



Dear Sisters,

Today, August 14, 2016, at 1:00 PM, Sunday and the Vigil of the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Divine Master heeded the desire of his bride

**SR. M. ZELIA CAROLINA CALAFIORE,
born on September 24, 1937, in Palermo.**

She affirmed that she would have liked to celebrate the eternal wedding feast on the Solemnity of the Assumption and that she would enter Paradise joyfully.

Carolina entered the Congregation in Catania on June 29, 1959, at the blossoming age of 22. She went to Alba for the Postulancy and made her Novitiate in Rome, which concluded with the Religious Profession on March 25, 1962. She made her perpetual profession in Rome on February 11, 1968.

The apostolic work she fulfilled for many years, in successive communities in Italy, was Ecclesiastical Tailoring, bringing to fruition the ability to sew that she had acquired in the family. The houses in which she exercised this service are: Bologna (1962), Cinisello Balsamo (1963), Roma (1967, 1987), Vicenza DM (1968-1971), Catania (1971), Palermo (1972-1982), Rimini (1983-1985; 1987-1992). We find her at the Society of St. Paul in Bari in 1966, with various responsibilities. For a decade she was asked, as a ministry of service, to be the local superior in various communities: Alba (1992-1997), Cagliari (1997-2000), Rimini (2000-2003). She then returned to the workroom: in Bari (2003), in Naples (2006), in Palermo giving her collaboration in the Liturgical Apostolate Center (2009). In 2013 she was appointed local superior in Naples and then, in 2015 she was in Bari working in the sewing ministry and as vice-superior.

In 2012, for the celebration of the 50th anniversary of her religious profession, she chose this phrase for the memorial card: *"I give praise to you, Father, you have revealed to the little ones the mysteries of the kingdom"* (Mt 11:25), an expression which summarizes her spiritual life. In her letter to the Mother General, Sr. M. Regina Cesarato, on this occasion she wrote: *"It is with great joy and gratitude that I write to you to express my thanks and gratitude. I am happy for these 50 years lived with my Lord Jesus, Master, Father, Shepherd and Spouse...During my retreat, recalling how he guided my life; I felt the depth of his love. I hope to be able to conserve these sentiments always in my heart, together with the joy the Lord continues to give me in the fulfillment of his will"* (Naples, July 4, 2013). Again in 2013 she wrote: *"You know, I ask my Master and Spouse to help me repair the earthen vessels I have broken during my life and he, like a great potter, helps me also through you. I am very pleased with this and I live these moments with serenity and detachment. In my daily life I continue to see and touch his grace; it is like a miracle, even for that which regards my health...(In regard to this) I hope to have some checkups, but I place myself in God's hands, in the arms of Mary, Mother of Serenity. Thank you for the prayers you offer for me; I also pray for you. I feel a great desire to pray for Priests, for those who are weak and suffering, those who are alone and for those who are involved with human justice, I pray and*

offer myself especially for them. I always remember you in my prayers. Thank you for everything. I embrace you with filial affection. In communion” (September 2013).

Sr. M. Zelia, even in the final consummation of her sacrifice as she was lovingly accompanied by the sisters, continued to repeat: *I offer everything for Priests, for vocations.* This was the synthesis of an attitude that she had always cultivated: loving and caring attention for the priests who were the direct recipients of her mission through the ecclesiastical tailoring. She was able to listen to them and encourage them. In the exercise of her mandate as local superior, she animated the communities to be welcoming, and the Priests knew from experience that they could count on the Sister Disciples to satisfy any need. Those who lived with her can testify that she had a great heart that was always attentive and available to others. She also sought to foster the creativity and talents of the sisters. She sustained the sisters working in the pastoral work for youth and vocations not only with prayer, but also by promoting the various initiatives.

She had recently arrived at the community of Bari (2015) when the first symptoms of her illness began to appear: multiple myeloma. She was transferred to the infirmary in Albano for treatment and assistance. They were especially painful months because the disease progressively attacked the bones, the spine, and the kidneys. It was a true Calvary that Sr. M. Zelia traveled with deep faith and serenity. She hoped and asked that the day of the Assumption might be the day for her entrance into heaven. Yesterday, after receiving the Anointing of the Sick, she clapped her hands for joy. She was allowed to leave the hospital, in accordance with her desire to die in the community, where she was welcomed by many sisters. She was filled with joy, almost as a prelude and preparation for her entrance into heaven today.

The sisters who saw her in these last days testify that Sr. M. Zelia was ready for the arrival of the Spouse and conscious of the step she was about to take. She desired that it be soon! She counted upon the help of the Virgin Mary. Upon her request, all of the sisters present invoked the Blessed Virgin with the song of the “*Salve Regina*”. These are the sentiments with which Sr. M. Zelia left us! From heaven, Sister Zelia, invoke Mary, Mediatrix of every grace, for all of us, for new vocations, and for the next General Chapter!

S. H. Paolo Mancini