



Dear Sisters,

In the context of the First Vespers of the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ King of the Universe, we received the news that today, November 21, 2015, at 6:00 PM, in Sanfrè (CN); the Bridegroom arrived to call to the eternal wedding feast, our sister

**MARIA LIBERA SR. M. ALMA,  
born in Montegaldella (VI) on March 3, 1923.**

Not yet twenty, Maria entered the Congregation in Alba (CN) on November 12, 1942, heedless of the Second World War that was fully engaged. Bearing witness to the depth of spirit and seriousness with which she undertook the path of consecrated life is a note she sent to the Novice Mistress asking for direction in her spiritual journey: *“Interiorly I experience something that I cannot express, and often when I am before the Tabernacle, I cannot keep from crying. Jesus has bestowed many graces and favors upon my soul. What can I do other than to give myself entirely to him in love? Yes, I want to be a pious disciple of love.”* At the conclusion of the regular novitiate in Alba, she made her First Profession on March 25, 1945, receiving the name *“Maria Alma”*, in honor of the Divine Maternity of Mary.

Immediately thereafter, she was sent to Ivrea, then to Florence, dedicated to the common Pauline mission for the diffusion of the Gospel. After some time, she was sent to Rome for the priestly apostolate and editorial work. During this time, we are in the midst of the complex itinerary of the institutional approval, together with all that this entailed for the superiors and the sisters. Witness to the confidence placed in Sr. M. Alma, is that, while still a young religious, on January 12, 1948, Blessed Timothy Giaccardo entrusted her with the task of preparing the telegram announcing the pontifical approval of our Institute: *Eugenio placuit - Pius probabit* (“Eugenio is pleased and Pius approved”): an expression indicating that the man - Eugenio Pacelli – is in favor and as Pope - Pius XII – places upon it the seal of the Church).

In 1948 she was in Alba for a period of study during which, in the Pauline tradition, she was also assigned to the bindery. She made her Perpetual Profession at the Mother House on March 25, 1950. Toward the end of that same year, she began her missionary activity: for one and a half years she was in Sherbrooke (Canada) dedicated to the priestly apostolate. In June of 1952 she was sent to the Diocesan Seminary in Fresno, California (USA) and remained there for five years. In the following years, her assignments would alternate among the communities of Staten Island (NY), Dearborn, and Fresno, passing from the priestly apostolate to the liturgical apostolate. During these years, also thanks to an excellent grasp of the English language, she fostered many apostolic relationships with seminarians, priests, and benefactors. Even after her return to Italy at the end of 1969, she continued to cultivate these friendships and maintain contacts. The modest donations she received were all placed at the service of the Congregation.

Upon her return to Italy, she offered her collaboration at the Souvenir shop at Saint Peter’s. In 1971, when the service at the Vatican Telephone Switchboard began, she was called to be one of the switchboard operators. In this capacity, she had the advantage of having learned various languages during her missionary experience. She carried out her ministry with competence, aware that this was a service to the person of the Holy Father himself. She realized that hers was a voice speaking from the center of catholicity, and communicating with various places around the world. She was also mindful of the need to continually improve in the etiquette of communication, especially in kindness and clarity, while remaining discreet.

During her nearly thirty years in the Vatican, Sr. M. Alma, with an apostolic spirit, would continue to be a point of reference for many English-speaking visitors, especially Americans. She manifested a special predilection for seminarians, for whom she would facilitate an audience with Pope John Paul II, and maintain contact with them until their priestly ordination.

In 2000 she was transferred to the Italian Province, while remaining in the Provincial House in Rome, where she continued to serve as the switchboard operator for the compound at Via Portuense. With declining physical energy, she was transferred to the Blessed Timothy Community in Rome, and then to the infirmary in Cinisello Balsamo (Milan). Recently she was transferred to Sanfrè (Cuneo).

She is remembered as a Sister Disciple who was extremely concrete, and who lived the present in simplicity. She was always grateful and joyful.

She carefully kept some holy cards handwritten by the Founder. In one undated message we read:

*“Our yeses to the Lord prepare for the final yes: when the Divine Master will invite [you] to Paradise: “Come, bride of Christ”. Look to heaven, to the Tabernacle, to Mary, to St. Paul Ap[ostle]. Blessings. Fr. J. Alberione”.*

The light from these essential words would surely have directed her earthly pilgrimage.

The Solemnity of Christ the King, which we celebrate as Church, reminds us of the ultimate realities of the Christian life: *“Behold, he [Jesus Christ] is coming amid the clouds, and every eye will see him” (Second Reading)*. The passage of Sr. M. Alma to eternal life, as the culmination of a gradual decline of her health, is an invitation and a gift also to us, who are called to testify to the world hope and the eschatological dimension of life.

Sr. M. Alma, now you contemplate Christ as King and Lord forever in eternal joy!

*S. H. Paolo Mancini*