

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

At 8:00 this evening, God our Father visited the cardiology wing of the Civil Hospital of Alba, Italy, to call to himself our sister:

TONNI CATERINA – SR. MARIA GIGLIOLA
born in Vallio (Brescia), Italy on 6 April 1929.

In the simplicity of her life, Sr. Maria Gigliola disseminated among us an abundance of goodness, generosity, discretion and love. Even before she entered the Congregation, her pastor underscored her exemplary behavior, kind heart and firm piety.

She was a “mature fruit” of the very fervent and creative vocation work carried out by the members of our Brescia community. Chronicles of the time recount the sisters’ strong commitment to prayer for vocations, their example of harmonious and serene communal life, their screening of various vocation documentaries that touched the hearts of young women, their ongoing contact with young women interested in our Institute and efforts to get to know their families, and above all the courses of spiritual exercises organized for them in Alba, which were truly unforgettable experiences for prospective candidates.

Sr. M. Gigliola entered the Congregation in Alba on 5 January 1951. After several years of formation, she had the chance to experience the joys and fatigues of “propaganda” in the diocese of Ferrara. Following this, she was sent to Rome to make her novitiate, which concluded with her first profession on 19 March 1955—the year dedicated to the Divine Master. She spent her Juniorate in the community of Cremona, where she worked in the book center and learned first hand how the Center could be a place of evangelization, the promotion of culture and a point of encounter with people from every walk of life.

After her perpetual profession, made in Rome on the Feast of St. Joseph 1960, Sr. M. Gigliola carried out various apostolic and community services. In Lodi, she worked in the kitchen; in Albano, she was entrusted with various responsibilities in the community; in Trent and Turin, she dedicated her physical and intellectual energies to apostolic activities in the St. Paul Film Agency.

At the age of 60, she was assigned to the Mother House in Alba to work in the huge bindery. She spent the last 30 years of her life there, dedicating all her talents day after day to giving a beautiful and dignified “dress” to numerous publications, especially the many editions of the Bible that were printed by the thousands and disseminated throughout all the regions of Italy. And when her strength began to decline, she continued to lend a loving hand in the refectory and in the preparation of snacks and coffee for the community’s lay collaborators.

Last year, Sr. M. Gigliola underwent surgery for intestinal cancer. But despite her very fragile health, she continued to be a serene presence in the community, bearing her illness with a true spirit of self-renunciation. With humility and gentleness, she willingly lent a hand in assisting the neediest patients in the infirmary.

But today Sr. M. Gigliola was not feeling well and, almost like a premonition, said she felt like she was dying. She was rushed to the emergency room of Alba’s Civil Hospital, where the doctors discovered a heart attack in progress and said that it had already done severe damage. All the treatments they administered were worthless: the gates of heaven had already been flung open to our sister and her Lord and Master was waiting to accompany her to the eternal wedding banquet. The words of today’s Liturgy resound with special strength in the life and death of this dear sister: “If we have died with Christ, we shall also live with him; if we persevere, we shall also reign with him...for he remains faithful!”

Now that Sr. M. Gigliola has been welcomed to the eternal Easter of heaven, may she experience all the prophetic power of these words, the beauty of her covenant with God and the incredible degree of his love.

Affectionately,

Rome, 4 June 2020


Sr. Anna Maria Parenzan