

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

At about 6:10 this evening, God the Father visited the infirmary wing of our Divine Providence community of Alba, Italy to call to himself our sister:

**MERLO SR. TERESA**  
**born in Castagnito (Cuneo), Italy on 13 September 1926.**

Sr. Teresa's name and birthplace immediately reveal her identity: in fact, she was the daughter of Maestra Thecla's younger brother Carlo. Recalling M. Thecla's brief visits to the family, Sr. Teresa said she carried in her heart her aunt's pressing question: "Is it possible that no one here wants to become a Daughter of St. Paul?" The first niece to follow M. Thecla into the Institute was Vincenzina, who joined the FSP community of Rome in 1941. But World War II was at its height and the young woman found the continual bombings of the city so traumatic that as a novice she finally returned to her family, only to die 15 days later.

Teresa entered the Congregation in Alba on 2 February 1942. She spent the first years of her formation in the Motherhouse, working in the technical apostolate. She made her novitiate in this community, concluding it with her first profession on 29 June 1946. Afterward, she carried out the propaganda apostolate in Modena and then in Turin for 16 years. In 1964, she began a long period of service as superior—a responsibility she carried out lovingly, humbly and with great dignity for the next 40 years, except for brief periods of rest. From her aunt, M. Thecla, she had inherited a great capacity to love others. When she herself was asked what she had learned from M. Thecla, she replied: "I learned to love people and listen to them. I learned discretion, humility and acceptance of the will of God. I felt my aunt's influence especially with regard to my prayer life and my strong desire *to become a saint...*"

As a superior, Sr. Teresa was deeply loved by the sisters and consequently was continually re-appointed to this office in various communities such as Piacenza, Novara, Brescia, Alba and the Generalate. She possessed the art of putting people at ease by creating a serene and welcoming atmosphere in the house and by wisely integrating the apostolate with times of communal prayer, relaxation and sisterly communion. Sr. Teresa was attentive to all the persons entrusted to her care but especially those with greater needs. She often said that her six years as superior of the Generalate were the best years of her life. She delighted in the chance to offer hospitality to FSPs arriving in Rome from all over the world and was also very pleased that the community included an international novitiate and a group of juniors. She felt reinvigorated by her contact with these young members but at the same time she was very attentive toward the older sisters of the community, especially those drawing near to their definitive meeting with the Father. It cost her a lot to leave the Generalate at the end of her second term of office but she embraced her transfer to the Divine Master community of Via Antonino Pio, Rome with simplicity and love. Afterward, she was assigned to the Divine Providence community—also a part of the Via Antonino Pio complex—where she carried out the valuable service of "group leader" for six years.

In 2004, Sr. Teresa willingly accepted a transfer back to her native Piedmont region. Inserted in the San Giuseppe community of Alba, she worked at the reception desk and carried out other household services. She was always very pleased to meet the FSPs who visited Alba on pilgrimage to the sites of our Pauline origins. Last June, it was discovered that Sr. Teresa was suffering from cancer of the stomach and lymph nodes. Although she underwent chemotherapy, the treatment did not improve her condition. She spent the last months of her life in the Alba infirmary, serenely repeating her aunt's words: "How wonderful it will be to meet our Father! When we get to heaven, we will finally be home!"

Sr. Teresa will be buried in the Castagnito cemetery, close to the house in which she was born and the parish church in which both she and M. Thecla were baptized, but we are sure that even now she lives in the presence of the Father, having become a "dwelling place" for the Blessed Trinity.

Affectionately,

  
Sr. Anna Maria Parenzan  
Vicar General

Rome, 23 May 2011