

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

At 1:00 a.m. last night, “the acceptable time” spoken of in today’s Liturgy arrived for one of the members of our Albano community, Italy:

CANTONE MARIA – SR. ASSUNTA
born in Naples, Italy on 14 June 1930.

Just before Christmas 2014, Sr. Assunta was diagnosed as suffering from cancer of the pancreas. In his divine pedagogy, the Lord accompanied her in her progressive acceptance of this incurable malady, giving her the grace to surrender herself trustingly and wholeheartedly into his hands and those of her doctors. She lived the last stage of her life serenely, surrounded by the affection of her community and lovingly assisted by her sister, Lydia.

Sr. Assunta entered the Congregation in Rome on 17 March 1947 at the age of 17. It was a time in which the large Antonino Pio community was overflowing with energy and enthusiasm due to its many apostolic initiatives and young Maria was immediately placed in the technical apostolate. In March 1953, she began her novitiate, which concluded with her first profession a year later. On that occasion, the Founder expressed a hope that is particularly moving in the light of today’s circumstances. “You will remember this day,” he told Sr. Assunta and her companions, “when you are at the point of death, preparing to pass to eternity, where you will make your final and eternal profession. At that point, the priest will not just say, ‘Receive the hundredfold, together with eternal life,’ but in a certain sense will also introduce you to heaven. At that moment, you will realize that during your lifetime you did indeed receive the hundredfold of grace and you will bless the Lord for this.... Jesus will say to you, ‘Come, spouse of Christ,’ and you will respond with a generous ‘yes,’ just as you generously said ‘yes’ to your divine vocation.”

Today the moment arrived for Sr. Assunta to once again say ‘yes’ to the Lord—the final ‘yes’ in the long chain of them she had generously and promptly said to him throughout her life.

After her profession, she was sent to Albano to manage the small FSP book center the sisters had opened in that town. For almost 20 years this was the “pulpit” from which Sr. Assunta transmitted to others the joy she filled her heart and shone from her sparkling eyes. It was the place where, with a wisdom springing from the Gospel, she sowed and cultivated the seeds of the Pauline vocation in the hearts of the young women she met.

In 1974, she was transferred to the book center of San Benedetto del Tronto and from there to the St. Paul Film Agency of Ancona.

In 1980 she returned to Albano and for the next 30 years worked in the radiology and medical imaging department of Queen of Apostles Hospital. Along with distributing to the patients the results of their radiology exams, she also sought to hearten and infuse hope in those suffering from incurable illnesses.

The sisters of our Albano community remember Sr. Assunta’s generosity, punctuality and the precision with which she carried out her work. They also recall how much she loved the mission carried out by Queen of Apostles Hospital and the warm relations she established with its personnel.

In 2008, advancing age made it necessary for her to withdraw from active service in the hospital and accept assignment to the community’s reception desk. It was a difficult transition for her since it meant loss of direct contact with the hospital’s patients and staff, but she carried out her new duties with her characteristic thoroughness and generosity.

Today, Ash Wednesday, is particularly poignant when we reflect on the fact that Sr. Assunta’s physical body has now begun its gradual return to “ashes.” We make our own the prayer of today’s Liturgy—a plea for the gift of new life and light—in the hope that she will be joyfully celebrating Easter in the company of Jesus this year.

Affectionately,


Sr. Anna Maria Parenzan
Superior General

Rome, 18 February 2015