



Dear Sisters,

The hour the bridegroom of the Gospel chose to arrive (cf Mt 25:6-7) was toward midnight. Yesterday, July 7, at 11:00 PM, at Saint Barbara Hospital in Czestochowa, Poland, the bridegroom came for

**Sr. M. Emmanuela Bozena Witczak,
born on March 9, 1963, in Nowogród Bobrzański (Poland).**

At the age of 21, shortly after completing studies in pedagogy, she presented herself to the Congregation as a young woman who appeared promising for her human and spiritual qualities: gentle, good, of optimum intelligence, with capability for relationships, nurtured in a family of profound faith and a strong work ethic. She entered the Congregation on September 2, 1984, in Czestochowa. Her pastor introduced her in this manner: *“She actively participated in the life of the Church. She played the organ and conducted the music classes for girls. Through her generous work, she assisted many in the parish. I must also mention that she did this with great self-offering and generosity. She was greatly esteemed in the parish. She carried out her work with the young with great zeal and creativity, without becoming discouraged over difficulties. (...) I consider her a person who is balanced, intelligent, joyful, and diligent, possessing a heart that is sensitive toward God and neighbor. She is sincerely seeking the vocation for her life in service to God and to others”*. After the novitiate in Czestochowa, she made her first profession in the Sanctuary of the Madonna of Jasna Góra on February 10, 1988. In the same place she made her perpetual profession on February 10, 1994. In her request for admission to the perpetual profession, she wrote: *“After living for nine years in this religious family, I am convinced that this is my way, the way in which the Lord wants me, therefore, I desire to profess perpetual vows in our Congregation. ...Trusting in the help of God’s grace, I seek to grow in love toward God and toward neighbor”*.

Gifted with musical talent, in 1991 she concluded a program of studies for organists in Czestochowa, and placed this gift in service wherever she was sent. In 1998 she completed her studies in theology, always at Czestochowa, and then participated in the Course on the Pauline Charism in Rome.

For some years she offered her collaboration as the organist in Poreba (a community – now closed - near a parish), at Czestochowa, then in the workroom for embroidery, at the Society of St. Paul, assistant to the novices, and in 1994 she is the postulant mistress and regional councilor. Dedicated to the pastoral work for vocations, her greatest desire was for vocations: she fervently prayed and invited others to pray for this intention. In 1999 she was nominated junior mistress. In 2001 she was entrusted with the ministry of Regional Superior, and in 2004 with the service of Councilor and Regional Secretary. In 2005, when Poland and Ukraine became a province, she was nominated Provincial Superior.

One may say that the life of Sr. M. Emmanuela, disciple of Jesus, is characterized by the following: awareness of her littleness, gratitude toward God and others, fidelity and fervor in responding to the grace of the vocation, sensitivity and gentleness toward the persons. She always knew how to find the good in the sisters, to discover their talents and help foster them for the benefit of others. The sisters in the Province of Poland remember her in this way: *“She knew how to dialogue, bringing peace, joy and serenity... She was able to calm difficult situations... She was not focused upon herself, but cared for the others with total dedication and generosity. She was always most faithful to the reception of the sacraments, to prayer; as long as she was able, she would spend long periods of time in the chapel before*

the Eucharistic Jesus. She loved priests and prayed for them. She expressed her love and sense of belonging to our religious Family, often expressing the intention for new vocations. She was interested in the life of our Congregation and of the Pauline Family, enjoying new persons and apostolic works. She was open to novelty – that which the new times and persons carried within themselves, but also capable of respecting and appreciating that which was traditional, and bound to the history of the Congregation and of our country". In particular, the Provincial Superior noted: "As the assistant for the novices, she was a great help to me. An edifying, delicate, and very patient sister, she knew how to listen, direct others properly and help the young novices. I was tranquil in giving her various tasks because I was confident that she would carry them out well and with dedication. As Provincial Superior I had the opportunity of knowing her better, being near her for 4 years as her vicar. She was a sister of peace, of dialogue, who loved the Congregation. She had a special gift of tranquility and interior serenity that emanated from her face, from every activity, from her words. I bless the Divine Master for the gift of this sister, who has enriched me so much. I admired her fidelity without tension and desire for show. I can say with certainty that I lived for various years near a holy Sister Disciple. I was fortunate" (Sr. M. Cecilia Wilk).

She also distinguished herself for her particular devotion to the Madonna. She worked to transform herself to become more like Mary most holy, the first disciple of Jesus. It was a great joy for her to spend the last years of her life and her illness in the community near the Sanctuary of the Madonna of Jasna Góra. As she was offering her missionary contribution in Nice, France, in 2011, she was diagnosed with an *adenocarcinoma*, which originated in the stomach and then metastasized. She faced this illness with great courage.

Fully aware of the severity of her condition, she wrote to the Superior General on September 8, 2013: "Dear Sr. M. Regina, Happy feast of the Nativity of Mary. I greet you heartily, and I would like to share a few words with you. It seems to me that I have begun my advent in preparation for the coming of my bridegroom, Jesus. I am very happy and ready for his call. I am truly serene, filled with peace and freedom to respond: "Here I am, Lord", as on the day of my first profession. I know that this is his grace.

Regina, I thank you for all the good I have received from you, and ask pardon on my part. I ask: pray for me now, in the most important moment of my life, and after my death. In our community we prayed for a miracle through the intercession of Mother Scholastica, but I am ready to accept the will of God, whatever that may be. I entrust myself totally to Mary, our loving Mother. United in prayer in Jesus Master, Sr. M. Emmanuela".

On the vigil of the Solemnity of the Birth of John the Baptist, June 23, 2014, she wrote a letter to all the sisters: "You will show me the path of life; fullness of joys in your presence; the delights at your right hand forever." (Ps 16:11). Dear Sisters of every community, I cordially thank each of you for the gift of sharing the vocation of the Sister Disciples of the Divine Master. I thank you for your love and goodness which I have received, and on my part I humbly ask pardon of each one of you for any displeasure or wound I may have caused. I entrust myself to your prayers and I will support you from eternity. We will be reunited in Heaven! I am grateful for everything. Affectionately."

On July 6, in the presence of the Provincial Superior, she received the Anointing of the Sick from the hands of her confessor.

After this she said: "Thank you for everything. Please, let us pray the chaplet for vocations". At the conclusion of the prayer she expressed this desire: *now I would like to renew my profession*. After the renewal she looked at each individual in the room and, smiling, said: "I am happy! Very happy!".

The sisters kept vigil with care and kindness, until the last instant, sharing this moment of final passage to eternal life also with her mother, who was present at her daughter's bedside.

Dear Sr. M. Emmanuela, we unite ourselves to the offering of yourself to the Father, certain that you will continue your mission of intercession for all of us!

S. H. Paolo Haucouri