

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

The Lord of Life has once again visited us. At 5:00 p.m. today, he called to himself one of the members of our James Alberione community, Albano, Italy:

LA GIOIA ANNA – SR. MARISTELLA
born in Taranto, Italy on 8 September 1939.

Sr. Maristella entered the Congregation in Rome on 19 June 1956 at the age of eighteen. After a period of initial formation, during which she learned the art of bookbinding, she was sent to Terni on apostolic experience.

She made her novitiate in Rome, concluding it with her first profession on 30 June 1960. Following this, she carried out capillary and collective diffusion in Aquila and Benevento. Her model was Maggiorino Vigolungo: she wanted to *make a little progress every day* in imitation of this young apostle of the good press. In her request to renew her vows, she wrote: “I am very happy to be a Daughter of St. Paul and I realize more and more that, in choosing me to be his spouse, the Lord has poured out special graces upon me.... When I come before him every day, I can’t find suitable words to thank him for this great blessing, the fruit of his love.”

For several years, Sr. Maristella lived in the Naples community, where she worked in the book center. Afterward, she began to travel the roads of Italy, in particular the Puglia, Marche, Piedmont, Lazio and Campania regions, to visit the secular book centers scattered in these zones and offer them the latest FSP publications. It was a modern way of widening the range of diffusion and she carried out this new and effective apostolate from the communities of Bari, Ancona, Turin, Rome and Naples. Sr. Maristella’s simplicity and radiant smile facilitated her contact and dialogue with the book sellers who were awaiting an FSP visit to restock their stores with books they knew were trustworthy and absolutely moral.

Later, she carried out the service of driver for a time in the community of Torvaianica and then was assigned to the shipping department in Rome. After this, she carried out various services in the Divine Providence, Castro Pretorio, Via Bosio and Provincialate communities (all in Rome). In spite of her fragile health, which was further undermined by the onset of Parkinson’s disease, Sr. Maristella willingly helped the sisters with kitchen, laundry, wardrobe and reception desk duties.

The worsening of her illness made it advisable to transfer her in 2012 to the James Alberione community, Albano, where she placed herself with trust and docility in the hands of the sisters and nurses. As the malady progressed, she grew in a spirit of self-surrender and learned to find joy in being cared for, enjoying the visits she received and the attention that was shown to her. In the last months of her life, she was able to communicate only through her smile, since the advance of the malady prevented her from speaking and made it hard for her to eat because swallowing was very difficult. She was literally consumed, ready to serve as an offering pleasing to the Lord for the salvation of many.

In the past few days, Sr. Maristella’s already precarious health situation worsened due to a serious form of pneumonia and a high and persistent fever. She tried to express as best she could her gratitude to the sisters and nurses who remained at her bedside up until the last moment of her life, accompanying her with great tenderness and love.

The words of the Apostle Paul in today’s Liturgy have particular resonance in the life and death of this dear sister: “Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” Sr. Maristella, in her littleness, gave God her all, and we are sure that she will now dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Affectionately,


Sr. Anna Maria Parenzan
Superior General

Rome, 19 June 2019