



Dearest Sisters,

As we celebrate today the 97th birthday of our Congregation, the Divine Master, from the community of Cinisello Balsamo (MI), wanted to join to the feast of Heaven our sister

SR. M. VITALIA - IDELMA MAZZOCCA
born on 16 February 1939 at S. Giustina in Colle (PD - Italy)

Almost twenty years old, she enters the Congregation ad Alba on 7 October 1958. The parish priest presents her as *«a dear daughter, of distinct piety, serious and exemplary in her demeanor, of a singular simplicity, always was part of Catholic Action, animated since childhood by this one desire: I want to become a nun! I would like to be sure that Idelma, with the grace of God, will be an excellent religious»* (October 3, 1958). Following the proposal of the then Mother General Sr. M. Regina Cesarato, she wrote a short but detailed history of her vocation in which she highlights the focal moment: *«One fine day in August, I was 16 years old, I heard a strong phrase, very intense and with great strength, which he proposed to me: Do you want to come? I won't call you anymore! At that moment I said Yes! Lord I come! The pain was as strong as death! And so day after day I began to detach myself from everything I owned. After a few days I told my parents. My dad replied: Think about it. For now my answer is a no. We will talk about it when you are twenty! I was happy to stay with them. ... For me it was clear that the Lord wanted me with him »* (Albano 2015). At the age of 19, she obtained parental consent, she left the family and entered the Congregation. She will remember it again in a writing left by her as a testament (Rome, Montecucco, 21 May 1997): *«Thank you for the gift of a religious vocation. The great mystery that only You are, to leave all - how much pain! ... You called me strongly and I heard your voice: Do you want to come? And I replied to your invitation: Yes, I will come. I hope that the yes pronounced in the most beautiful, dearest, most joyful, most attractive moment of my life, will console me on the verge of death.*

What to say to the young people of today? If one of you feels called and chosen, follow the Lord without any fear. In the beginning it could appear harsh and difficult, but the Lord does not disappoint, he will stand by you and support you ».

After the regular initial formation, she makes her first profession in Rome on May 7, 1961.

As soon as she is professed she is in Nice (France) where she attends at the sewing workroom; in 1965 she is in Rome as assistant to the novices, while she is preparing for perpetual profession which she will make on May 7, 1966.

She will then be in Cinisello Balsamo as assistant to the aspirants until 1968 when she is asked to leave as missionary to Australia. Here she will make her contribution, especially in the confectionery workroom, until 1973. She always continued to carry in her heart, in her affections this Nation she loved: *«In this beautiful land I discovered the wonders of creation, the beauty of nature, the subtlety of the people and their customs, ... I learned English ».*

Returning to Italy, she dedicated some time to studying until she obtained the diploma of professional nursing in Milan in July 1976. In 1979 she completed it in Rome in order to obtain the title of head nurse. Sr. M. Vitalia took up this preparation with responsibility and placed it with love at the service of suffering brothers and sisters. She will then be in the Sanfrè Community with the

infirm sisters for three years, then in charge of the infirmary in the RA Community of Rome, then in the infirmary at the House of St. Paul in Rome.

She associated with this service the task of superior of small apostolic communities: in 1988 in Turin SAIE; in 1991 she is in charge of the infirmary of the Generalate of the Society of St. Paul; in 1999 she is in charge of the infirmary in Sanfrè, then again in Milan at the Society of St. Paul, where in 2009 she was also appointed superior of the community as well as in 2012 where she was at SSP Alberione House in Albano. Recently, since 2015, she was at the House of the Society of St. Paul where she was a serene reference point for the brothers. When the community experienced the *Covid* contagion last October, she too was involved. A prolonged hospital stay was necessary which greatly weakened her. Thus she shared with the countless *Covid* patients the elusive drama of this disease. Once she reached negativity, she considered herself by now in a recovery phase and had been transferred to the RSA Divine Master of Cinisello Balsamo for the necessary rehabilitation. Only yesterday, 9 February, the provincial superior, Sr. M. Paola Gasperini, on a visit to the communities of Lombardy, was able to stay with her, listen to her aspirations and pray together. She had nothing about her to predict her immediate return to the Father's House, indeed she was eager to resume in order to return to her service, but she was open to God's will, given the persistent generalized ailments. And this morning, at 7.40 am, while the majority of our communities in Italy were in prayer, she was called to participate in the liturgy of Heaven.

Sr. M. Vitalia, whose name was a reference to Jesus Master Life, knew how to nourish around her the love of life with her constant smile and "maternal" spirit that became the presence of physical and spiritual care through witness of life, the constant smile, the words of encouragement. She paid no attention to herself. Her life, given as a gift, was primarily for others, always in an attitude of service and listening to the brothers.

She knew how to stop at the sources of life, nourish herself with Eucharistic life, dedicate abundant time to prayer. She loved to cultivate herself spiritually and intellectually with readings relating to life in the Spirit: *«My life as a woman consecrated to the Lord is now over fifty years old and I always remember every moment with great enthusiasm and emotion». «You Lord have called me with your strength and your love to lead me within the walls of a Congregation where day and night, I was able to contemplate you in the Holy Host. In this Sacrament you have manifested yourself as Father, always good brother friend, with your merciful omnipotence as Father you have allowed me to always feel close to you especially in the most difficult moments of my life. You gave me the strength to tell you always and everywhere: You are my Lord, without you I have no good... Death does not frighten me, and not even You Lord frighten me because I have lived my life close to You... When my mind wanders in the dark, have mercy and send me Your Mother Mary. Order your angels to take care of my soul! »*. The Lord Jesus, Divine Master, will certainly have listened to her prayer and, as she took care of so many brothers and sisters in need, the angels will have welcomed her soul and led her to the throne of God!

Sr. M. Vitalia, now with your Lord and Master, intercede for all the brothers and sisters of the Pauline Family for the gift of health and to be freed from this indomitable virus of *Covid*!

S. H. Paolo Mancini