



Dear Sisters,

As the first day of 2022 was ending, on the Solemnity of the Mother of God, at 7:20 PM, in the Divine Master community of Nogent sur Marne (Paris), the Virgin Mary introduced our sister to the banquet of eternal life

**SR. ANNA MARIA – PAOLA BURCI
born on October 20, 1942, in Bologna (Italy).**

She was brought to the baptismal font on October 29, and received the name of Paola. At the age of nineteen, she met the Sister Disciples of the Divine Master and the Pauline Family, immediately manifesting the missionary zeal of the Apostle to the Gentiles. She entered the Congregation in Rome on September 7, 1961.

She made her religious profession in Rome at the conclusion of the novitiate on March 25, 1964, and her perpetual profession on August 15, 1969, also in Rome.

She spent the period of temporary vows in France, at Nogent sur Marne, where she was immediately faced with the challenges and the beauty of a mission beyond the national boundaries and narrow horizons. She was content in the community in which she found herself, in the mission, and took advantage to learn the French language well.

Immediately after perpetual profession, she left for Lubumbashi (RDC) where she enthusiastically began to organize the Liturgical Apostolate Center, overcoming the weariness and resistance of the beginnings. She remained there for five years (1969-1974) and then returned to France, where she spent her entire life in the various communities there: Nogent sur Marne and Nice.

A sister gifted with a great love for our religious Family and the mission of the liturgical apostolate, she held various institutional responsibilities for various terms: Superior of the Delegation, Councilor and Treasurer of the Delegation. But she invested her best energies in the Liturgical Apostolate Center in Paris, for which she had managerial and administrative responsibility until a pulmonary tumor with widespread metastasis forced her to slow down and undergo the necessary treatments. Unfortunately, due to the complex clinical picture that developed over the past weeks, the physical decline was rapid and concluded with a heart attack in the evening of January first, 2022.

The sisters who shared the journey of life with her bear witness to her gentleness and amiability; rarely did she become so angry that she would hurt the others.

She had the art of facing life with a smile, even lately when the disease manifested itself in all of its aggressivity. In the face of the inevitable difficulties, she was able to find the proper words to minimize them. Certainly it could have been the manifestation of her means of defense, but often it was her way of moving forward without burdening the others with the weight of her trials. This made the relationship with her pleasant and various friends, priests, laity and collaborators remember her as a luminous person.

From this smiling aspect of her person transpired a strong sense of responsibility, both in her work in the Center and elsewhere to the point of sacrifice, of which she rarely lamented. Her family also remembers her as a person who was always happy and joyful, open to the mission and filled with a positive outlook.

She manifested a marked love for the arts, and especially for music. In her free time she taught herself to play the zither and she willingly accompanied the liturgical songs for the community celebrations on weekdays and feastdays. The numerous lay persons who participate in the Eucharistic Celebration on Sundays in the chapel of our community in Nogent sur Marne were able to enjoy and praise the Lord also through her animation.

This musical sensitivity also extended to other artistic areas: it was beneficial for the beauty of the prayer and of the liturgical space.

For years, she followed the formation of the Friends of Jesus Master, Pauline Cooperators associated with our Institute, and of vocations: always with hope and renewed courage.

Some days ago, while participating in the community *lectio divina* she shared what she was experiencing in her illness and confessed: "what I am living at this moment is a grace! It gives me the possibility of accepting the cross, even if it is very heavy, and to follow Jesus more closely". Purified by suffering, in a personal colloquium she emphasized the absolute priority of the love for Jesus and said in a way that was very moving: "There is only one thing that is important in our existence: to be detached from everything and from everyone and to give our love to God alone! This is what is important!".

The community accompanied her with care and tenderness in the various phases of her illness, praying with and for her and enabling her to perceive the fraternal presence of those who know how to be neighbors to one who is undergoing the trials of suffering.

For her there is truth in the words the Christian liturgy of the dead has us sing: "May the Virgin, the sweet mother of Christ here on earth, welcome you; may you dwell with your sweet heavenly mother".

Now, rest in peace, dear Sr. Anna Maria, and pray for us who are still pilgrims: intercede for our presence as Sister Disciples of the Divine Master in France and for the promising communities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo that you loved with the passionate heart of Paul, the Apostle without borders, since to him you entrusted your missionary journey confidently each day.

Sr. M. Michaela Honeth'