

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

At about 10:00 this morning, God the Father visited the infirmary of our Divine Providence community, Alba, Italy, to call to himself our sister:

CASTELLANO GIUSEPPINA – SR. M. ELENA
born in Santo Stefano Quisquina (Agrigento), Italy, on 22 December 1918.

Sr. M. Elena and other girls from her hometown were the fruit of the capillary diffusion and vocation apostolates carried out by the FSPs of the Agrigento community in the 1930's. With great faith and apostolic passion, these sisters traveled the length and breadth of Sicily and even visited its outlying islands, bringing the Word of God to everyone. Sr. M. Elena entered the Congregation in Palermo on 30 September 1940 but because of the war she was not able to go to Rome until March 1941. After a brief period of initial formation, she was sent to Ferrara to take the Word of God to families and parishes.

She made her novitiate in Rome, concluding it with her first profession on 19 March 1944. As a young professed, she was stationed in the communities of Livorno, Palermo and Caltanissetta, where she carried out the diffusion apostolate and helped to organize Gospel and Bible Days. These experiences helped to prepare her for a new assignment: that of working as a missionary in France. She arrived in Paris in November 1952, just a few days after the opening of that community. It is impossible to enumerate the sacrifices she and her companions made during that foundation period. They lived in temporary lodgings, did not know the language, and were looked upon suspiciously by everyone, even other religious Institutes. These first sisters wrote: "It seemed like they wanted to force us to leave but we accepted the situation in order to do good and give a solid foundation to our new community."

In 1962, after 10 difficult years filled with big and small sacrifices, Sr. M. Elena was transferred back to Italy, where she was assigned first to Palermo and then to Bologna and Naples—all communities with thriving St. Paul Film Agencies. For the next 25 years, Sr. M. Elena double-checked the films returned by parishes, schools and movie theaters. Hundreds of thousands of meters of film slipped through her hands on a regular basis as she carefully checked the celluloid for breaks, tears or scratches than needed to be repaired. It was an apostolate shrouded in anonymity but fecundated by an abundance of prayer, sacrifice and apostolic spirit.

In 1993, Sr. M. Elena was transferred once again—first to Alessandria and then to the St. Joseph community of Alba, where she worked in the bindery. About two years ago she took up residence in the Alba infirmary so as to receive the health care she needed. She spent the last period of her life quietly, serenely awaiting the call of her Lord. Although disabled by arthritis, she sought to be as self-sufficient as possible, getting about by means of a walker. About a year ago, her physical strength had diminished to the point that she was forced to remain in bed. There, the Queen of Apostles, to whom she was deeply devoted, prepared her for her passage to heaven, which took place very peacefully.

We remember our dear sister's great humility and feeling of unworthiness at having received the gift of the Pauline vocation. In requesting admission to profession, she wrote: "I am very unworthy to take this step and I am almost afraid to ask it, but through the great mercy of God I humbly request admittance to religious profession among the Daughters of St. Paul." When the time came for her to make her perpetual profession, her feelings were unchanged. "I am afraid to ask this grace because of my wretched condition," she wrote, "but I trust in the great mercy of God." And we are sure that our good Father, who never allows himself to be outdone in generosity, welcomed our sister into his loving arms today to give her the reward he has prepared for all those who live in a spirit of littleness and humility. Affectionately,


Sr. Anna Maria Parenzan
Vicar General

Rome, 10 July 2013