

ISTITUTO PIA SOCIETÀ  
FIGLIE DI S. PAOLO  
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Dearest Sisters,

At noon today, God our merciful Father visited Queen of Apostles Hospital, Albano, Italy, to call to himself almost without warning one of our sisters, who flew to heaven as a result of a pulmonary edema and heart complications:

**BINNI MARIA ANGELA - SR. MARIA LORENZA**  
**born in Monsampolo (Ascoli Piceno), Italy on 18 August 1926.**

Sr. M. Lorenza entered the Congregation in the community of Rome on 12 October 1944. As a postulant, she spent some time in Naples carrying our capillary diffusion. She made her novitiate in Rome, concluding it with her first profession on 19 March 1948. Just before her profession, she had a unique experience, which she described in this way: "Right before my profession, that is, on the night between 18-19 March, I was suddenly seized by strong doubts and discouragement. It seemed to me that my limited education and timid personality would prevent me from carrying out the apostolate well. I was tormented by these negative thoughts all night long. They made me feel I was not capable of approaching people and as a result that it would be better if I didn't make my profession. Half-awake, half-asleep I decided that in the morning I would go to Maestra Nazarena, our novice mistress, and tell her about my decision. When I finally dropped off to sleep I dreamed of Fr. Timothy Giaccardo, who took me by the hand and said, "Come with me. I will take you to Maestra Nazarena." Waking up with a jerk, I could still feel the warmth of Fr. Giaccardo's hand, as if he had touched me. At that moment, all my doubts and uncertainties vanished. Fr. Giaccardo had died just a few weeks earlier, on 24 January to be exact. I had not known him well and I hadn't been praying to him, but from that day on he became a constant point of reference for me and he has always answered my prayers." It was a significant meeting—perhaps a prelude to the role Sr. Lorenza would be called to carry out in the Congregation.

After several years in the community of Aosta and the bindery in Rome, in 1953 Sr. Lorenza was assigned by Maestra Thecla to the cinema apostolate, whose work rooms were located in the basement of the Queen of Apostles Basilica. Every day Primo Maestro stopped by to encourage and bless the small group of Pauline pioneers laboring in this completely new apostolate. Sr. Lorenza was very enthusiastic about her work, which involved developing and mounting miles of film footage, even though this required a notable degree of specialized training—a daunting thought to a person who had received only a basic elementary education. When the cinema apostolate was transferred to Via Portuense, great sacrifices were required to print the films, especially those shot in four colors. The sisters' work hours were exhausting, often extending until midnight and resuming at 4:00 the next morning. But Sr. Lorenza and her companions rejoiced at the chance to participate in an activity of the charism that placed them in the vanguard of the times.

In 1963, Sr. Lorenza began a long parenthesis in her Pauline life that would later open unforeseen paths to her. She was asked to reorganize the diocesan archives of Naples—a huge and extremely demanding work into which she threw herself without any prior training but with great faith and wisdom, trusting solely in the grace of her vocation. Contemporaneously with this, she enrolled in a two-year course in archive work, taking advantage of every opportunity to dialogue with her professors and classmates. Her ten years of service in this sector were crowned by the publication of a book she wrote entitled, *An Official Guide to the Diocesan Archives of Naples*—a text highly praised by scholars, who said it was written with exceptional competence. In response, she said: "I thank the Lord because he worked with me, making up for all my shortcomings and inadequacies. I can say that I truly experienced God in my work. I committed myself to the project and he did the rest."

After another ten years of service, this time in the Vatican, Sr. Lorenza was asked in 1980 by Superior General Maria Cevolani to set up the Historical Archives of the Daughters of St. Paul at the

FSP Generalate in Rome and, at the same time, to set up a centralized archives for the whole Pauline Family at the SSP Generalate in nearby Via della Fanella.

Not knowing where to begin, since both archives contained almost no material, Sr. Lorenza traveled to Alba to meet with Sr. Immacolatina Bianco, who was in charge of the FSP community library there. Sr. Immacolatina placed at Sr. Lorenza's disposition a wealth of books and magazines that she had collected and preserved with scrupulous care over the years, safeguarding them as a precious heritage of the Congregation. Sr. Lorenza recounts: "Taking a deep breath, I shook off all the fears that were assailing me and set to work. I wound up preparing a total of 95 packages of books to take back to Rome with me. I also brought back precious paintings of St. Paul and the Queen of Apostles, which I sent out to be restored."

But there were more surprises in store for Sr. Lorenza. One day the Superior General introduced her to Fr. Stefano Lamera, who had asked for someone to compile the documentation he needed for the information-gathering stage of Fr. James Alberione's beatification process. Fr. Lamera gave Sr. Lorenza a small booklet entitled *Abundantes Divitiae Gratiae Suae—the Charismatic History of the Pauline Family*, asking her to find the documents necessary to help the Pauline Family come to a better grasp of the various stages of its history. To fulfill this task, Sr. Lorenza visited the archives of Alba, Susa, Turin, Genoa, Asti, Cuneo, Novara and Cherasco. In the end, she compiled 16 huge volumes containing photocopies of all the pertinent documents.

She also gathered and organized all the documentation needed for the beatification process of Maestra Thecla, including Prima Maestra's personal notebooks and copious correspondence, which consisted of about 10,000 letters written to sisters and FSP communities throughout the world. Sr. Lorenza felt the weight of her great responsibility to provide the ecclesiastical authorities with the documents they needed to officially recognize the holiness of our Founder, Maestra Thecla and other members of the Pauline Family whose beatification processes were underway. She said: "I was so deeply immersed in this work that I found myself doing research even in my dreams!"

All the Daughters of St. Paul owe Sr. Lorenza their deep gratitude for her tireless work, including her discovery in Susa and Turin of documents that proved to be very valuable in clarifying certain questions concerning the role of Angela Boffi at the origins of our Institute.

In 1990, Sr. Lorenza's declining health made it necessary to transfer her from the Generalate to the Provincial House of our Italian circumscription and from there to Via Antonino Pio, where she was placed in charge of the post office. In these last years, her health steadily deteriorated but she never lost her enthusiasm for archive work and was always happy to lend a hand in the search for documents when requested. Up to the end of her life, she continued to read and reread the documentation concerning Maestra Thecla so as to discover new and precious clarifications that have helped to shine greater light on Prima Maestra's personality.

A few years ago Sr. Lorenza wrote: "Life is beautiful and the gift of my Pauline vocation makes it even more beautiful. I continually thank the Lord for both these gifts. The years have flown by on my journey to eternity. Now I am trying to prepare for my meeting with God. What will it be like? I trust in his great mercy. I thank him for his immense goodness and generosity toward me. I am happy with the life I have led in our dear Congregation. I have tried to give my *all* to it. How wonderful and beautiful our mission is!"

Thank you, Sr. Lorenza, for all the good you did among us. Thank you for the intensive and extensive research you carried out so lovingly with regard to our Pauline history. We like to think that Fr. Alberione and Maestra Thecla themselves welcomed you to heaven today and that the first thing they did was thank you because your littleness and humility have helped Pauline charism shine more brightly in the universal Church.

Affectionately,

  
Sr. Anna Maria Parenzan  
Vicar General

Rome, 2 March 2013