



Dear Sisters,

Today, Saturday, February 25, 2012 at 2:00pm, the Lord visited the community of Sanfre' (CN), introducing into eternal life our sister

SISTER M. CELESTINA - RITA GAINELLI
born in Vestenanova (VR) on December 18, 1920.

Rita entered the Congregation in Alba (CN) on November 13, 1939, at the age of 19, with the certification from her pastor regarding the serious nature of her commitment to the Christian life which she learned in her family, which was numerous and poor but filled with a deep faith in God.

Following her novitiate (1942-1943) she made her first religious profession in Alba on March 25, 1943, and her perpetual profession on March 25, 1948, always in Alba. In the report presented for her perpetual profession, the Superiors underscored that she was a sister *“who possessed a spirit of sacrifice, decisive and content to make the perpetual profession”*. After the first profession, the apostolic work entrusted to her was primarily in the Houses of the Society of St. Paul. First she was in the laundry in Alba and, after the perpetual profession, in 1948, she went to the kitchen in Rome. For one year (1949-1950) she was in the Divine Master House in Milan. She then returned to Alba to work in the kitchen and the workroom; until she went to Rome in 1956 for the workroom at the Society of St. Paul. From 1964 to 1967 she was responsible for the sisters working at the Society of St. Paul in Vicenza; from 1967 to 1969 she returned to the workroom in Alba, from 1969 to 1985 she returned to Rome in the workroom of the Society of St. Paul. Her characteristic smile and sense of humor flowed from a great and generous heart which made her a *“mother”* in the midst of the brothers. Beyond her work, Sr. M. Celestina was well aware of the fact that her primary apostolate was that of the Adoration and daily offering for the perseverance of those called and for the apostolate of the means of social communication. In 1985 she went to the community in Rome, Regina Apostolorum, at Via Portuense, to make the liturgical vestments, then in 1992, she transferred to the Community Timothy Giaccardo because of her declining health. In 2006 she went to Sanfre' as an elderly sister, but she always remained active for as long as her health permitted.

There is a golden thread that runs through her brief writings and correspondence with Mother M. Lucia Ricci, Mistress of her initial formation: *“Pray that I may be faithful to my promises made during the spiritual exercises and especially that the Lord will enable me to understand true humility and the Celestina with blue eyes can do nothing by herself”* (Rome, July 1, 1975). *“Now that I am descending from Tabor, to avoid discouragement, I must say more with my heart than with my lips: by myself I can do nothing, with God I can do all things!”* (Camaldoli, May 16, 1975). *“Pray always that I may always be as the Lord wants me”* (undated). The sense of her own limitations and her misery made her ever more confident in the goodness and mercy of Jesus.

Sr. M. Celestina was totally dependent on others for several years due to serious bone and cardiovascular problems. In these last days her situation was aggravated by pulmonary complications which led to her death. Her new name, *“Maria Celestina”*, which she received on the occasion of her religious profession, was a constant reminder of Heaven, that Heaven whose doors were opened for her today, Saturday, by the Mother of God. While we have begun this Lenten journey which introduces us into a more lively participation into the Paschal Mystery of our Lord Jesus, the return to the Father of Sr. M. Celestina is a reminder of that final Easter toward which our lives are directed! May your gaze, sister, be fixed forever on the face of God!

Sr. M. Paola Mancini
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