



Dearest Sisters,

At 1:20 a.m. on the night between Holy Thursday and Good Friday, God our merciful Father visited our Divine Providence community, Rome, Italy, to call to himself our sister:

MASTROSTEFANO LIVIA – SR. M. MERCEDES
born in Velletri, Rome, on 19 March 1926.

A truly multifaceted person, Sr. Mercedes entered the Congregation at a very young age and lived her Pauline vocation with passion. She deeply loved the Founder and Maestra Thecla, who watched over her development with great tenderness and toward whom she felt an ever-deepening fidelity and love. Aware of the importance of history, she devoted her whole life to living the “admirable Pauline story” more and more profoundly in her many diverse responsibilities over the years. Sr. Mercedes was a self-taught sister, who learned to understand the Pauline apostolate and its application to specific contexts as these emerged little by little with the passing of time.

She entered the Congregation in the house in Rome on 20 Sept. 1936, at the age of ten. In the winter of 1939, she was sent to Alba to learn the art of typography and she quickly became an expert at it. At the Motherhouse, the sisters lived in great poverty. Sr. Mercedes recalled that on winter mornings it was often necessary to use a clog (a wooden house shoe) to break the ice in the water basin in order to wash their faces. She made her novitiate in Alba, concluding it with her first profession on 3 Oct. 1946. She also made her perpetual profession there in 1951 and then carried out editorial duties in addition to her work in the typography. It was Sr. Mercedes who created the very popular “Joined Hands” publishing project that offered books as gifts for the celebration of the sacraments of Christian initiation. A version of *Pinocchio* for pre-schoolers and the preparation of the first pages of countless parish bulletins (which were printed in large numbers in Alba at that time) can also be listed among her apostolic services.

In 1957 she was transferred to the Albano community for reasons of health, but by the following year she was able to be assigned to the FSP typography in Rome and then to Udine to collaborate in the book center. Afterward, Sr. Mercedes made a valuable contribution in the diocesan offices in Massa. In 1967 she was moved to the FSP “Writers Community” in Grottaferrata. For a short time she served as local superior in Viterbo, but following this she was forced to spend another four years as a patient at Albano, where she also carried out the work of secretary in the blood analysis laboratory.

In 1976 she was transferred to the Generalate in Rome and then, in 1979, to the Divine Providence community in the same city, where she lived until her death. Her official apostolate was the reorganization of the catechetical and then editorial archives. But her interests in the archival field extended to the entire Pauline world, in particular to the history of the FSPs and the Pauline Family, with special reference to the lived experience of the Founder and the Paulines of the “first hour.” She was interested in researching old books, especially the sources of Alberionian thought, and any details that might cast greater light on the story of the Pauline Family. Her office was filled to overflowing with documents—treasures that she herself had scoured innumerable flea markets to obtain. Sr. Mercedes was proud to display her vintage series of magazines published by the Pauline Family from its very beginnings. A feather in her cap was her collection of archive photos printed in the FSP magazine *Così*.

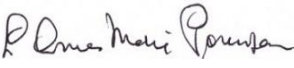
She dreamed of and made detailed plans to set up a large, permanent Pauline Family exhibit and a museum on the charism. Feeling the urgency to communicate more deeply the facts she was unearthing, she willingly seized the proposals of various magazine editors (especially those of the periodicals *The Mother of God* and *The Pauline Cooperators*) to prepare short articles, even very simple ones, on the history of the Pauline Family. Sr. Mercedes had become a real point of reference in this regard, so much so that the various editors of the Alberionian *Opera Omnia* fervently thanked her for the help they had received from her. On her part, she herself had published several booklets of anecdotes about Fr. Alberione

and Maestra Thecla and had edited in digital format a veritable *Alberionian Anthological Dictionary*. It is impossible to sum up in just a few lines Sr. Mercedes' dynamism, her ability to communicate, and her repeated insistence that the Pauline Family remain faithful to the Founder.

The Word of God was the beacon that gave direction to her entire life. In fact, in her eagerness to live an ever-fuller relationship with Jesus Master, she often confronted her own life with his words in the Gospel of Mark: "Those who want to become my followers must deny themselves, take up their cross daily, and follow me" (8:35). The booklet Sr. Mercedes wrote about our Constitutions contains a personal note confirming the profound experience of communion she lived with the Master. It reads: "Thank you, Jesus, for [giving me] the capacity to love. Thank you for understanding me and accepting me with all my faults. Thank you for smiling at me... I used to love you out of convenience, now I realize that I love you because of something I feel inside of me. You are a different Jesus, a different Father, a different Spirit from the Trinity I used to know!"

In 1998, she had expressed the desire: to finish her life like the good thief and hear Jesus say to her: "Today you will be with me in heaven." We are sure that today, Good Friday, Sr. Mercedes is already contemplating our resurrected Lord, who has welcomed her to the endless joy of heaven.

Affectionately,


Sr. Anna Maria Parenzan

Rome, 29 March 2024