

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



Dear Sisters

On the eve of Good Shepherd Sunday, at 1.30 p.m.(local time), in the Giacomo Alberione community of Albano, one of our sisters was led to the pastures of eternal life:

**CANU MARIA ANTONIA sr MARIA LUCINA
born in Ittiri (Sassari), Italy on 8th September 1934.**

In an interview published few years ago in L'Osservatore Romano, entitled: "The Sister of a Million Books," Sr Lucina herself related: "I entered the convent when I was sixteen and a half years old and it was books that brought me there. I felt the religious vocation, but as a young girl I was very lively and was naturally not very inclined to the severity of religious life. One day, two young, smiling and friendly sisters arrived in my village, knocking at doors to sell books. I soon found myself with my suitcase saying goodbye to Sardinia..."

Sr M Lucina entered the Congregation in Rome on 12 January 1950, the Holy Year. After a period of formation and apostolic experience in Gorizia, she went to Rome for her novitiate which concluded with her first profession on 19 March 1954. She immediately began her long service in the book centers for sixty-four consecutive years, with wisdom, intelligence, dynamism and great love, in some of the most active and busy book centers in Italy: Verona, Brescia, Udine, Cagliari, Sassari, Turin, Trento, Treviso, Rome Castro, Naples Capodimonte and Naples Duomo.

In Brescia and in Trento, she served as superior without ever neglecting the task of the book center, which was always a priority for her. She recounted: "I sold about eighty books a day, for two hundred and fifty working days a year, for sixty-four years... just over a million books." She added: "Maybe those books were read by more people. I often think about this in the evening, after prayer, before falling asleep. Where are all those books now? How many rooms can be filled with a million books? And above all, I like to think about how much good those books that have passed through my hands have done. Maybe a life has radically changed thanks to one of those books."

Her testimony of life left one fascinated by the competence and the original way in which she herself handled, caressed and touched the books, as if they were precious and delicate jewels. She was a true teacher of the apostolate for hundreds of sisters who learned from her, not a technique, but a way of life. A journalist commented: "It is extraordinary how this sister, who has never studied theology, has great theological competence; she is an expert in every field and every author of systematics, she quotes Denzinger from memory..." Sr Lucina devoted her free time to studying in order to know the content of the books and to be able to offer them with confidence. It was usual to meet her on her way to rest with piles of books in her hands. She also valued moments of recreation as time to prepare herself for the mission. She confided "Through books I tried my hand at spiritual direction: I understood what the spiritual question was and looked for the book that could offer an answer." And from the book center, with her ability to communicate, she was able to establish beautiful and lasting apostolic relationships.

On her sixtieth anniversary of profession, she wrote: "How many encounters, how many gifts received through the apostolate, what a rich life received and given... the Lord has been truly great and good to me. I can never thank him enough for having made me blossom in his Fatherly heart and for having made my little life bear fruit in goodness."

She had been in the Giacomo Alberione community in Albano for about three years. Last February, she was also struck by *Covid-19*, which caused her interstitial pneumonia. She was admitted to the Ospedale dei Castelli and nearby hospitals, but was eventually found negative [*of Covid*] and returned to the community. However, the respiratory and blood problems got increasingly worse and soon led her to an encounter with the Good and Beautiful Shepherd, the Shepherd who has an intimate knowledge of each sheep and for whom in love, he gives his life.

Affectionately,

Rome, 24 April 2021


sr Anna Maria Parenzan