

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

At 12:25 p.m. on the Feast of the Holy Family, God the Father visited the infirmary wing of our Divine Providence community of Via Antonino Pio, Rome, Italy, to call to heaven one of our sisters, just as those gathered around her bedside finished praying the 4<sup>th</sup> glorious mystery of the rosary:

**MARCON TERESA – SR. BERNARDETTA  
born in Rosà (Vicenza), Italy on 30 October 1916.**

Sr. Bernardetta's life was very simple and straightforward. She entered the Congregation in Alba on 11 March 1939. When she left home, her mother gave her a single piece of advice: "Leave behind you your suitcase with all its *no's* and take with you only the one containing all your *yeses*." From that day on, Sr. Bernardetta always made the effort to say yes to God through her many superiors over the years.

Seeking to respond to the call of the Lord always more fully, she made her novitiate in Rome, concluding it with her first profession on 3 March 1941. She spent the next ten years in this city, carrying out the service of "gatekeeper" to the Via Antonino Pio compound (which housed many buildings), and the following ten years (1951-1961) diffusing the Word of God in the diocese of Lodi.

In 1961, she was transferred back to Rome and inserted into the Divine Master community of Via Antonino Pio, which at that time was the headquarters of the Institute's General Government. She spent the rest of her life in this community, dwelling in the shadow of the Queen of Apostles Sanctuary, which she deeply loved. For many years she participated with great fidelity in the Mass which Fr. Alberione celebrated at dawn every morning. It was only two years before she died that she was transferred to the infirmary wing of the community.

Except for her time in Lodi, Sr. Bernardetta always carried out the service of "guardian" of the Via Antonino Pio compound. It was she who unlocked the heavy gates to the property every morning so that externs would have access to the Sanctuary, and she established warm friendships with many people in the neighborhood. By the end of her life, she had come to know several generations of families, all of whom deeply appreciated her welcoming smile, her goodness and her love for the simple things in life. Sr. Bernardetta formed enduring bonds with others because she was capable of listening to them and of taking their situations upon herself. No one entered or left the FSP compound without receiving a word of hope and consolation from her, a magazine or a suggestion about good and constructive reading. Living as she did at the "center" of the Congregation, Sr. Bernardetta was the custodian of a long segment of our Pauline history. She lived for many years in the same community as Maestra Thecla and nourished a deep love for her. Because of this proximity, Sr. Berardetta was also a "reservoir" of precious stories, such as the episode in which, during WWII, German soldiers demanded access to the Via Antonino compound so as to occupy its buildings. A witness to Maestra Thecla's humble and prayerful meeting with the soldiers, Sr. Bernardetta described how M. Thecla knelt on the ground behind the closed gates, praying for salvation and peace, and how the soldiers, after looking around at one another in bafflement, simply left without trying to force their way in.

Sr. Bernardetta had a special love of nature: not only toward the flower gardens that she tended so carefully but also toward the birds, especially the blackbirds that lived in the surrounding trees. She seemed to understand their language because they would respond readily to her calls and invitations.

Our sister's long life drew to a slow, sweet end, laden with merits. Following a few days of hospitalization at Albano, she was sent home and spent her last days in her bedroom. We like to think that it was the Blessed Mother herself, whom Sr. Berardetta deeply loved and frequently invoked through the rosary, who opened the gates of heaven to her and introduced her into eternal joy.

Affectionately,

Sr. Anna Maria Parenzan  
Superior General