



Dear Sisters,

Today, December 31, 2015, at 10:00 AM, in our community of Częstochowa DM-Poland, the Lord called to eternal life our sister,

**SR. M. HIERONIMA FILIPPINA CHMIELEWSKA
born in Radomsko (Łódź) on May 1, 1927.**

Filippina entered in Częstochowa on July 15, 1947: she was the first young woman to join the community of the Sister Disciples in Poland during the time of reconstruction after the war and the terrible situation of Communism. In fact, with the death of Sr. M. Saveria Pistamiglio (1942) and another Polish postulant, Maria Jankowska (1943), the first foundational nucleus was like the grain of wheat buried in the earth that would bear much fruit.

In a letter to Mother M. Lucia Ricci dated November 20, 1994, Sr. M. Hieronima wrote a summary of her vocational story: *“I am very grateful to Jesus Master who has granted me the grace of making me his pious disciple. With the passage of the years, I understand better the grace, the great mercy he has bestowed upon me. July 15, 1947, is the date of my entrance into the Congregation. (...) Actually, I had already been in the Congregation. On November 22, 1942, at the age of fifteen, I entered at Częstochowa, but in 1945 I left the Congregation with the resolution of re-entering once the sisters came from Italy. And truly the Lord has watched over me and permitted me to re-enter. It is for this reason that I give thanks to Jesus for my vocation twice a year”*. Special mention should also be made of a note dated September 14, 1947, written shortly after her entrance into the tiny reality at Częstochowa: *“I heartily thank you for having received me into the Congregation once again. I cannot express my great joy. In his great mercy, Jesus kept this great grace for me... I am happy to find myself here, having abandoned the world and having heeded the voice of Jesus... going to high school, I always felt something was missing. I felt the emptiness in my soul, even though I received Communion frequently...”*

Filippina immediately revealed herself to be a young woman filled with hope and especially of faith and courage in the face of a reality that, humanly speaking, offered nothing that was secure or promising. Her certainty came from the Lord's presence, the centrality of the Eucharist, which enabled her to overcome all obstacles. The Pauline presence in Poland, at that time, counted solely on the presence of the Pauline priest, Father Tarcisio Ravina, who, unfortunately, was imprisoned. There was also a cleric, Luigi Giuseppe Łabędź, who needed assistance and direction in the Pauline formation.

The personal story of Sr. M. Hieronima kept pace with the story of the presence of the Sister Disciples in Poland. A great asset was Sr. M. Timotea Bovetti who, as superior, was required to face the various difficulties that arose each day and accompanied the reconstruction of the Congregation in Poland.

She made her first profession in Częstochowa on April 13, 1952, having received a dispensation from the novitiate by the Holy See, and made her perpetual profession, always in Częstochowa, on April 13, 1957. Until 1966, due to the particular political situation of the nation, she creatively expressed her missionary spirit: dedicating herself to making rosaries, the formation of young women, a secretarial ministry, and from 1963 to 1966, as local superior in the community of Częstochowa.

In 1966 she was a catechist in Warsaw-Falenica, exploring new ways for the apostolate under the direction of the Episcopate. From 1967 to 1970 she was in Lublin, where together with other sisters, she collaborated in offering domestic service for the Dominican Fathers. From 1970 to 1975 she was asked to offer her collaboration in the workroom in Toulouse (France).

Upon her return to Poland, given the difficulty of expressing our specific apostolate, she adapted herself to the local situation with a missionary spirit and dedicated herself fully to the catechism of children for some years, as would be the case for other sisters as well. Thus she spent eight years in the community of Łapy, a short distance from the border with Belorussia. She was also the local superior of this community. Each year she taught catechism to young people and children in about 28 classes. After Mass and meditation, celebrated very early in the morning, she left the house immediately: from 7:00 AM to 4:00 PM she dedicated herself to the classes. These were held at the parish where the children gathered during the breaks from the public school. *“Faith was needed, but Jesus Master strengthened us each day”. “It is our hope that there will be more than one priest from this immense crowd of boys. Praised be the Lord who desired that his disciple should be so close to souls. How we rejoice to see them approach the Sacraments!”* In fact, from Łapy and the surrounding towns, there were various vocations who entered not only our Congregation, but also the first young men for the Society of Saint Paul, prepared and fostered by the Sister Disciples. In 1983 she was transferred to the community of Piastów, where she continued in the catechism of young people and, simultaneously, was regional councilor and secretary; she then went to Poręba in 1991, continuing in the same ministry. In 1992 she was transferred to the workroom Częstochowa, and dedicated herself to translations for as long as her health permitted. Suffering from various ailments, especially of the heart, she was confined to bed for increasing periods of time, until the conclusion of her earthly pilgrimage.

In a letter written to Sr. M. Regina Cesarato, Superior General, she affirmed: *“I thank the Lord for all the days of my life, for all the graces and blessings, and the great mercy he has shown to me. Despite the serious illnesses I have endured, I received the grace of remaining united with my superiors, in obedience, for the love of Jesus. Now I continue and pray: “Jesus, humble of heart, live in me that I may live in your humility and charity and become a living host, holy and pleasing to God. Fiat voluntas tua [May your will be done]!”* (October 7, 2008).

The sisters of the Province wrote that Sr. M. Hieronima left them as a spiritual testament the love of Jesus Master in the Eucharist, the Congregation, the value of the vocation above everything else and a constant concern for it. Let us give thanks to God for her prayers, her service and her suffering. Let us invoke her intercession before the Lord to receive the grace of new vocations for our Congregation, for the Pauline Family, and for the entire Church.

Sr. M. Hieronima, you often affirmed that you experienced the gift of God’s mercy in your life, obtain for many persons and for all of us, the grace to appreciate this gift, especially during this Jubilee of Mercy. May the New Year, which is imminent, bring to the world the gift of peace through the intercession of Mary, Mother of Mercy!

S. H. Paolo Hancock