



Dear Sisters,

Today, June 7, 2023, in the community of Albano Laziale (RM), in the heart of the night the Bridegroom came for our sister

**Sr. M. Bianca – Maria Porco
born on December 14, 1925 in Belsito (Cosenza).**

A few days after her birth, on December 18, her parents, Francesco and Rosina Coppolo, brought their little daughter for baptism so that she might immediately become part of the family of the children of God. Maria was in fact born, as a special grace, *«following the request of my mother to St. Joseph»*. Her infancy was interwoven with the participation in the religious functions and with questions on what they were celebrating: *«The priest elevated the Sacred Host, my mother bowed her head in adoration. Curious, I asked her in dialect: “What is that white thing?”. Recollected, my mother responded: “It is Jesus, descended from Heaven”. I stopped a moment to think. Then I told her: “Mamma, when I grow up, I will be a priest”. It was the first sign of my vocation. A priest, no, but a mother of priests, yes. In the same year I received the sacrament of Confirmation with great joy and solemnity, dressed in white. I approached to receive Jesus and, in receiving him, I felt something that I cannot express. I felt that Jesus had taken possession of me and that one day I would be consecrated to him forever»*. She spent her childhood and adolescence in the family, participating in every activity of catechesis of the Parish, almost always at daily Mass. Enrolled in Catholic Action, she actively participated in its initiatives. Sr. M. Bianca, in her vocational story, emphasizes that her childhood was interwoven with little things, but she felt that she was being guided by an invisible hand on a sure path to the vocation as a Sister Disciple.

Despite the tragedy of the Second World War that was taking place, she entered the Congregation in Cosenza on October 18, 1944, not yet nineteen years of age. Following the novitiate, lived during the difficult years of the institutional definition of our Congregation, supported by great faith, she made the religious profession on May 24, 1947 in Alba, Casa Madre, and her perpetual profession on June 21, 1952, also in Alba (CN). She had completed 76 years since the first profession, a long life, inscribed in the history of the Institute to which she contributed by her witness and active presence. Her joyful face, the priority given to Eucharistic prayer, her industriousness, her availability, were an eloquent language for everyone. In

fact, she herself underscored: «*After the profession, around the world: France, Canada, United States, Ireland, Portugal and Italy*» (Albano Laziale 2012). She lived in an attitude of praise, of blessing and thanksgiving to Jesus Master for her experience as a disciple-apostle. After the profession, she spent the first 4 years in France, dedicated to sacred art, then in Canada for 7 years, in part in the priestly service; for one year in Staten Island (USA), in the kitchen. She returned to Italy for a few years (1960-1964), in the workroom for ecclesiastical tailoring, then again in various communities in France (1964-1970). In Italy at Bordighera, in Rome SMM and in Alba (from 1970 until 1982). She then went to Athlone (Ireland) (1982-1986). Her final missionary experience was her collaboration in the various communities of Portugal (1986-2007). Responding to the invitation of Mother M. Tecla Molino, Superior General at that time, she wrote: «*I understand your desire; there is the need to see some young people. Let us ask the Lord with trust and humility. We will also include some offering, some mortification, that the Lord may look with predilection upon our Congregation and **send us the young women who are called to be his disciples.** We also feel this need and do whatever is possible each day*» (December 28, 1982). Upon her return to Italy, after a period of time in the workroom at SMM Rome, she went to the DM community in Albano Laziale that was more suitable for her health, which was gradually becoming more fragile.

In view of her re-entry in Italy, after many years of missionary life, she communicated to Sr. M. Laura Mancini, Provincial Superior at the time: «*I hope that Jesus Master will grant me the health to give a small contribution of prayer and apostolate in the Italian communities. It is already 46 years that I am living outside of Italy. Certainly, having passed 80 years of life, one cannot hope for many more. Despite this, I am content and thank the Divine Master for this grace of returning and for all that I was able to contribute for the progress of our houses in other nations where I worked, prayed, rejoiced and suffered. I entrust to the Madonna the remaining time of my life so that she will prepare me for the definitive encounter with Jesus Master. Before leaving Portugal, I am going to Fatima to greet the Madonna, and I will present your intentions to her*» (March 29, 2002). «*I carry in my heart the nations and the persons I have known: Canada, France, United States, Ireland, Portugal, especially Fatima where I strongly felt the presence of the Madonna. Now I have only one goal: to prepare myself for the encounter with Jesus Master that he will find me with my lamp burning*» (to M. M. Tecla Molino, September 16, 2002). These last years of her life were offered to Jesus Master with much love, in a spirit of abandoning herself to him, in the desire to adhere to the will of God with her whole mind, will and heart. In this spirit of offering she asked for the entire Congregation the union of hearts, zeal for the apostolate in its Eucharistic-priestly-liturgical expressions. These are the intentions we entrust to her in this Chapter season, together with a good outcome for the World Youth Day that will be celebrated in Lisbon (August 1-6, 2023) with the gift of some new vocations!

S. M. Paolo Mancini