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FIGLIE DI S. PAOLO
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Dearest Sisters,

In the radiant light of Epiphany, our heavenly Father visited Queen of Apostles Hospital, Albano, Italy at about 5:00 p.m. today to call to himself our sister:

FAZIO ANTONIETTA – SR. MARIA CLEOFE
born in San Giovanni in Galdo (Campobasso), Italy on 3 May 1917.

This is an opportune moment to recall the words spoken by Blessed James Alberione to Sr. M. Cleofe and her forty co-novices on the occasion of their first profession: “If we are faithful to the Lord, he will be faithful to his promise to bless, console and remain close to us until the day he welcomes us to heaven with the words, ‘Come and receive your crown, spouse of Christ!’ The day we observe the vows most fully should be the day we end our life here on earth.”

Sr. M. Cleofe was faithful to her vows up to the end of her life, in both sickness and health, when she was able to dedicate all her energies to the apostolate and when, while still relatively young, one of her legs was amputated.

She entered the Congregation in the community of Rome on 8 January 1935 and a year later, as a postulant, was sent to Agrigento to disseminate the Word of God to the families of that area. She returned to Rome for her novitiate, concluding it with her first profession on 31 March 1940. As a young professed, she traveled the streets of Matera, Salerno, Pola, Trieste and Belluno, her propaganda bag overflowing with books. Transferred to Trent, she was assigned to the St. Paul Film Agency, where she double-checked returned films. Afterward she carried out the service of cook with great generosity in the communities of Udine, Massa and Cicogna.

In 1978, a serious illness made it necessary for the doctors to amputate one of her legs. But Sr. M. Cleofe did not “retire” from the apostolate because of this. With the help of a crutch, she continued to carry out the service of cook and housekeeper in the community of Campobasso for more than 15 years. Energetic and strong-willed by nature, she refused to let herself be blocked by any obstacle, including a steep and dangerous flight of stairs that she had to go up and down many times a day. The FSP book agents who regularly visited the book shops of the Abruzzo region all remember Sr. M. Cleofe’s hospitality and solicitude toward their needs.

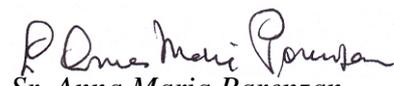
In 1996, Sr. M. Cleofe was assigned to the Naples/Capodimonte community where, in spite of poor health, she carried out many small household services compatible with her condition.

In 2005, advancing age and declining strength made it necessary to transfer her first to the Thecla Merlo community of Albano, and afterward to the newly-opened James Alberione community in the same town. From her wheelchair, she continued to carry out small jobs that made her feel useful and that helped the day to pass more quickly.

A few weeks ago, Sr. M. Cleofe’s health took an unexpected turn for the worse and yesterday the doctors were obliged to amputate her other leg so as to avoid gangrene. But Sr. Cleofe was ready to accept the invitation of the Lord, addressed to her today, to fly to heaven to receive her crown.

Today, the splendor of eternal Light that accompanied the life of our dear sister led her to the feet of the Child in Bethlehem where, like the three Kings, she opened the “jewel box” of her life to offer him her most precious possessions. We are sure that after long years of suffering, Sr. M. Cleofe is at last experiencing the great joy of having finally arrived home.

Affectionately,


Sr. Anna Maria Parenzan
Vicar General

Rome, 6 January 2012