



22 luglio 1922 - 22 luglio 2022

Rome, 22 July 2022

Dearest sisters,

On 22 July, the Church invites us to celebrate the liturgical feast of Mary of Magdala, the disciple who, in the garden, sees, recognizes, witnesses to and proclaims the resurrection of Jesus. In her call to discipleship, which took place through her encounter with Jesus, who freed her from seven demons, a new vocation—a missionary one—is offered to Mary Magdalene. In fact, the risen Christ makes her an “apostle to the apostles,” calling her to *get up and set out*, using the energy flowing from her meeting with him, to be “an apostle of the new and greatest hope” (Pope Francis).

By the benevolent design of Providence, on the day of the radiant feast of the woman whom we chose as the icon of our last General Chapter, we celebrate the Centenary of the private perpetual profession of Maestra Thecla and eight other sisters. The account of that event is restrained and essential, as always, and a photo of the newly professed taken in their kitchen in Alba offers us a treasured remembrance of that important beginning. But it does not end there. This is how Sr. Teresa Raballo remembers the moment:

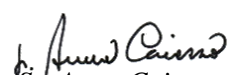
After breakfast, our Founder, the Theologian James Alberione, without any preparation or ceremony, with all of us gathered in the kitchen doing our work, said to Teresa, “Here are your daughters: do what you want with them.” Then, turning to all of us, he said, “This is your mother!” That was how Prima Maestra was made Superior General. She looked at us, letting two tears fall from her big eyes because of the responsibility she felt, but she was serene as ever in fulfilling God’s will.

Like Mary of Magdala, for Teresa Merlo—now Maestra Tecla—an important new call took place that would make her a wise and faithful mediator of what the Founder had in mind for us—a call that would make her, for the rest of her life, the mother and formator of her daughters, to whom she transmitted “the beauty of participating in God’s mission” (CD 2019, 5). In her and through her, the Lord performed amazing things: “We witnessed great things without realizing they were great, because they were done in God’s style” (Sr. Assunta Bassi).

We want to dedicate the coming months to Maestra Thecla, because we need her faith, her words, her examples, her encouragement. Let us joyfully welcome her among us once again, transforming 22 July into *a day of great celebration and grateful prayer*. Let us ask Prima Maestra to pray for our communities, for the apostolate and for new missionary vocations.

Please ask her to pray for me too. Thank you.

With deep affection.


Sr. Anna Caiazza
Superior General