



Dear Sisters,

Today, May 31, 2013, Feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, at 12:15PM, in the Divine Master community of Palermo (Italy), Mary Most Holy opened the way to eternal life for our sister

SR. M. BARTOLOMEA BARBARA ALÌ
born in Paternò (Catania) on December 8, 1922.

Just over twenty years of age, Barbara entered the Congregation of the Sister Disciples of the Divine Master on April 25, 1945, at the conclusion of the Second World War, an event which had serious social consequences throughout the country. The pastor presented her as a young woman who had great potential; also emphasizing her ability in tailoring and sewing: talents which she placed at the service of the apostolate. Barbara went to Alba (CN) for the novitiate, which began on April 3, 1947, Holy Thursday. On the same day, the decree of diocesan approval was promulgated. This was decisive for the ecclesial and institutional recognition of our Congregation. She made her first religious profession on April 4, 1948, in the Mother House in Alba. Following the first profession, she spent one year in Turin, and in 1949 was sent to Portugal, the land of Mary Most Holy. She returned to Italy for her final vows in Alba on April 4, 1953. For a period of time she remained at the Society of St. Paul in Rome, until 1955 when she returned to ministry in Portugal, where she would remain for another five years. In 1960, having acquired a good knowledge of the Portuguese language, she was sent further away. She went to Latin America: first in Brazil, at Caxias do Sul and at Sao Paulo, for a ministry she described as being “*at the service of the community*”, that is, local superior. In 1967 she is in Santiago, Chile, always as local superior. From 1979 to 1983 she was in Argentina, where she met some family members who had immigrated there. Initially she was local superior in Cordoba, and then regional councilor.

She placed her characteristic traits at the service of the mission: straightforward, firm, decisive and constant. These permitted her to undertake courageous apostolic initiatives. In Santiago, Chile, she dedicated herself to the construction of a chapel in honor of the Divine Master, which even today remains a center for Eucharistic-liturgical animation. On September 30, 1973, she wrote to Mother M. Lucia: “*The chapel is a source of intentions as well as consolation. Things are going slowly due to difficulties, but they have not stopped us. The apostolate is abundant, the Center is working, and we have had the first results from the ceramics*”. On April 8, 1981, she wrote to Mother M. Lucia Ricci from Cordoba (Argentina): “*As we mentioned, the Father Alberione House is already functioning. For the moment, there are two priests, both are content. One more tabernacle, an abundance of Holy Masses!*” Love for the Congregation and faith permitted her to undertake various apostolic initiatives with perseverance, involving and rendering responsible also the other sisters. Sr. M. Bartolomea knew how to love and to make herself lovable. Despite the appearance of hardness, her heart was especially sensitive and good.

In 1983, she returned to various communities in Portugal: at the Society of St. Paul in Lisbon, in Porto, and from 1988-1999, at the Society of St. Paul in Fatima. Following one year in Camarata, in 2000 she returned to the small community in Fatima, caring patiently and lovingly, together with another sister, for a diocesan priest who had left his house to the Congregation. Sr. M. Bartolomea was content to be near her beloved Madonna, whom she went to visit daily. “*I am here in Fatima, a place of much prayer, everything invites us to this, but we also need to remember what the Madonna said: penance and prayer, and there are many occasions. When I go to the Chapel (of the Apparitions) I remember you in my prayers and feel the duty of giving thanks for all that has been placed in the depths of our hearts*” (to M. M. Lucia Ricci, September 8, 1991). In this tiny apostolic reality, they creatively used the time to make cord rosaries, which they generously distributed. In 2006, due to age-related health problems, she returned to Italy and was assigned to the Divine Master Community in Palermo.

Already suffering from a heart ailment, she went to meet her Spouse today almost unexpectedly, with the comfort of her sisters, after fixing her gaze for over five minutes on the image of the Madonna at her bedside. Born on a day dedicated to Mary, her earthly life also concluded on a Marian feast. And certainly Mary, whom she greatly loved, and to whom often prayed the Holy Rosary, would have opened the doors of Paradise for her.

Sr. M. Paola Mancini
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