

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

At 7:50 p.m. today, the vigil of the Second Sunday of Advent, one of our sisters in the infirmary wing of the Divine Providence community, Alba, Italy, gently fell asleep in the Lord:

BERNABEI GABRIELLA – SR. MARIA GIOVANNINA
born in Castellarano (Reggio Emilia), Italy on 24 March 1931.

We can imagine that Sr. M. Giovannina was immediately admitted to the choir of angels in heaven because in the last days of her life, gravely ill and unable to swallow even a glassful of water, she continued to softly sing her joy in the Lord. It was how she had spent her whole life: in a spirit of joyful thanksgiving to God for the apostolic mission he had entrusted to her and for which she had prayed and offered herself up to her last moment on earth.

Sr. M. Giovannina entered the Congregation in Rome on 6 October 1950 and after a short time in the technical apostolate was sent to disseminate the Gospel to the families of the Abruzzo region. She returned to Rome to make her novitiate, which concluded with her first profession on 19 March 1954. As a young professed, she returned to the diffusion apostolate, this time in the diocese of Como. After her perpetual profession she spent more than 10 years in Rome, working in the typesetting department of the technical apostolate. Transferred to Verona, she had the chance to finish her studies before being assigned to the St. Paul Film Agency in Trent. With great faith in the grace of her vocation, she accepted the request of the bishop to take charge of the diocesan cinema office, where she coordinated all the diocese's cinema activities. In this role, Sr. M. Giovannina organized animation courses for teachers, the managers of movie theaters, priests and catechists. She even organized a cinema training course for women religious, taught by Sr. Luigina Borrano, fsp.

In 1976, Sr. M. Giovannina began another stage of her life during which she learned to love the book center apostolate through her work in our Treviso and Terni centers. Up to the last day of her life, she continued to imagine that she was still among the many books she had sought to present to countless people over the years. Just three days ago, she confided to the sister assisting her that she hadn't been able to diffuse all the magazines that had been entrusted to her and she asked the sister to complete this task for her. She also had very happy memories of her time in Terni, where she had joyfully carried out the book center apostolate for more than 16 years, and recounted many anecdotes from that time.

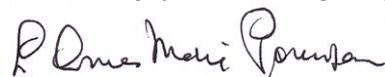
In 2006, Sr. M. Giovannina's loss of memory due to advancing age made it necessary to transfer her to the infirmary wing of the Divine Providence community, Alba. The Pauline apostolate continued to remain at the center of her heart, just as her loving wait for the call of her Spouse now became the center of her life. The last few months of her life, she was able to swallow only semi-liquid foods and during her last days she was unable to swallow at all. But she remained very peaceful, welcoming her caregivers with a big smile and offering her life for the Pauline mission—the part of it that she herself had carried out and the apostolate being carried out by FSPs all over the world. In 1972, she had written: "If one day we decide to open a house in South Africa, please let me know. That country is continually in my thoughts, although I don't know why...."

Several weeks ago, Sr. M. Giovannina asked with great simplicity: "When am I going to die?" And when she was told that her life was in the hands of the Lord, who alone knew the day and hour of her call, she was satisfied, although from that time on she frequently said, "I'm waiting for the Lord."

Sr. M. Giovannina lived the last weeks of her life in serene expectation of her Spouse, who arrived tonight and said in anticipation of tomorrow's Liturgy: "Take off your robe of mourning and misery and put on the splendor of glory from God forever."

This is how we like to think of Sr. M. Giovannina: radiant with joy and thanksgiving in the arms of her Lord forever.

Affectionately,


Sr. Anna Maria Parenzan
Superior General

Rome, 5 December 2015