



*Dearest Sisters,*

We have learned that at the civil hospital Carlo Urbani in Iesi (AN) , at 10.30 pm, on March 4, 2021, our sister concluded her earthly pilgrimage

**SR. M. GABRIELLA - GEMMA RACCA**  
**born in Marene (CN - Italy) on April 2, 1942.**

Two days after birth, on April 4, 1942, Holy Saturday, she was brought to the baptismal font according to the custom of Christian families who want to ensure immediately that their children have the best treasure of life: the sonship of God and the friendship of Jesus. The Italian families, even in the small towns, pay the tragic price of the ongoing war, and the children grow up quickly, educated by the emergency of each day and the example of their parents. Thus, the desire to give herself entirely to the Lord and open up to the wider horizons of life matures in her early in life.

Gemma, a teenager, defined by the pastor as virtuous, enters the Congregation in Alba (CN) on 8 September 1955. Having taken on the commitment of initial formation and completed the novitiate, she made her religious profession in Rome on 25 March 1960 and perpetual vows, again in Rome on 25 March 1965. During her temporary vows, she is sent to study and completes the professional diploma of nursing in Bologna in 1965.

If we want to speak of a missionary spirit open to multiculturalism, we find in Sr. M. Gabriella a witness of this peculiar gift. She has been called to fulfil her mission in different countries, showing great adaptability, and always feeling at home! After Perpetual Profession, she is sent to take care of the elderly sisters in Sanfrè community from 1966 to 1973. Following this, she will be in Ireland for a few months to learn the English language. This will allow her to insert well in Melbourne, Australia at "*Moran House*", the first house of the Congregation of hospitality for elderly priests, where she will remain until 1978. Then, she moved to Boston (USA), to assume the service to priests in need, resident in the Diocesan House of *Regina Cleri* and she will remain there until 1982. Afterwards, she is requested, for a year, to collaborate in Guadalajara (Mexico) again for work in favour of priests, which at that time welcomed only the elderly. In 1984 she returned to Italy and worked as a nurse in various communities: in Rome SP, in Rome RA, then in Albano DA and then in Bordighera. In 1996 she is destined to a new mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo: initially in the community of Lubumbashi, going daily to Kigoma at the Society of St. Paul. In 2001 she will go to Kinshasa, to the Pauline brothers, then to our communities. The privileged service was in the infirmary but with availability for any other task.

She returned to Rome in 2010 and, with great inner joy, agreed to join the new community of Jerusalem, where, besides the knowledge of the English language, flexibility in

interculturality was necessary above all. She returns to Rome at the end of January 2017 and, after an interval of a few months in the Vatican, in May 2018 she is assigned to the Italian Province and specifically to the community of Fabriano, at the service of the diocesan clergy in the Priestly House, making herself appreciated for her human and polite traits.

Here the sisters and priests were not spared from the Covid infection. The testimony of Jesus Master: *"No one has a greater love than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends"* (Jn 15:13) also applies well to our sister Sr. M. Gabriella. When the whole community of the priestly house was hit by the virus, and she initially tests negative, she was active in an extraordinary way at the service of all, so far as to become infected, in a severe form. It was necessary for her to be admitted to the intensive care unit in the best equipped hospital in the area. Unfortunately, her already compromised pulmonary situation made it critical for a path to recovery; she was then sedated and intubated, with little hope that she could overcome the crisis. Thus, like hundreds of thousands of infected people in hospitals, she entered the protocol isolation that made direct communications with her impossible, while incessant prayer for her was raised by the communities, in Italy and abroad. Mary Most Holy certainly supported her in her silent passage to eternal life.

Sr. M. Gabriella gives herself in totality in every place, with great love for the Congregation, eager to transmit the core values. At the professionalism of her specific service, she united the intuition of the reality of the patient allowing her to act with skill and sensitivity.

In her correspondence she communicates her apostolic pulse and where she passes, she leaves a beautiful memory, as the Director of the *Regina Cleri Home* (Boston) wrote at the time: *« Dearest Sr. Gabriella Racca, your apostolic work will remain indelible in the annals of Regina Cleri. Our Cenacle has lost a jewel. Pray for me as I will do for you »* (Mons. Salvatore Screnci). Sr. M. Gabriella from Congo wrote to myself: *« I am well and I am happy in Kigoma. On Sundays I distribute the Eucharist at Mass in the Cathedral, then I bring the Eucharist to the sick also in the hospital near us. If you only knew what misery these sick people are in! »* (Lubumbashi 2002). *"Help me again with prayer to be that presence that brings grace and joy, seeking only what is necessary"* (20.03.2002). *« In this time I often repeat to myself: with love everything is possible! »*. *« Here our apostolate has a great future in all its aspects. May the goodness of the Lord send good workers into his vineyard. May the Primo Maestro protect us! »*. And to Sr. M. Regina Cesarato she will write: *« I remind you of my availability for (another Nation in Africa!) when and how it will please the Lord! »* (Kinshasa 28.03.2007). The following letter can be considered almost a testament: *« Thank you for the encouragement and for giving me the opportunity to witness to the beauty of our vocation in this great Africa. Thank you for the visit of Sr. M. Gemma and Sr. M. Micaela. They brought a universal breath to our small realities and to the level of the Congregation. Thanks for the next Jerusalem community. I believe that at the heart of each of the Pious Disciple there lives the desire to be part of it, at least spiritually »* (Christmas 2008).

Sr. M. Gabriella, in whom the fire of the origins warmed your heart, making you a joyful and active witness, intercede for the gift of new vocations, especially in those nations where you have been able to dream and desire them with so much hope and trust!

*S. H. Paolo Hancini*