

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

At about 5:00 this morning, the Lord knocked anew on the door of the infirmary of our Divine Providence community in Alba, Italy to call himself:

CAREGLIO PALMINA – Sr. SEBASTIANA
born in Vezza d’Alba (Cuneo), Italy on 2 April 1914.

Today the Lord answered Sr. Sebastiana’s ardent desire to “go to him” so as to reward her for her good, simple, generous and joyous life.

Sr. Sebastiana entered the Congregation in the community of Alba on 28 Feb. 1932. She was 18 years old at the time. Soon after, she was sent to reinforce the newly-opened community of Cagliari and help carry out the diffusion apostolate there. She made her novitiate in Rome from 1937-1938, concluding it with her first profession on 20 January 1938. Immediately afterward, she was transferred to Treviso, the local community in which, except for a brief parenthesis, she spent more than 50 years of her life. Sr. Sebastiana was in Treviso during World War II and she and the other sisters of the community came through several dangerous situations unharmed, causing them to continually thank the Queen of Apostles for her miraculous intervention and tangible help. Referring to those years, the FSP chronicles of the time report the sisters as saying: “The Blessed Mother not only defended but also protected us. We felt that she was carrying us in her heart and we are happy to make known her mercy toward us.”

After the war, Sr. Sebastiana organized many Gospel Days in almost all the towns of the large and dynamic Treviso diocese. From 1955-1962, she lived for a short time in the communities of Rovigo, Novara, Ostia and Mestre successively. Following this, she returned to Treviso, where she remained until 2000. The book center was the place of her daily self-offering to God—the “pulpit” from which she offered Jesus Word to the people, happy to serve him, feeling herself to be at the heart of the Church. The book center was her “great love” and she was an unforgettable point of reference for the many priests, religious and lay people who frequented it. Sr. Sebastiana’s friendliness and simple wisdom made a deep impression on everyone she met. She knew how to offer the right book to the right person because she herself was an avid reader, who passionately and responsibly cultivated her self-formation. She established warm relations with children, their parents, teachers and even the staff of the diocesan Curia. She was highly esteemed by the bishops of Treviso, especially Bishop Antonio Mistrorigo, who guided the diocese for almost 30 years. Our Pauline Book Center, located on the street level of the Curia building, served as a kind of “reception room” or “ante-chamber” for it. With great discretion, Sr. Sebastiana would collect the Curia’s mail, greet the bishop’s visitors and take them up to see him, helping him come in contact with people of every walk of life. Her ability to keep “secrets of office” was legendary and her conversations were always positive and uplifting. In the community, she was a benevolent, sisterly presence who witnessed to her love for the Pauline vocation. The other sisters considered her to be the “custodian” of the Congregation’s history in Treviso and she accompanied “long distance,” with prayer and nostalgia, the celebration of the community’s 80th anniversary of foundation, which took place just this month. On their part, our sisters of Treviso also have many fond memories of Sr. Sebastiana, whom they say was small in stature but a “giant” in the spiritual life. They especially remember the simple yet profound Gospel wisdom that they say wafted from her like perfume and was felt by everyone who approached her.

Ten years ago, Sr. Sebastiana decided that it would be prudent for her to ask for a transfer to Alba while she was still lucid and self-sufficient. She spent the last period of her life in docile obedience to the sisters who cared for her, offering everyone the gift of her warm smile. And today we are sure that as she entered heaven her beautiful singing voice broke out in a joyous “Magnificat,” the song of the humble and poor, who are great in the eyes of God because they place all their trust and hope in him.

Affectionately,


Sr. Anna Maria Parenzan
Vicar General

Rome, 14 June 2010