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Dearest Sisters,

We just received the news that at about 9:00 p.m. yesterday, the Blessed Mother visited Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Sao Paulo, Brazil, to lead to heaven a sister of ours who lovingly bore the same name:

BELEM SR. MARIA DE LOURDES
born in Bauru (Botucatu), Brazil on 25 February 1932.

Only 15 days ago, Sr. M. Belem was hospitalized to undergo an intestinal test that should have been routine. Unfortunately, complications during the examination procedure made it necessary to operate on her immediately and even more unfortunately this very delicate surgery provoked a lung infection that rapidly worsened to the point that it killed her.

Sr. M. Belem entered the Congregation in the community of Sao Paulo on 10 December 1943. She was 11 years old at the time. In that community, she continued her studies and received her initial religious formation. She also made her novitiate there, concluding it with her first profession on 19 March 1951.

Because of her generous spirit of availability—an outstanding trait of her personality—Sr. M. Belem carried out many different activities in her Pauline life. She was a teacher, a writer, she worked in the book center and she also held the office of provincial councilor. Over the years, she served as superior of the communities of Rio de Janeiro, Domingo de Morais, Porto Alegre, Citta Regina and several other communities in the city of Sao Paulo. For over 20 years, she dedicated herself with true passion to the writing and translating apostolates, which also included the work of choosing books from other publishers for publication, especially editions that fostered the journey of the Local Church. Sr. M. Belem deeply loved the Church and was happy to place her creativity and pastoral sensitivity at its service.

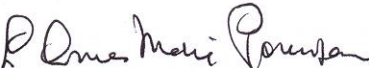
A serene person who carried out the Pauline apostolate with great fervor, Sr. M. Belem was not able to turn her back on the needs of any sister. Although frail in health, she accepted the limitations imposed on her by this, but nevertheless she generously offered her services wherever possible, especially helping out with activities that enabled her to use the many intellectual gifts with which the Lord had enriched her. Her profound sense of belonging to the Congregation reinforced her desire to establish warm relations with everyone, in particular the province's young members and elderly sisters. The sisters whom she accompanied during the Juniorate stage of their formation remember the kindness and respect with which she treated everyone as she helped them seek the will of God.

Sr. M. Belem deeply loved the Founder and Maestra Thecla, whom she had had the chance to meet on their trips to Brazil. Because of this personal contact with them, she chose to write her thesis for a License in Theology on the theme: *"Woman and Her Mission in the Work of James Alberione."*

In these days, Sr. M. Belem was joyfully preparing to celebrate the Pauline Year by means of a trip to Italy so as to visit the places linked to our Congregation's beginnings and so as to also retrace the footsteps of the Apostle Paul. But the good Lord had other plans for her and invited her to take a different and unexpected "trip."

While we accompany this dear sister with our prayers on her journey to heaven, let us ask her to intercede for the whole Congregation, and especially our Brazilian Province, which she loved very much and for which she spent all her energies, day after day.

Affectionately,


Sr. Anna Maria Parenzan
Vicar General

Rome, 19 February 2009