



Dear Sisters,

On April 26, 2014, in the Divine Master community of Albano Laziale (Rome), at 6:15 PM, at the time of the first Vespers of the II Sunday of Easter and the vigil of the canonization of two Popes: John XXIII and John Paul II, the Lord called to the Eternal Easter our sister,

**Sr. M. Francisca – Maria Marchegiani,
born on November 27, 1918 in Montesilvano (PE).**

In this special period of the canonization we are invited to discover the journey of sanctification of our sister. Maria experienced the trials of World War II (1939-1945). Various times they were evacuated; and persons dear to her perished, including her fiancé. It was with great sacrifice that she continued her education to obtain her diploma as a teacher. Through her work, she sustained her family economically; therefore, her entrance into the Congregation was not without suffering. In the narration of her vocational story, she contemplates the action of Divine Providence in her life: “I was a simple girl, who thought about everything except becoming a sister. I lived near the sisters, a Pauline community in Pescara. They passed in front of my house whenever they took the train and we cordially greeted each other. Sr. Agnesina Stoto, who was young and nice, was not afraid to extend the invitation. Like an antiphon, each of our meetings ended with her invitation: “*Maria, why don’t you become a sister?*” I truly was not thinking about it, and what could I say? If the Lord wants! But she was not discouraged. Later the Pauline priests invited me to teach catechism to the girls, and for lack of another space, the classes were held in the priests’ dining room. Sr. Agnesina was the cook, always dynamic, always busy, always active and caring. She continued to pray and due to the various circumstances, despite my resistance, on February 11, 1948, Primo Maestro (Fr. Alberione) brought me to our sisters at Via Alessandro Severo. At eight o’clock that evening he left for Alba (CN) with Mother Elia Ferrero.

Sr. M. Francisca affectionately recalled her meeting with Primo Maestro. “Mother Margherita Imperato saw me and said: “*Come, come, I will introduce you to Primo Maestro*”. We entered a small room on the left, perhaps the sacristy, and saw Primo Maestro, who said to me: “*Is it true that you want to become a sister?*” “*Yes, it is true, but I find so many difficulties that I never get there*”. He lowered his head and remained in recollection for some moments, then he looked at me and said: “*If you want to come, we will be leaving tomorrow morning at 8; be at the bookstore*”. I thought for a moment and responded: “*I will be there!*” And so it was! Sr. Agnesina won! With her simplicity, her fervent prayer and faith, she had won. For me she was the instrument of Divine Providence. I will always be grateful to her” (November 9, 2002).

Once she entered the Congregation, besides the duties in sewing and the laundry, she was soon asked to use her preparation to teach the aspirants and postulants. She herself attended some formative courses of theology and philosophy. At the completion of the novitiate, she made her first profession on March 25, 1950 in Alba. In her request she declared her satisfaction with the Rule of this Institute. For the biennial vows, she wrote: “*I am always very content in my vocation as a Sister Disciple and, with the grace of God; I hope to persevere until Paradise*” (Alba, January 1, 1953). She made her perpetual profession in Rome on March 25, 1955.

From 1954, she was a collaborator with the magazine *La Vita in Cristo e nella Chiesa* (*Life in Christ and in the Church*), working in the editorial department together with Sr. M. Marcellina Brentali, who realized the dream of the Founder. Regarding this she noted: “*In the meantime plans were being made to begin a magazine of our own...thus came into being Life in Christ and in the Church...it came into existence poor and uncertain, but sustained by much faith. Later I was entrusted with a monthly column on Church history. I submitted the articles first to Fr. Gambi and then to Fr. Nosetti. Following the publication of*

Mediator Dei on the liturgical reform, in order to prepare ourselves better we began to participate in the annual liturgical weeks” (personal notes). In 1957, as a service to the Church, she was asked to collaborate in the preparation of the directory for religious women. In 1959, “in the name of Jesus Master and for the good of the Congregation” she was challenged to cross the ocean and go to Canada as local superior in Montreal, where she was welcomed by the sisters.

In Canada, where they worked “energetically and in harmony”, Sr. M. Francisca collaborated for the preparation and the diffusion of the magazine “La Vie” (The Life), in the liturgical center which was well underway and to pay the debts of the new construction. In 1961 she went to France, with the responsibility for the community of Nogent sur Marne.

In 1963 she returned to Rome with responsibility for the Liturgical Apostolate, and later she also dedicated herself to the education of the young Paulines at Villa San Giuseppe. In 1969 she is the local superior in the community of Florence, and at the beginning of 1971 she is at the Vatican where our ecclesial service at the Vatican switchboard was beginning. In 1974 Sr. Francisca was appointed as a regional councilor and regional secretary for Italy. In 1977 she was entrusted with temporary responsibility for the community in Genoa, and in 1979 she was recalled to Rome and appointed local superior in the Regina Apostolorum community. In 1983 she returned to France as the local superior in Toulouse, attending to the various needs of the small community. In 1989 she was sent to Nogent sur Marne where she worked in the preparation of liturgical vestments and offered her collaboration in the council for the Delegation of France. In 2006 she was sent to the Blessed Timothy community for the elderly sisters. From there, she was accompanied in 2011 to the infirmary in Albano, where she received her final call from the Lord.

Sr. M. Francisca, even at an advanced age, was capable of learning new things; for example, the preparation of vestments. In the various services of governing the communities, she united wisdom and frankness so that her relationships with others combined both charity and truth. A passionate reader, she cultivated herself intellectually: books were her inseparable companions and she was precise and demanding in her instruction.

She was methodical, also in her interior work. She noted: “Loved by God and holy by vocation: on the 27th of next month I will be 88 years old. This course of spiritual exercises may be the last gift the Lord gives me. Time is especially precious for me. Do not waste even an instant... absolute priority to piety. Be available...do not be demanding...kindness toward everyone, speak well of everyone”. She wrote to Mother M. Lucia: “I am always more aware of the fact that you loved me in the Lord and that you always trusted me” (Nogent, October 4, 2000).

Sr. M. Regina Cesarato, in her feastday greeting, justly thanks her for her presence and her service to the Congregation. Her life was characterized by a spirit of sacrifice, by a sense of apostolate, by the cultivation of study and by poverty. We can say that she journeyed in a balanced manner on the 4 wheels of the Pauline cart.

We confidently entrust to her the magazine LA VITA IN CRISTO E NELLA CHIESA, for which she went through the streets of Rome seeking collaborators who were competent and efficacious.

The news of the conclusion of her earthly pilgrimage, like a consumed candle, reached us as about a hundred young people moved from the Church of Jesus Master in pilgrimage during the night toward Saint Peter’s Basilica to participate in the canonization of Popes John XXIII and John Paul II.

From heaven, we ask her intercession that courageous young people, as she was, might radically follow Christ the Master in the Pauline Family and in the Church!

Sr. M. Paola Mancini

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