



Dear Sisters,

Today, February 29, 2012, at 10:30 AM (local time), in Kinshasa (Democratic Republic of the Congo), the Lord called to himself our sister

**Sister M. Agnes - Marie Shamba
born in Kabongo (Dem. Rep. of the Congo) on February 12, 1957.**

We believe that the community in Heaven is celebrating our first African sister, disciple of Jesus Master, who entered to form part of their communion of life in God. She is a sister who is remembered by many for her smiling and tranquil face and her peaceful gaze.

After a suitable period of accompaniment and discernment, Maria entered our community in Lubumbashi on June 29, 1981. Before entrance into novitiate, Maria was entrusted to our congregation by her parents, both profoundly Christian, with a formal act of approval: *“On May 20, 1983, we the parents of Shamba Marie, gave our consent to Marie who desires to become a religious in the Congregation of the Sister Disciples of the Divine Master. May God flood her soul with the many graces needed to respond favorably to this divine vocation”*. Her pastor, from the Parish of Saint Cyprian (Lubumbashi), stated: *“I believe that Marie, if well guided, has the qualities for this vocation and can attain this goal”* (Lubumbashi, December 14, 1983). On October 7, 1984 Marie is in Rome to begin her novitiate and on December 8, 1986, always in Rome, she made her first religious profession.

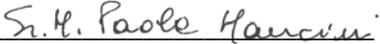
She would make her perpetual profession in Lubumbashi, in her parish of origin, on August 15, 1993. Her request for admission to the profession is accompanied by the story of her vocation, which deserves to be transmitted in order to receive the gift of a newness that is entirely African, which transpires through this testimony: *“In 1979 I met the Sister Disciples of the Divine Master at their Liturgical Apostolate Center. I was greatly impressed by their works for the universal Church, for the world. Immediately thereafter I heard these words echo within me: “GO! DO NOT BE AFRAID”. Little by little, following the Lord’s voice, I dedicated myself to a deeper knowledge of the Institute. Each time I saw the sisters driven by their spirit of apostolic life, especially with the Eucharistic adoration, I felt the desire to follow Jesus Master, he who teaches and is the salvation for all people. On the day of the Annunciation of the Angel to Mary, I went into the small chapel of the Sisters to pray and to honor Jesus, the true light. In my meeting with Jesus in the Eucharist I renewed my baptismal promises to nourish my trust in God. The desire to love only Jesus Way, Truth and Life continued to grow within me. Drawn by Mary most Holy, she who said “yes” to the Lord to be the Mother of the Savior, there arose within me the desire to entrust myself entirely to her. Along the way, the joy of following Christ radiated within my heart; in spite of the difficulties which I encountered at every step of my vocation and formation, Mary most Holy was always near me in this journey of discipleship. Now I am among the Sister Disciples for 12 years, I have always heard Mary spoken of as the model for every vocation and especially for every Sister Disciple. From this came a motto, a program of life that was very significant for me: DO EVERYTHING LIKE THE MADONNA, LIKE MARY... SHE CARED FOR JESUS UNTIL CALVARY. I felt called and guided by these words. In the simplicity of heart, I felt called in turn by the same spirit of humility, like Mary in the house of Nazareth. In these 6 years of my discipleship and of religious life I asked the Divine Master to guide me in fulfilling only his will, and living always in the spirit of the Founder, the true mission of the pious disciple in the Church today, for those who are more needy through the Eucharistic, priestly and liturgical apostolate. Through the intercession of all*

the deceased, I ask the grace to be able to serve my brothers in charity throughout my life” (Rome, May 1, 1993).

Her mission as a Sister Disciple unfolded in these stages: from 1993 to 1998 she is in Lubumbashi attending to the confection of the liturgical vestments, given her competence and specific preparation in this area; in 1997 she is nominated Councilor of the Delegation; in 2000 she is in Kimwenza, collaborating in the novitiate; in 2003 she returns to Lubumbashi. In 2005 she is called to offer her collaboration for one year in Ouagadougou (Burkina). In 2006 she comes to Rome for the formation in Missionary spirituality at the Urbaniana University and also participates in the Formation Course on the Charisma of the Pauline Family. She is nominated Councilor of the Delegation and, returning to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, she works in the pastoral work for vocations at Kinshasa. For a period of time she returns to Kimwenza and then as local superior at Lubumbashi. About a month ago she went to Kinshasa for a Council meeting and suffered a cerebral hemorrhage. She was believed to be well on the way to recovery and even today was accompanied to physical therapy. At the conclusion of the routine rehabilitation exercises she felt ill and was immediately taken to the hospital, but the Lord’s call to the eternal wedding feast had come for her.

Sr. M. Agnes leaves us a witness of a constant search for the Divine Master, of a strong sense of belonging to the Congregation, and a will to build the African Delegation in unity and love, walking “hand in hand”. I believe a letter of thanksgiving written by her may also be considered a precious legacy. The letter was written upon her departure from Rome in 1993: *“I echo the words of Mother Scholastica: ONLY GOD IS ENOUGH! Yes, my decision is that of discovering the will of God always. The Lord has given me a gift, the gift of discovering little by little that life is a service of love; this is a reminder, a re-clothing of the splendid festal garment; AFTER WHICH THE CANDLE IS LIT AND NO LONGER EXTINGUISHED, as the Zairian proverb says”* (to Sr. M. Paola Mancini, Rome, July 7, 1993).

Sr. M. Agnes, the sorrow of separation from you, especially for your dear sisters in Africa, is mixed with great hope, the hope that you surely precede us in the eternal Pasch toward which we all are traveling!


Sr. M. Paola Mancini