned with an ardor that could not be contained. FSPs from the three continents on which Sr. M. Rosa lived and worked during her lifetime all say that she was always ready to meet every apostolic need.

Sr. M. Rosa entered the Congregation in the community of Alba on 23 Sept. 1952. After spending a period of time carrying out the diffusion apostolate, she made her novitiate in Rome, concluding it with her first profession on 19 March 1956. As a junior, she became a competent printer and for this reason she was sent to Great Britain where, from 1961-67, she worked in the technical apostolate in Langley. Then she was asked to go to Pakistan, where she worked in the book centers of Karachi and Lahore and also carried out itinerant diffusion. With great simplicity and love, she learned the customs of her new mission land and also a new language: Urdu. From Pakistan, she was sent to Africa, where the Lord had great plans for her. In 1972 she arrived in Uganda and shared with the other sisters the difficult war years, which were nevertheless rich in beautiful apostolic experiences in Kampala and later in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

In 1983, Sr. M. Rosa was recalled to Rome to work in the Generalate's Pauline Mission Center, but her heart yearned for Africa... She returned there in 1984 when she was appointed superior of the Kampala community. Afterward, she was transferred to Nairobi which, except for a few short intervals, remained her "home base" up until 2008. It is very hard to summarize Sr. M. Rosa's intense apostolic activities in Kenya, just a few of which were her work in the delegation's distribution center and typography, and above all the countless Bible Days she organized. One example of her apostolic ardor can be glimpsed in a letter she wrote from Mwanza, Tanzania. Although she was making her spiritual exercises at the time, her interior passion to spread the Gospel prompted her to organize a book exhibit for the Feast of Jesus Master. She wrote: "The people literally invaded the tables, showing great interest in everything displayed. The amazed and delighted pastor was speechless."

Sr. M. Rosa received the grace to be able to disseminate the Word of God abundantly and she received the further grace—incomprehensible on the human level—to fecundate that apostolate through suffering. In 2005, she was hospitalized repeatedly due to an abnormal enlargement of her liver and spleen. Her declining health made it necessary for her to discontinue her long apostolic trips but she joyfully immersed herself in the apostolate in Nairobi. There, she organized the work of the delegation's small typography, initiated young women into the Pauline apostolate and also worked in the publishing sector. In 2008, her steadily-deteriorating health obliged her to return to Italy. In the Thecla Merlo and then in the James Alberione communities of Albano, she lived an intense Calvary, far from the sisters with whom she had shared her life and far from the apostolate, even though both of these were the chief objects of her prayers and gave her many reasons to offer her sufferings to God. Last year, Sr. M. Rosa wrote: "This is a very special time for me. Without this experience, something would have been missing in my life. It is a time in which I am learning to surrender myself completely to God. And it is also a time in which I deeply feel the beauty of the vocation I received and that I have sought to live." Through her life and death, Sr. M. Rosa has left us a great legacy. Thank you, Sr. M. Rosa! May the countless seeds you scattered yield abundant fruit in the field of vocation work and also for the apostolate throughout Africa! Affectionately,


Sr. Anna Maria Parenzan
Vicar General

Rome, 24 August 2010