



Dear Sisters,

Today, December 7, 2017, at 2:00 PM, in the community of Sanfrè (CN), the Lord introduced into the eternal Pasch our sister,

SR. M. PIA MADDALENA CHIAVASSA
born on March 6, 1918, in Fossano (CN).

The name of Sr. M. Pia Chiavassa immediately calls to mind: one nation - Japan, a heroic faith that was lived; a request and a miracle – from Blessed Timothy Giaccardo! These few words would be sufficient to summarize a life that was lacking only a few months to span a century. This flower came from San Lorenzo di Fossano, the birthplace of Blessed James Alberione, and was transplanted in Alba on December 10, 1938, preceded in the community by her older sister, Sr. M. Onesima, who died in 2004. Later she would be joined in this journey of discipleship also by her niece, Sr. M. Bernardina Lingua. Before her entrance, Maddalena, had various jobs as a domestic helper, and was thus formed in a life of giving and sacrifice. Her formative journey took place during the troubled period of the Second World War. She made her first profession in Alba on April 14, 1941, and her perpetual vows on April 14, 1946, also in Alba, during a critical period for our existence as an Institute.

Before and immediately after the profession, she shared in the common mission for the diffusion of the Gospel in France (in Marseilles and Nice), in Vercelli, and in Mondovì. In Alba, in 1942, she was assigned to bookbinding and study. From 1946 until 1949, she was a missionary in Alexandria, Egypt, continuing the extraordinary apostolic experience begun by Mother M. Scholastica, of prayer and offering, especially for the Muslim world, and in the diffusion of the Word of God. Here Sr. M. Pia is witness to a miracle attributed to Saint Paul. All of the residents of the building had fled, when armed men assaulted their apartment. After consuming the Eucharist, filled with fear, they prepared for the worst. “At the door”, Sr. M. Pia, wrote in her vocational story, “there was an image of Saint Paul. I called out loudly: Saint Paul, with the sword, defend us! Precisely at that moment, an Arab arrived, a good man who lived on a floor above us. Sr. M. Assunta Aimo gave his children injections; he loved us and freed us. Then he took a piece of wood and nails to strengthen the door. Thus, the Lord saved us”. Upon her return to Italy, she was assigned as assistant to the novices in Alba, until she was called to a new mission in Japan. She departed on June 2, 1952, together with Sr. M. Luciana Lazzarini, and upon arrival they found already six aspirants. For some years they dedicated themselves to a difficult task, the cultivation of rice in a land in which the Paulines had a radio station, and provided for other domestic services. Under these precarious conditions, Sr. M. Luciana Lazzarini, sent for the formation of the novices, became gravely ill with tuberculosis and, after a short time, would need to return to Italy. Sr. M. Pia recounts: “The only thing we could do was pray for a miracle. I asked the sisters to pray, asking for her healing through the intercession of *Signor Maestro*, Timothy Giaccardo, who had died six years before with a reputation for holiness. I went to Sr. M. Luciana’s room and told her: “Get up, and go to pray. Tomorrow the X-rays must show that you are cured. Do not doubt, obey and believe”. The X-rays were taken several times because the doctors thought there was a mistake. Sr. M. Luciana was completely healed, and would remain in Japan for 53 years!

In Japan, Sr. M. Pia, was formator, animator of the spiritual life and apostolate for the young community growing in vocations and in the mission. Her service of animation also extended to the Philippines, Korea, and Australia. She was first local superior, then regional superior and a sure point of reference for the Japanese sisters. She would continue to do so even after returning to Italy at the time of the 1969 General Chapter, after 17 years of missionary life.

In Italy, she was appointed local superior first in Rome at the Regina Apostolorum community (1969-1972), then in Cinisello Balsamo (1972-1975), Regional Delegate of Italy (1975-1978). In 1979, she was at the switchboard in the General House, and then appointed local superior of the same community (1981-1987) and, finally, as local superior in Sanfrè (1987-1994). She continued her service at the switchboard for as long as her health permitted. She was extraordinarily lucid and clear in her writings, even in her later years: «Dearest Sr. M. Regina ...I am almost a hundred years old and the Lord, in his great mercy, has left me here and I thank him. My work is only that of prayer, which I strive to do in abundance, first for my own sanctification and then for all the needs of the Congregation, of the Church, and of the world. I am grateful for the kindness of the superiors, of the sisters, and their patience with me. The Lord will reward everything. Let us ask confidently for new vocations. May the Madonna guide and bless you » (May 15, 2015).

Thanking Sr. M. Giovanna Colombo, then Provincial Superior, for the greetings on the occasion of her 75th anniversary of profession, she wrote: «During these years of my life, the Lord has given me a great deal and I feel that I have corresponded little. I entrust myself to God's mercy and go ahead confidently, certain that the Lord loves and forgives me. The only thing I can do is pray and offer for many intentions». Her last letter to the current Superior General, Sr. M. Micaela Monetti, merits attention: «Dearest Sr. M. Micaela, heartfelt greetings for your new ministry. I promise the assistance of my poor prayer. Trust in the Lord and in the sisters. I promise my docility and submission. My work is only that of prayer. I pray badly, but I pray a great deal. May the Lord accept my incapacity. Greetings! Be patient, I write badly, I am 99 years old. I am waiting for you in Sanfrè. If you do not come soon **I will go to Paradise!** Come to Sanfrè for your vacation!» (May 29, 2017). Her health, despite the advancing age, remained good. The only limitation that caused her suffering was the total deafness that hindered all communication. During these last days she demonstrated the ability to accompany the prayers, guided by the sisters, as she completely abandoned herself to the Lord in serenity and peace.

Sr. M. Pia, may the Immaculate Virgin accompany you to the contemplation of the face of the Father, and obtain for the Pauline Family in Asia, and for all of us, an increase of faith in our mission of intercession!

S. H. Paolo Mancini

