

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

At 6:30 a.m. today, Gaudete Sunday, the Lord visited the infirmary wing of our Alba, Italy community to call to the contemplation of his glory our sister:

MEDAGLIA ANNA – SR. GAETANINA
born in Ville Marmentino (Brescia), Italy on 10 January 1920.

If we wanted to send you a picture that capsulizes the life of Sr. Gaetanina, then we would have to capture the image by means of high-speed photography because our sister was perpetually in motion, always hurrying to reach and serve others through the apostolate. She was a tireless, joyous and fervent sister, who never wanted to lose a minute of the precious gift of life and of the Pauline vocation.

She entered the Congregation in the house of Alba on 23 June 1937, preceded by her younger sister, Sr. M. Margherita, who died 5 years ago. After working for a few years in the Alba typography, Anna was sent to Rome to make her novitiate, which concluded with her first profession on 19 March 1941.

Immediately after this she began a long stage of Pauline life as a “propagandist”—the apostolate that most distinguished her. In fact, she spent 25 consecutive and enthusiastic years carrying heavy bags of books to the families of Rovigo, Brescia, Ferrara and Vercelli...not to mention Ravenna—a city she periodically visited from the Ferrara community, since at that time we did not have a house there.

What an abundant catechesis she offered the people she met! How many conversions took place through her! How many funny things happened! Sr. Gaetanina had a lot of stories to tell about those years—stories that revealed the tangible presence and providence of God the Father in the daily lives of the sisters. She recounted, for example, that during World War II the sisters of the Ferrara community took refuge from the falling bombs in the bell tower of the Cathedral. When the rain of bombs finally abated, the sisters discovered that they couldn’t get down from the tower because the staircase was blocked with rubble. They had to climb through a window and lower themselves to the ground by means of a rope tied around their waists....

In 1966, Sr. Gaetanina was transferred to Lugano, Switzerland, where for the next 15 years she dedicated herself to various community services, especially that of cook. A person always ready to interpret things humorously, she once replied in this way to a questionnaire sent out by her provincial superior asking what apostolates she knew how to carry out: “I’m a jack-of-all trades!” she wrote. “You mean to say that after 35 years you still don’t know that? Woe is me!”

In the following years, Sr. Gaetanina lived and worked in the communities of Trent, Bolzano, Rome and Udine successively, where the Lord brought to perfection the work of love he was fashioning through her spirit of ready availability to him. She loved to recall her time as a propagandist in the Alpine valleys of Trent and Alto Adige, which were overflowing with tourists during the summer season. She would have liked to remain in that region for the rest of her life but in 2010 the steady advance of Parkinson’s disease and other maladies linked to advancing age made it necessary to transfer her to Alba, the community in which, more than 60 years earlier, she had begun her long adventure as a Daughter of St. Paul. The attitude of embracing life as a gift remained with her up to her last breath: in fact, up until yesterday she was still urging her caregivers to devote less time to her and more to the other sisters, who were perhaps in greater need....

Almost as a response to this generosity, the Lord invited her through today’s liturgy to rejoice, sing, exult and set out on the “highway to heaven,” along with many other enthusiastic pilgrims.

He called her to receive the reward that our Founder assured us has been promised to all the FSP propagandists. “On your deathbed,” he said, “you will remember all the roads you traveled. Not a single step you took will go unrewarded. A leaflet containing an excerpt of the Gospel is worth more than a glass of water. When, on her deathbed, a sister finally lays down her propaganda bag, an angel will fill it to overflowing with the precious gems she gathered during her life and will take them to Jesus, who will give her an eternal reward” (FSP48, p. 526).

Affectionately,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Sr. Anna Maria Parenzan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sr. Anna Maria Parenzan
Superior General

Rome, 11 December 2016