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Dearest Sisters,

At 4 p.m. today, the XXXIII Sunday of Ordinary Time, the Divine Master visited our Thecla Merlo community of Albano, Italy, to invite to the eternal wedding feast in his kingdom of light, our sister:

**SANSONE VENERINA – Sr. MARIA LETIZIA**  
**born in Massa Lucania (Salerno), Italy, on 8 September 1927.**

In the year 2000, on her 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of religious profession, Sr. M. Letizia wrote: “My story is like all stories: interwoven with sufferings and joys, weariness and enthusiasm, and above all the great gifts the Lord has sowed on my path. The more time passes, the more I discover that he is the infinite, incomparable *Lord* of my existence, who has given me the amazing gift of his love so that I might make a gift of it, in my turn, to everyone who crosses my path. This is a stupendous discovery....”

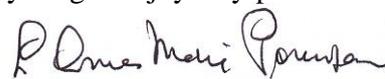
Sr. M. Letizia’s “story” as a Daughter of St. Paul began on 20 November 1946, when she entered the Congregation in our Divine Providence community of Rome. After her initial formation and a period of apostolic experience in Salerno, she became part of the large group of novices who made their first professions on 19 March 1950 in Rome. The Holy Year was approaching and our Founder repeatedly urged the sisters to open the doors of their hearts to new apostolic and spiritual horizons. Sr. M. Letizia was not sent abroad like some of her co-novices, but the itinerant apostolate she carried out in her early years as an FSP and later in the book centers was permeated by the missionary ardor that she had learned directly from the lips of Blessed James Alberione. She said that she felt called to “live in a world without boundaries” and that she yearned to “belong to Christ without any mediation, to love him totally,” dedicating her entire being to helping other people get to know and love him.

She spent her Juniorate in the communities of Verona, Alba, Novara, Spoleto, and Palermo. After her perpetual profession in 1955, she continued her book center mission in various regions of Italy, in continual contact with the many people who flocked to the Province’s big and beautiful apostolic centers in Verona, Cagliari, Cosenza, Salerno, Messina and Massa Carrara.

Her 10-year period as manager of the Pavia book center (1989-1999) remained etched in her heart as it surely did in the hearts of the many people whom she gifted with her jovial smile, sense of humor and enthusiasm for proclaiming the Word of God. Before leaving for Palermo, her new destination, she participated in an enlightening interview for Pavia’s diocesan newspaper, recounting the significance of our FSP book centers in her life as an apostle. She said that they were privileged environments for getting to know not only particular places and local churches, but above all for getting to know the faces and hearts of the people who lived there. She wrote: “I would like my presence to be a caress for those who feel defeated by life; an instrument of serenity and hope for those who find themselves lost.... I want to be a light that points out paths of peace and good.”

When she was transferred to Palermo in 1999, Sr. M. Letizia felt that she was being called to open a new chapter of her life. In that large and beautiful Sicilian book center, she immediately became known for her competence, the welcome she extended to everyone, and her love for the Gospel. Placed in charge of the center’s biblical sector, she determined to get to know the Word of God more profoundly through its various and numerous editions, and by delving into many different biblical commentaries in order to be able to respond better to the wide variety of questions asked by priests, seminarians and lay people.

In 2014, Sr. M. Letizia was moved to the Thecla Merlo community, Albano, for reasons of health and advancing age. She did not have any particular illnesses, and until last April, when the covid pandemic confined her to bed, it was common to meet her in the hallways of the house, smiling as she moved around with the help of a walker or wheelchair. The Lord called our sister to heaven somewhat suddenly, but in serenity and peace. We like to think that, at this supreme moment, she reaffirmed what she had written back in the year 2000: “I thank the Lord for everything and joyfully praise him for his love and mercy.” Affectionately,

  
Sr. Anna Maria Parenzan

Rome, 13 November 2022