



Dear Sisters,

Today, March 30, 2015, at noon, in the Divine Master community of Albano Laziale (RM), the Lord called to the eternal wedding feast our sister,

**SR. M. FRANCESCA LUCIA LA PERNA,
born on January 3, 1923, in Comiso (Ragusa).**

At the age of twenty, Lucia entered among the Sister Disciples of the Divine Master in Catania on November 19, 1943, while Italy was involved in the Second World War. The Pastor confirmed that she was a young woman of strong moral character and sincere religious piety; signs that would indicate suitability for religious life. She began her novitiate on March 24, 1946, in Alba (Cuneo) and made her first profession on May 27, 1947, in Sanfrè, where she had been staying for health reasons. She made her perpetual profession on June 21, 1952, in Alba. 42 years after her profession she wrote some notes regarding her life: she affirmed that upon the death of her father, before she was three years old, she was placed in a local boarding school and remained with the sisters there until she was 17. During the war the family moved to the countryside. They were far from the church and often unable to attend Mass: a situation she found distressing. She acknowledged that she was *“very sensitive, and when the sisters spoke about the passion and death of Jesus, about those who crucified him, she began making mortifications, and accepting these willingly for Jesus and for the sins of humanity”*. After reading the biography of St. Therese of Lisieux she decided to offer her life in service to God and others; following the advice of her confessor even in the choice of an institute. *“Now, after 42 years of profession, I commend all young men and women to the Madonna that they may follow her in the service of Jesus and of the Church” (Cinisello Balsamo May 30, 1989).*

In 1949 she is doing embroidery in Alba, in 1952 she is assisting in the kitchen and laundry at the Society of St. Paul in Rome. In 1954 she is working in ecclesiastical tailoring in Milan until 1958, when she is transferred to the Liturgical Apostolate Center in Catania. From there she returned, in 1961, to the tailoring in Florence. After a few years at the St. Paul seminary in Albano (1968) she would first go to Florence, and then spend a long period of time in Cinisello Balsamo for the diffusion of the magazine *“LA VITA IN CRISTO E NELLA CHIESA”* (1973 - 1988). While going door to door with another sister, she was awaited by persons taking the opportunity to ask for prayers for the living and the deceased. She would continue to cultivate apostolic relationships in her advanced age and sickness, and she was often sought by known persons. After a period as portress at the house in Rome, she was transferred to the infirmary in Palermo in 1993.

After suffering a stroke that left her paralyzed on the left side, she supported the limitations with incredible energy and will power for more than 20 years. Because of a greater need for assistance, she was in Albano for several months. During these last days her condition deteriorated rapidly: with diminished kidney function and diffuse and irreversible edema, until cardiac deficiency led to her death.

In her personal file at the provincial archives, there is a letter which, at her explicit request, was opened only after her death. Her message brings to life the Gospel for Monday of Holy Week: *“Mary took a liter of costly perfumed oil made from genuine aromatic nard and anointed the feet of Jesus and dried them with her hair; the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil” (Jn 12:3)*. She began by expressing the essential orientation of her life: *“My good is being near the Lord”*.

“Dear Jesus, in life you were my only Master, I will be happy when I hear you say to me: “Come bride of Christ, receive the crown”, because of the great mercy you have always shown me. In fact, although you knew my littleness and poverty in all things, you have chosen me with your grace of love, that I might not lose the way with its consequences. Now, as you know, I desire nothing other than to rejoice in your presence face to face and, with your help, to continue to live the gift of infirmity which I have accepted in conformity with my charism as a Sister Disciple with a semi-contemplative lifestyle: silence and prayer. Jesus I ask your pardon for the lack of correspondence to your unceasing LOVE. Also to you, Mothers, for not responding to the good I have received [...] Thank you. I will intercede for you

when I am in the community of Heaven. *I offer my life;* for the Holy Father, the Church, for Priests, for Christian Unity, for my Congregation, for vocations. Thank you to the Superior, to the nurse [...] for your fraternal care. Thank you to those who have helped me by word and good example. Farewell! [...] a dear fraternal greeting and embrace. Affectionately, Sr. M. Francesca La Perna (Palermo, December 1998)".

Sr. M. Francesca expressed these values also in her correspondence with the Mother General: "*Now I am following the suffering Jesus to arrive at the desired goal: Paradise. The good God will grant me the grace of ending my earthly day in his Holy Will*". (Palermo, June 13, 2013). The longing for holiness and for the communion of love with Jesus Master were constant elements in her life. Sr. M. Francesca, may you rejoice in peace in the luminous face of Jesus the Divine Master!

S. H. Paolo Mancini