



*Dear Sisters,*

Saturday, February 24, 2024, at S. Camillo Hospital in Rome (Italy), at 2:00 PM, Jesus Master Way, Truth and Life, definitively called to himself our Sister

**SR. M. GRAZIA – GESUINA SANTUS**

**born on April 2, 1934, in Solarussa (Oristano - Italy).**

It was Monday of the Angel, the day after Easter, when the second child of the Santus couple was born. Eight days later, April 9, she was brought to the baptismal font to receive, with the name Gesuina, the gift of faith and adoption as a child of God. Gesuina was raised in a family and place in which the human and Christian values were fostered and bore fruit. Many years later, she would recall: «On July 2, 1939, feast of the Visitation of Mary (before the reform of the liturgical calendar), she made her First Communion and received the gift of a small book. She was not yet able to read but, as soon as she was able, she discovered that everything was an invitation from Jesus-Spouse to her soul, to follow him on the way of perfection, in the religious life, through the Vows: he revealed to me the beauty of the religious consecration. I felt this invitation of Jesus was addressed to me, with a bright, gentle, and continuous attraction that pushed me from early childhood toward the decision to become a sister. Everything worked in favor of this desire: a profoundly religious family, the presence of the sisters in the town, the Parish involved with Catholic Action, the priests who guided me. The Pastor, Father Giuseppe Fenu, spoke to me about the Congregation of the Sister Disciples of the Divine Master and gave me the book to read, “*Tre fiori nello stesso giardino*”, which I read with attention and interest. He told me it was a missionary Congregation with a profound Eucharistic spirituality».

Active in the life of the Church, she was President of the Young Women’s Catholic Action of her parish, a movement in which she had been enrolled from childhood. Various difficulties within the family caused a delay in the realization of the proposal to become a sister. Another sister was already a religious with the Suore del Sacro Costato, Sr. Assunzione, and she remained at home to assist her mother, who was elderly and suffering, her father and a brother. The family bonds were very strong, but thanks to the mediation of the Pastor, she was finally



able to leave home on December 15, 1959, at the age of 25, to enter the Congregation. One day her mother confided to the Pastor that she “prayed every day that her children would be the consolation of the family and serve the glory of God”.

From the first formative steps, she distinguished herself for her personal responsibility, for her enthusiasm and the content in living the vocation she embraced: she was an excellent candidate. Her health was fragile due to a heart defect present at an early age, but she did not allow herself to be outdone in generosity and apostolic zeal. When she discovered that the Congregation was not missionary in the way she had understood, she drew from the deeper interior motivations, inspired by St. Theresa of the Child Jesus who, although she spent her entire life in the Carmel of Lisieux, was proclaimed patroness of the missions.

«Before the Eucharistic Jesus, in prayer, I sought to understand the words of Primo Maestro. The Holy Spirit enlightened me and in that constant reading, I gradually placed myself in harmony with the feeling of the Founder who revealed to me God’s Will, his design for me, calling me to serve in the Pauline Family, with a hidden mission of immolation and offering but fruitful in doing good, that embraced the entire world in service to the missionary Church. The Eucharistic Jesus Master, with the light of the Holy Spirit and the maternal action of Mary Most Holy, worked a gradual transformation within that prepared me for the religious investiture, the novitiate and religious profession. The words of Primo Maestro held a convincing attraction that revealed to me the precious nature of our mission of intercession and that could satisfy my every desire».

Upon completing the novitiate, she made her religious profession in Rome on March 25, 1962, and five years later, on March 25, 1967, her perpetual profession, always in Rome. They were the years in which the wind of renewal of Vatican Council II were the strongest and nourished in everyone the enthusiasm and hope of a new ecclesial spring. The religious of all ages were also breathing this same air.

On July 15, 1965, she received her diploma as a professional nurse and, for her entire life, Sr. M. Grazia dedicated her physical, mental and spiritual energies to alleviate the sufferings of the Pauline brothers and of the sisters in the communities to which she was sent by obedience. From her writings, it emerges that on July 16, 1963, feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, she offered her life for the sanctification of priests, in complete adhesion to the specific vocation of the Sister Disciples, entirely dedicated to the service of Jesus Master living in the Eucharist, in the Priesthood and in the Church. Throughout her entire life she held, as a precious treasure, a mandate she received from Primo Maestro during a course of Spiritual Exercises: «Do not ask for suffering, but do not deny anything to Jesus. Dedicate yourself so that every member of the Pauline Family might understand and live our Pauline spirituality».

At various times she offered her service in the infirmaries of the Pauline communities: Rome San Paolo Film, in Alba Casa Madre, in Cinisello Balsamo (Editoriale), in Albano Casa Alberione and in the General House – Via Alessandro Severo. She was there when, on November 26, 1971, our Founder concluded his earthly pilgrimage and remained edified by the Paschal experience of Father Alberione and the vigilant and maternal presence of Sr. M. Giuditta Benzo, his personal nurse.

She was the local superior in the communities of Gravina in Catania (1974), Sanfré (1976), Cinisello Balsamo (1985), Bordighera (1989). And then we find her in numerous infirmeries: Rome Comunità B. Timoteo (1993 – 1998), Palermo (1998 – 2006), Albano DM (2006 – 2014). Finally she returned to the Community of Beato Timoteo, where she spent her last years with generosity and zeal in service and prayer. «For me, the secret of much interior peace is the certainty of being in the will of God that is made known to me through obedience, and serving Jesus Master present in every sister», she wrote to Mother Paola Mancini, Superior General at that time.

She participated with joy and interest in every event of the Pauline Family and of the Congregation and, despite the decrease in her physical energy, she encouraged, exhorted, admonished and counseled all those who approached her. To the sister, and the Provincial and General Superiors, who had the opportunity to listen to her personal sharing, she recommended the care for vocations, the Pauline vocations through fidelity to the Eucharistic Adoration, which is an apostolate and not a personal devotion, and attention to the priests. In the same way, also Sr. M. Bernardita Meraz Sotelo, Superior General, who met her a few months ago, during her fraternal visit to the Province of Italy, witnessed.

«Jesus Master, throughout my consecrated life, you gave me the gift of “joy” for my vocation and mission as a Sister Disciple, therefore I live in continual thanksgiving. Everything is a gift from God, everything leads me to the Magnificat!» (November 26, 2013).

On the occasion of the Centennial of Foundation, she desired to leave a long interview on the story of her vocation, on the precious nature of our presence in the Church and in the Pauline Family, exhorting everyone to remain faithful to the original inspiration of the Founder. A brief excerpt from this testimony can be found in <https://www.pddm.org/100anni/una-generazione-narra-all-altra/>.

Suddenly struck by an intestinal blockage, it was necessary to have her hospitalized and thus, she participated in the moments of fraternal life until the last moment at which she concluded her earthly life. The news took us by surprise, but she was certainly vigilant as one of the virgins awaiting the arrival of the Bridegroom and ready to enter with him into the wedding feast.

Sr. M. Grazia, now that you participate in the joy of Paradise and the company of our Pauline saints, intercede for us that we may gather the precious inheritance of the Founder and of Mother Scholastica to be happily coherent to the gift received by grace.

*Sr. M. Michaela Manetti*