



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

At about 5:00 p.m. today, the God of infinite beauty visited our Thecla Merlo community of Albano, Italy to lead to heaven our sister:

BENIGNI SR. MARIA LUISA
born in Ranica (Bergamo), Italy on 25 December 1941.

Sr. M. Luisa had been a member of the Thecla Merlo community for several years as a consequence of Alzheimer's disease, which was gradually undermining both her memory and her physical strength. But even before she was transferred there, Sr. M. Luisa frequently visited the community to spend some time with the sisters, especially Sr. Lucia, a dear friend with whom she had shared many years of both intensive study and apostolate. We can say that Sr. M. Luisa's life was dedicated to the pursuit of the "God of beauty" through art, an innate gift which she had had the chance to perfect through many years of specialized training.

Sr. M. Luisa entered the Congregation in the community of Alba on 9 September 1962. After a period of initial formation, followed by a time of apostolic experience in Turin, she returned to Alba for her novitiate, which concluded with her first profession on 30 June 1965.

During the 1960's, a number of sisters were chosen to pursue specialized studies in the graphic arts so as to enable the Congregation to offer the people editions that were both beautiful and appealing in form. Sr. M. Luisa was one of the sisters designated for these specialized studies. At the suggestion of painter Santagata, she enrolled in an art institute in Urbino that specialized in the illustration of books. Both Sr. M. Luisa and Sr. Lucia received a Fine Arts degree from this rigorous Institute, which set very high standards for its students, and then, successively, both received Masters Degrees in Lithography.

Sr. M. Luisa had the chance to put her training to good use immediately. From 1972-1985, she served as Art Director for the children's publications of the Society of St. Paul. This time in Turin was a rich one for her, especially with regard to the many contacts she made and the relationships she established. Afterward, she spent a period of theological updating in Rome. In 1987, she was transferred to Milan, where she worked in the graphics department of our FSP publishing house. In 1999, she spent a time of formation in our Boston community in the United States, then resumed her service in the FSP graphics department in Milan. A person of noteworthy ability in the fine arts, she loved beautiful things and everything that added zest and color to life.

Sr. M. Luisa was a friendly, sincere and tactful person. Equipped with a strong sense of humor, she enjoyed recounting jokes and funny stories to the people around her. She was also known for her love for purses, which she carried with great dignity. In fact, her distinguishing feature was without a doubt her dignified and exemplary behavior, which was in no way affected or undermined by the progression of her illness.

When her mother died, Sr. M. Luisa had a memorial card printed with the words of her mother's favorite hymn on the reverse side. The hymn opens with the statement: "You are the God of the living-God, the Lover of life." We are sure that Sr. M. Luisa went to meet the Lord convinced that she would be meeting, as the hymn goes on to assert, "the God who has conquered death." And above all, we are sure that she went to this definitive encounter inflamed with the desire expressed in the last line of the hymn, which says: "When I reawaken, I will praise you, my Savior." Affectionately,

Sr. Anna Maria Parenzan
Vicar General

Rome, 23, April 2009