

Rome, 5 February 2023

Dearest Sisters and young women in formation,

Speaking one day with Sr. Vincenza Salvà—who left us a few months ago at the age of 105—I was particularly struck by one thing she said: “When Prima Maestra would meet with anyone, she would look into the person’s eyes and her first question would be, ‘How are you? How is your family?’ She was a real mother; she had a mother’s heart.” *Mother* was the word Fr. Alberione used to define her. “You will have other Prime Maestre,” he said, “but she alone and above all was the Mother of your Institute.”

In reality, Prima Maestra carried the whole Pauline Family in her big, motherly heart—a Family she had seen come into being and with whose growth she had cooperated, as the Founder himself testified, saying: “She felt its problems, she rejoiced in its development, she kept informed about it. She remembered and prayed for it in her final illness.”

Our brothers, the *Society of St. Paul*, considered her to be their mother. Maestra Thecla had seen them grow, work and sacrifice themselves for the sake of the Gospel alongside her daughters. She loved them tenderly, and they returned her love. When relations between the two Congregations became a bit strained, she intervened decisively, recalling Primo Maestro’s desire and directive that the two Institutes should walk together, in “a clearly-understood collaboration that assures the life and development of both Congregations, fosters their initiatives, and helps them share sacrifices and merits” (VPC 138). He always urged that “justice, charity and goodness prevail.”

Maestra Thecla supported and fortified his foundation of the *Pious Disciples*, whom she always loved and appreciated because she understood the purpose of their mission from the very beginning. When, after many years of toil and travail, the Congregation attained its autonomy, she rejoiced. “I am happy,” she exclaimed, “very happy with your progress. May the Lord bless you! Go forward!”

Prima Maestra prayed for and collaborated with the birth of the *Pastorelle Sisters*, heartening them with her words, prayers and benevolence. In a note to them, she said, “I am following the wonderful things you are doing as you move ahead and I rejoice in your progress. Blessed be the Lord!”

Maestra Thecla felt great tenderness and warm, farsighted love for the *Apostoline Sisters*, the youngest Congregation of the Pauline Family. She sustained, inspired and helped them. When they launched their periodical *Se vuoi*, she urged the Daughters of St. Paul to welcome the publication into their book centers and promote it.

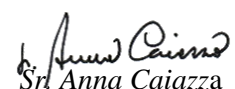
The role of the Prima Maestra in the foundation of the *Aggregated Institutes* was very significant. She supported Fr. Alberione when he started them, prayed intensely for them, and spurred on those who were seeking and accompanying their first members.

Maestra Thecla—who was the fruit of the prayers of the Pauline Family’s first *Cooperators*, as the Founder himself attests—always urged us to welcome them, train them and involve them in the mission of the PF. She prayed and offered herself for this intention.

Sisters, it is a very positive thing that we are and recognize ourselves to be a Family. And it is also wonderful to feel that our desire and commitment to walking ever more closely together in proclaiming the Gospel through the diversity and complementarity of our gifts is a precious heritage passed on to us by Maestra Thecla.

Fr. Alberione said that he often prayed to her for the whole Pauline Family. Let us do the same, asking that her maternal intercession will strengthen our unity, as a sign of the times and a witness for today.

With deep affection,


Sr. Anna Caiazza
Superior General