

ISTITUTO PIA SOCIETÀ  
FIGLIE DI S. PAOLO  
CASA GENERALIZIA  
Via S. Giovanni Eudes, 25  
00163 Roma  
Tel. 06.661 3039 - Fax 06.661 57 208



Dearest Sisters,

With deep emotion we inform you that shortly after 3:00 p.m. today, God the Father visited the Intensive Care Unit of St. Camillus Hospital, Rome, Italy, to call to himself our sister:

**FELICANI ENRICA – SR. MARIA IMELDE**  
**born in Rastellino Castelfranco Emilia (Modena), Italy on 28 July 1942.**

A couple of weeks ago, Sr. M. Imelde slipped and broke her ankle, which had to be put in a cast, but this discomfort did not explain the feelings of nausea and malaise she unexpectedly experienced this morning, shortly after which her heart stopped beating. She was urgently hospitalized and the doctors rapidly assessed her situation, which turned out to be extremely serious. But in spite of all their efforts to save her, she was called to the kingdom of heaven today, the feast of Our Lady of the Snows, the patroness of her home parish.

There are no adequate words to express the self-donation, humility and generosity that characterized the life of this dear sister, along with her deep love for the African mission to which she has dedicated almost thirty years of her Pauline life. We can affirm that Sr. M. Imelde did not seek personal gratification in anything she did. In great simplicity and to the very end, she spent all her energies trying not to burden her sisters with her declining health and fatigue, always ready to take upon her own shoulders the most difficult and unappealing community tasks. A lover of poverty and sacrifice, she was an authentic witness to the values of the Gospel, which she lived quietly, selflessly and with great commitment on a daily basis.

She entered the Congregation in Rome on 15 January 1962. She underwent her initial formation and made her novitiate in that community, concluding it with her first profession on 30 June 1966. On her Golden Jubilee of religious consecration, her heart brimmed over with gratitude. “My thanks to the Congregation that welcomed me in my poverty, placed its trust in me and supported my growth. The Lord, with his infinite grace, has walked with me and protected my every step. He has loved me immensely and I will never be able to thank him enough for that... *Miserere and Magnificat!*” And she added: “I am available to do the will of God peacefully and serenely. Whatever he wants, I also want, in a spirit of faith.”

As a young professed, Sr. Imelde carried out the itinerant apostolate in the dioceses of Pavia, Alba, Rovigo, Verona and Vercelli. But her heart yearned for the mission *ad gentes*, even though she realized, on a practical level, its difficulties. In 1973, she joyfully joined the group of sisters who three years earlier had brought the FSP presence to Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. She served as local superior there for three mandates, fostering the community’s insertion in the Tanzanian culture and promoting the sisters’ study of the local language, Swahili, so as to extend the Pauline mission to every part of the country through parish book displays and pastoral work for vocations.

In 1984, when the new East Africa-Mozambique Delegation was established, Sr. Imelde was transferred to Nairobi, Kenya and as local superior and delegation bursar, she had the joy of helping that promising new circumscription take its first steps. After a pause for rest and updating in the Generalate community, in 1990 she returned to Dar, where she served two more terms as superior. With the help of the young women in formation, she produced audio cassettes that favored a beautiful and attractive diffusion of the Christian message. In 1997, she rejoined the Nairobi community, where she worked in the bursar’s office. And finally, on 15 Dec. 2001, she returned definitively to Italy, where she was assigned to the Generalate, certainly not to rest but to continue her self-offering by means of the thousands of services that were necessary in such a large community: maintenance of the buildings and the garden, the accompaniment of lay collaborators, the security of the house, which often required getting up at night to double-check the complicated alarm system...

Sr. Imelde’s countless behind-the-scenes duties kept her in the background, but she was nevertheless a presence that instilled peace, tranquility and security in the community. She confided: “I have always found strength in the Lord and in obedience to his will.” The last 20 years of her life were challenging ones: her health was worsening but the *great Love of her life* enabled her to tirelessly meet every need presented to her.

In a letter to the Superior General, she expressed her sorrow at having failed to incite the sisters to take more risks. We are sure that now, from heaven, Sr. Imelde will continue to watch over, love and guide the steps of our young African apostles so that, through them, the flame of faith may burn more brightly and the Gospel may reach the ends of the earth. Affectionately,

  
Sr. Anna Maria Parenzan

Rome, 5 August 2002