



Dear Sisters,

Today, September 13, 2016, Memorial of Saint John Chrysostom, at 7:30 AM, in the Community of Sanfrè (CN), filled with life and blessing, the Lord called to eternal life our sister

SR. M. SPERANZA MARGHERITA TORTA
born in Bene Vagienna (CN) on May 27, 1914.

With the years of her earthly life, we also remember the birth of the Pauline Family 102 years ago, filled with grace and blessings. Margherita entered the Congregation in Alba (CN) on March 19, 1929, where she joined her aunt, Sr. M. Vincenzina Fea, and would be followed by her cousin, Sr. M. Timotea Bovetti. She would always nurture much gratitude for the gift of the vocation she received, and for the confirmation she received from Primo Maestro during a retreat in Alba when she was fifteen years of age: *“When our holy Primo Maestro called me and said: the Divine Master wants you here. ...I was always happy in this vocation because it is the heart of the Church”*. She entered the novitiate in 1932, and made her religious profession in Alba on December 18, 1933.

It is not often that one would find in a personnel file a page written: *Mary Most Holy, exercise in Arabic, letters of the alphabet and Arabic handwriting*. This gives some idea of the richness and modernity of the life of this sister, not only a centenarian but also a person in whom the Divine Master wrote his wonders. It is as if the life of Sr. M. Speranza were inscribed with our charismatic history, filled with an apostolic spirit and trust in the young sisters. And, with wonder and surprise, the memorial card of her perpetual profession as a Sister Disciple of the Divine Master bears this verse: *“Those who trust in you, O Lord, will rejoice in lasting happiness and You will protect them”* (Alexandria, Egypt, December 17, 1939).

Following the initial apostolic experiences in Cagliari, Rome and Corsica for the diffusion of the Gospel, in 1937 she was sent to Egypt with Sr. M. Emilia De Marie. Sr. M. Speranza remembered that experience with pleasure, as it brought her from Egypt to Jerusalem, with the task of bringing to Bishop Luigi Barlassina a letter from Primo Maestro. She recalled that Blessed Alberione spoke to them of *“Jerusalem, the platform between east and west, of Peter and Paul who brought the message from Jerusalem...”* She would tell this with a face filled with great longing, as she viewed Jerusalem as a center uniting all the nations. This sister recalled with particular emotion the visit to the holy places, to the Holy Sepulcher, where *“we seemed to still smell that balsam...where one experiences something that is not human, but mysterious...That empty tomb has something moving”*. In 1937 a foundation was not possible, but it remained a lively desire of Primo Maestro, who said: *“When the Lord wills it!”*. From Jerusalem, as in an apostolic adventure, the two sisters moved on to Beirut, in Lebanon and in Syria. A note in the bulletin of the Cooperators (UCAS n. 185 – 1937) reports: *“The sisters were unable to remain in Palestine due to the current political difficulties, and they are now in Lebanon. They were fortunate enough to spend fifteen days in the Holy Land and visit everything”*. Mention was then made of the obstacles for the language and the poor economy, which made it difficult to carry out the apostolate of the press in Syria. Sr. M. Speranza asked daily for this grace and the gift to see that day. In a letter to Sr. M. Paola Mancini, the Superior General at that time, she wrote: *“I will pray willingly...especially according to the intention given to me by Primo Maestro, that the Sister Disciples might reach Palestine. The Divine Master is also awaiting us there”* (Bordighera, August 24, 1993). Thus she rejoiced greatly when the small community of Jerusalem was finally established in 2009.

In this difficult time for peace in the Middle East, the Divine Master received the offering of the life of Sr. M. Speranza as a petition for these nations. She was a person of great peace, capable of transmitting it to others, bringing serenity to the hearts of others, especially in the community. Her apostolic intercession from Heaven will bear much fruit.

Upon her return from the mission in 1942, she lived the charism of the Sister Disciple ever more deeply, nourished by the special spiritual relationships with the Founder, Fr. Timothy Giaccardo, and Mother Scholastica. Always in joyful self-giving, she carried out her various mandates responsibly, especially with the Pauline brothers. At Sanfré she bore witness to the final stages of the earthly life of Venerable Brother Andrea Borello.

In 1942 she was the local Superior in Siena, and in 1948, the Bishop lamented her transfer: *“The good Sr. Speranza, with her kindness and serene meekness conquered the heart of the people of Siena ‘a people easy to capture with love’ as Saint Catherine wrote”*.

She was then appointed as the local superior in the community at Sanfrè, then in Turin, and then as local superior and nurse at the Society of St. Paul in Genoa and at the St. Paul Clinic. In 1980 she was in the workroom at Bordighera, until she went to Sanfré in 2006 as an elderly sister.

The spiritual heritage of Sr. M. Speranza is important, as can be gathered from her notes: she acknowledged her poverty and, simultaneously, nurtured a lively desire to be formed by the Lord for her sanctification as well as for the salvation of her brothers, of which she often spoke to God. She was committed to the observance of silence and able to sing the praises of God with her mind and heart, both day and night. In 1983, when an interviewer asked what she would have liked to say to the younger Sister Disciples, she responded: *“That they have a great love for the Eucharist, the three apostolates that make us like the first community established by Jesus Himself, and which is among the most beautiful and grace-filled. In these they will find the grace to attain great holiness”*. In response to the question about her hopes for the future: *“My hope is to correspond ever more and better to the infinite graces I have received, and then to go to Heaven to receive the prize of the faithful disciple”* (1983).

On the occasion of her 60th Anniversary of Profession, she wrote: *«To be crucified with him, our adored Master, to rise with him in every moment, in confidence, in hope, with Christ our sole love, and one day to be taken up by him in the resurrection and in the Glory of Heaven...Ask for **great mercy for me** since I have lived in the midst of many holy souls, and yet I am still so poor and have corresponded so little to so many gifts...but with a heart filled with gratitude and many holy desires, through the intercession of Mary our sweet Mother and Queen, **may I be filled with this mercy and one day sing with her the eternal Magnificat in Heaven.** (...) May the Divine Master show us his face and may we follow him in a way capable of loving him in our sisters, in the Pauline Family, to offer to the Holy Church many saints as our Holy Founder, Father James Alberione, desired”* (to Sr. M. Paola Mancini, August 24, 1993).

Luminous and communicating hope until her last days, Sr. M. Speranza brought to conclusion her earthly pilgrimage at the extraordinary age of 102. She reached the pilgrim's House of the Father after a rather long agony, surrounded by the affection and prayers of the sisters and the care of the nursing staff.

Now, before God, with her gaze fixed on the Most Holy Trinity, may your apostolic heart, Sr. M. Speranza, open toward our upcoming provincial and general chapters that they may be an opportunity for renewal in the journey of sanctity and apostolate for every Sister Disciple!

S. H. Paolo Mancini