

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,

At 2:00 a.m. last night, the Second Sunday after Christmas, while all was wrapped in profound silence, one of the members of the “St. Paul” sub-group of our Divine Providence community, Via Antonino Pio, Rome, Italy, was called to eternal life:

GUIDETTI ADELMA OLGA – SR. MARIA LORENZINA
born in Baiso (Reggio Emilia), Italy, on 23 July 1919.

A sister over a hundred years old, she maintained intact over all these decades her vivacity of thought, her interest in others, her openness to friendship, her wit and her ease of communication. We thank Sr. M. Lorenzina for all the good she spread among us in her over-82 years of religious profession, having made her first vows on 10 February 1939. Let us allow her to tell us herself about the beauty of her Pauline life with the expertise of a writer, the passion of a speaker and the language of a journalist—skills which she exercised abundantly over the years. Here are some excerpts from the warm and moving testimonies she left us:

The two Daughters of St. Paul who were visiting the families in my town to spread the good press asked my mother a simple, spontaneous question: “Ma’am, how many children do you have?” “Four,” she replied. “In fact, I’m in the midst of preparing some small things to send with one of my daughters who is going to Correggio (Reggio Emilia) to study to be a teacher.” “Madam, at our Mother House in Alba, we also have girls who are studying to be teachers.” “Really?” my mother exclaimed. “How much does it cost there?” It turned out that the boarding fee was less than that in Correggio... “Then I’ll send my daughter to you,” my mother declared, “because you’ll raise her well and she’ll study harder!”

Thus, on 17 January 1931, I arrived in Alba, accompanied by my mother. Early in the morning, we set out for Piazza San Paolo, pushing hard to open the door of the Temple that dominates the square. Once inside, we were met with an unforgettable sight. The big church was filled with priests (some in the pews, others celebrating at the high altar and side altars), many clerics in cassocks, many young people, many nuns praying... My mother left before evening to return home, and I was enrolled among the students—the *Immacolatine* (“Little Immaculates,”), as they were called. I was twelve years old.

What was there in Alba in 1931? Nothing, even though everything was already there, in seed form. There was the House, the Temple [of St. Paul], the community, prayer, study, school and the apostolate: printing, bookbinding, the bookstore, shipping department, circulating libraries. The printing and binding of books were done in common by the Society of St. Paul and the Daughters of St. Paul. There were magazines, there were the first branch houses.... There was great excitement in the air when news began to circulate—and then was confirmed—that some members of the House would be leaving for Brazil. My years of formation, spent in Alba, were an interweaving of prayer, study, school, work in the typography and bindery, noisy and cheerful recreations, volleyball games....

Gradually and serenely, I was filled with a yearning to do what the sisters did: to proclaim the Gospel, to make Jesus known, to go as a missionary to faraway places. The words written in large letters on posters all over the house: *Glory to God and peace to all*, not only struck my eye but also my heart.

Primo Maestro and Prima Maestra Thecla were the heart and soul of everything—the guides of our Family, which was taking decisive steps toward a future of holiness and grace. My first meeting with Prima Maestra took place in Alba in the spring of 1935. Although I am nearly blind now, the image of her is indelibly engraved on my memory: she was a beautiful, welcoming person with unforgettable eyes...

After making my religious vestition, my apostolic experiences began. I was assigned to the writing apostolate, as a preparation for higher studies in philosophy, theology, and the sacred sciences—classes desired and organized by Primo Maestro, which I had the good fortune to attend.

At the end of our studies, to confirm that they were to be used for the writing apostolate, all the students had to submit a final paper, which would then be printed. My paper was on *The Selected Letters of St. Francis De Sales*. I sent the manuscript to Primo Maestro, who returned it to me with a brief note: “From

now on,” he wrote, “never put down your pen.” But in all honesty, I have to say that over the years I used my pen less than I had planned and laid it down time and again for long periods.

An initiative that occupied me for ten years or more—not full-time but full-heartedly—was the many “Gospel Days” that were organized by the sisters in our local communities. My contribution to these “Feasts of the Gospel” was to guide conferences, meetings and reflections for different parish groups and associations. It was a marvelous way to proclaim Christ the Master, Way, Truth and Life, and it is an apostolic activity that I would like to see revitalized and updated today.

For Christmas 1955, the inaugural issue of the weekly magazine *Così*, published by the Daughters of St. Paul, rolled off the press. Months earlier, Primo Maestro had called me to his office and told me to pray, think about and prepare myself to start a magazine for young women. He wanted me to be its editor-in-chief. The development of this initiative is an interesting but long story, so I won’t go into it here. Just a short reflection: the periodical eventually had to be closed but the vision of the Founder remains alive and relevant because he continued to see the Daughters of St. Paul carrying out their mission in the heart of communications through the dynamics of updated and timely publications.

The story of my Pauline life would be blurred and fragmentary if it were not for the figure of Prima Maestra Thecla—an icon of beauty and goodness. I didn’t just see, meet or listen to her.... I *lived with her* for almost thirty years: first in Alba, from 1931-1936, and then in Rome, from 1938-1962. I loved Prima Maestra and she loved me. Among my many memories of her are some special ones that fill my heart with joy and nostalgia. I had the priceless privilege of accompanying Maestra Thecla on two of her trips: one to England and the other to India. I admired her maternal affection for each sister, her concern for the welfare of the communities, her interest in their various apostolic initiatives and their concrete ways of inserting themselves in the local Churches. She rekindled our sisters’ hope and recharged their enthusiasm wherever she went. My trip to India with Maestra Thecla had unexpected ramifications. In fact, in 1962, when Prima Maestra told me that there would be a change in the directorship of *Così*, she said: “I’m sending you to a place where I’ve seen that they love you. I’m sending you to India, to Bombay!”

This decision of Prima Maestra launched me on a long series of missionary journeys that extended to the Philippines, Borneo, Japan and Korea. My later sojourns in the United States, England and Australia were also unforgettable and enriching experiences. I had the chance to live in new worlds, unknown countries, different cultures. Above all, I got to know many Daughters of St. Paul: I saw where they lived, what they did, and how they dedicated themselves to the cause of the Gospel with great faith, courage and enthusiasm.

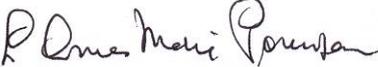
When I returned to Italy, I was appointed superior of two Italian communities: first Alba and later the Divine Providence community of Rome. This made it possible for me to compare my wealth of experiences abroad with local experiences. Both Alba and DP Rome were vibrant, complex communities that, despite their difficulties and problems, knew how to build, to approach things creatively, to keep their eyes open, and to *move ahead*.

Sr. M. Lorenzina’s life will remain an inspiration to all of us and to the sisters who will follow us in the beautiful adventure of the Pauline life. Her example as a writer, as a much-loved Delegation superior in Great Britain and Australia, as a provincial delegate in Italy, and as the superior of large and exigent FSP communities, will endure. Her dynamism and enthusiasm for her Pauline vocation always remained vigorous, and she refreshed it ceaselessly until a simple fall six days ago made her suddenly dependent on others for everything.

In the moving testimonies she shared with various groups in formation, she loved to recall a conversation with Sr. Filippina Busso in which, with luminous eyes, her dear friend confided to her: “What a beautiful life we’ve led!” And Sr. Lorenzina repeated: “Yes—a beautiful life in an admirable Family! How marvelous to be part of it!”

This is the wonderful legacy that Sr. M. Lorenzina leaves us, as we continue to revel in the joy of the Christmas season and she takes her place in the assembly of the saints (cf. Sir. 24:12).

Affectionately,


Sr. Anna Maria Parenzan

Rome, 2 January 2022