



Dear Sisters,

On June 8, 2021, at 9:20 PM, in the Paulistano Hospital of São Paulo (Brazil), our sister concluded her earthly pilgrimage

SR. M VENERINA - MICHELINA VACCARISI
born on January 8, 1928 in Avola (Syracuse) Italy.

She was the oldest of 9 children: 4 brothers and 5 sisters, one of whom is a Sister Disciple: Sr. M. Rosaria. She entered the Congregation in Catania on January 24, 1948, the day on which Blessed Timothy Giaccardo died in Rome. She went to Alba (CN) for the religious formation and made her first profession in Alba on March 25, 1951, and her perpetual profession in Rome on March 25, 1956.

She described her brief and synthetic vocational story, written in 2021, as a love story! God calls whomever he wants! Her family was poor, but industrious and rich in faith, in sacrifice and in fidelity, which contributed to the formation of solid roots in the Christian life. Then Catholic Action helped to form her ecclesial and missionary sensitivity. She specifically affirmed: *«I heard God's call on a Holy Thursday in which the youth of Catholic Action made the night adoration at the altar of repose (at the Holy Sepulchre). I was enchanted and thought about how beautiful it would be if we could do this more often! The Lord certainly answered me»*. She was aware of the insistent call of Jesus and, at the age of twenty, she manifested to her parents her desire to consecrate herself to the Lord. She had to overcome the resistance of her family members, especially her mother who, having poor health, relied on her eldest daughter. But in the end, with faith, her mother relented adding *"may God's will be done"*. And this also led to an improvement in her health. *«I made profession on Easter Sunday (which in that year fell on March 25). This is the day that the Lord has made! Alleluia! This alleluia has accompanied me throughout my life!»*. In the exercise of her mission following profession, she spent one year in tailoring at the Mother House of the Society of St. Paul in Alba, in appreciation of the assiduous presence of the Founder, who provided the Pauline communities with weekly meditations. She was then sent to Catania and then to Rome, always in the priestly apostolate. And she continues: *«After perpetual profession I was sent to follow Jesus in the land of Brazil where, by the grace of God, I am until now. I am content and happy. All of eternity will not be enough*

to give thanks to God». Clearly the words of Mother M. Lucia Ricci would have touched the heart of this young sister, when she said in a meditation of 1956: «Now we also say to our missionaries: Go forth. It is already a land of fire only living our life, that the fire may be maintained. We, more than any other missionary, have the task of going, lighting, nourishing this fire of love in a unique way, because to us the Lord has entrusted the flame of Eucharistic, priestly, liturgical charity, that is to be kept constantly lit in our heart and wherever we go». Sr. M. Venerina was part of that group of sisters who, on July 26, 1956, were sent to officially began our presence as Sister Disciples in São Paulo, Brazil, and to communicate the flame of this charity that springs from the charism.

In the first years of her missionary life, together with other sisters, she assumed the priestly service in the Pauline seminary. She participated in vocational initiatives, traveling and visiting the families, touching them with her friendly presence and communicating peace. Sr. M. Venerina, in silence, in prayer, and with kindness, built our history together with the Brazilian sisters. Making use of her certification in embroidery and sewing, she dedicated herself to the preparation of liturgical vestments, to the Liturgical Apostolate in various communities. From 1978 to 1980, she was the Local Superior in the community of Christ the Redeemer (Cristo Redentore) in Rio de Janeiro. For various years she was a member of the community of Brasília, of Caxias do Sul, and lately of Cabreúva. In May 1989, she went to Italy in order to be able to accompany her mother who was elderly and suffering. To facilitate her proximity, she was assigned in Portugal for some years. Following the death of her mother, the sisters in Brazil repeatedly asked the General Government to allow Sr. M. Venerina to return to Brazil: thus, in 1997, she returned to Brazil, which became her country by adoption.

The sisters from Brazil experienced her presence as that of a *matriarch*, underscoring how her prayerful, industrious and silent presence animated both the sisters and the Friends of the Divine Master. She was able to establish fraternal bonds with the families, always desiring to offer them a useful instrument for prayer in the family: the Divine Office of the communities. She was greatly appreciated for her dynamism in the mission and her personal witness in dedicating the first hour of the day to the Eucharistic Adoration. As an authentic missionary, she always communicated the love of Jesus Master present in the Eucharist, in the Liturgy, and in the Church, the People of God. She was encouraged others in the knowledge of Mother Scholastica Rivata and entrusting to her intercession especially prayer for the children.

When cancer of the esophagus was revealed, Sr. M. Venerina fought the good fight, serenely facing the apostolate of suffering and accepting the treatment and attention from the sisters. To those who asked if she wanted to return to Italy, she would respond, with a smile: “we can also get to Paradise from here”. When Sr. M. Rosaria, the sister who is a Sister Disciple, went to visit her, she gratefully wrote to Sr. M. Micaela Monetti, Superior General: «Thank you for this beautiful gift of sending Rosaria here to Brazil. It seems like a dream, but it is real. It was a gift from God. Thanks be

to God and to you. You were very kind and good. May the Lord repay you. Thank you!».

Sr. M. Venerina had a special longing for holiness, for sanctification; a longing she expressed in various writings. She expressed to Sr. M. Regina Cesarato: *«May the Lord grant you all that is good and beautiful you desire, especially sanctity and wisdom».* *«Primo Maestro told us: wherever we find ourselves we can become saints. I am always happy and content!».* This testimony of happiness is almost an echo of the Easter Alleluia from the day of her religious profession. Having completed the race, she received the reward of eternal life! She is now a member of the triumphant Church!

We are also grateful to the various sisters of the Province of Brazil and the Pauline brothers who manifested their affection and gratitude. Some witnesses, especially, from the sisters who accompanied her more closely: *«Sr. M. Venerina repeated every day, let us seek to see the positive part in the other. She was a woman of great charity, silence, serenity, content in her vocation. She never made noise, but she made each day a lively and active offering to the Lord and to the brothers. Sr. M. Venerina spent the entire time of treatment with serenity and great trust in God. Her mantra was: we are in the hands of God and it is the best place we can possibly be since no leaf falls to the ground without God's permission. She was grateful for everything. She is gone... But her presence will never leave us... It is so strong in the life of each one of us, because she was the wine of Jesus in the joy of a word of faith and witness of those who felt loved by the BELOVED. Go and do not forget to tell Jesus that we are grateful to God for your missionary love. Help and reawaken this love in us».*

From Paradise, Sr. M. Venerina continues to accompany the Pauline Family in Brazil and Latin America, obtaining liberation from the pandemic and from every form of oppression that takes away the dignity and the freedom of the people! Thank you again for all your dedication to Brazil which loves you so much. *Sr. M. Venerina, sing in Paradise, call the people, sing of Easter!*

S. H. Paolo Haucium.