

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

At 3:00 p.m. today, local time, the Lord visited the Thecla Merlo community of Albano, Italy to call to himself after a long period of suffering, our sister:

BARINI GEMMA – SR. M. GRAZIA
born in San Martino Buon Albergo (Verona), Italy on 7 December 1926.

We are confident that Sr. Maria Grazia appeared before the Lord clothed in grace, like a bride adorned for her Bridegroom, well prepared for her eternal wedding. She shaped her life into a masterpiece especially during these last 7 years, after she was diagnosed in 2010 as suffering from an abdominal tumor that reduced her to complete dependence on others and made it necessary for her to receive nourishment through a feeding tube. But Sr. M. Grazia remained serene through it all. Completely surrendered to the Father, she quietly participated in community life up to the very end and continued to offer her illness for vocations, the Congregation and the whole Church. Her perpetual smile and humorous comments served to highlight her profound communion with Jesus Master, who enriched her life and gave “wings” to her daily self-offering. There were no limits to the prayer intentions she carried in her heart, in addition to those requested of her by the sisters who dropped by to see her. Sr. M. Grazia felt that she was a citizen of the world because her thoughts and prayers touched every continent. She liked to joke that the nourishment she received through artificial means was completely *gratis* [because it was funded by the national health-care plan] and so she was in actual fact living off the State! Everyone who visited her bedside found their faith reinvigorated and left more serenely, thanking the Lord for all he was doing through this apostle of his.

Sr. M. Grazia entered the Congregation in Alba on 24 March 1941, at the age of 15. She first worked in the shipping department and then carried out capillary and collective diffusion in the diocese of Pavia. In 1945, she began her novitiate in Alba, concluding this stage of her formation with her first profession on 29 June 1946. Immediately afterward, she was sent to Venice and from there to Vercelli and Turin to continue capillary diffusion to the families.

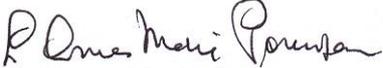
In Turin she worked for several years as a librarian in the Association of Circulating Libraries, which at that time was run by the Daughters of St. Paul. From 1969-1976, she was assigned to the St. Paul Film Agency of Turin and afterward to that of Bologna.

In 1983, she was transferred to Milan where she carried out a variety of household services in the Via Paolo Uccello community. Following this, she was sent to Como, and for the next 24 years carried out the service of cook and wardrobe keeper, as well as other domestic duties. It can well be said that her presence was like that of the sun because she refreshed and illuminated her community with her welcoming smile and readiness to satisfy every request and need.

When she celebrated her 50th anniversary of religious profession in 1996, Sr. M. Gemma wrote: “For me, this is a year overflowing with thanksgiving and great happiness for all the gifts I have received from the Lord and the Congregation. I want to respond with fidelity for as long as the Lord leaves me here on earth. With his help, I want to serve him with a joyful heart.” Her yearning was completely fulfilled although perhaps not in the way she envisioned. In 2010, the diagnosis of cancer offered her the chance to respond to the call of the Lord in a concrete way. She spent the last 7 years of her life in the Thecla Merlo community, Albano, where she was a gift of God to everyone through her witness to his grace and love. She felt called to just one thing, namely: to do the will of her Lord with great simplicity.

Today’s Liturgy is an especially appropriate farewell salute to this dear sister, who was a true bearer of peace, a herald of the Kingdom of God, a kind and poor apostle, and a tireless, joyous and hardworking “postmistress” of God and of the Church.

Affectionately,


Sr. Anna Maria Parenzan
Superior General

Rome, 5 October 2017