



Dear Sisters,

Today, June 7, 2022, at 2:15 AM, in the Beato Timoteo Giaccardo community, the Bridegroom arrived to celebrate the eternal wedding feast with our sister

**SR. M. PALMIRA – STEFANA REGINA SANTALUCIA
born on December 26, 1933, in Altivole (TV).**

Carried to the baptismal font on December 31, her parents were concerned that their rather frail little daughter might soon become a daughter of God. She was raised in a profoundly Christian family and the pastor presented her to the Institute as a young woman of irreproachable conduct. In the family she assisted with the work on the farm, forming within her a love for nature and a spirit of sacrifice.

She entered the Congregation in Alba (CN) on February 2, 1952, the feast of the Presentation of the Lord. Stefana Regina had recently celebrated her 18th birthday and offered to the Lord the freshness of her youth. Following the first years in Alba dedicated to the initial formation until her entrance into the novitiate, she continued her formative journey in Rome. In fact, on April 9, 1954, the novitiate was transferred to Rome, in Via Portuense, where the house was in an advanced stage of construction. Therefore, she formed part of the first group of novices to make their first profession in Rome on March 25, 1955. After her profession, in the 5 years of temporary vows, she offered her apostolic collaboration to the Pauline mission at the Vocazionario San Paolo (Seminary) in Rome. She made her perpetual profession in Rome on March 25, 1960. Not yet thirty years of age, she was sent to Spain. Thus she experienced the universal mission of the Congregation: first in Bilbao at the Society of Saint Paul (1960 – 1964) and then in Madrid (1964 – 1966) where she dedicated herself to various services. After the mission in Spain, she received a missionary destination that was much further away: Australia, in Homebush which is now Strathfield (Sydney). She would remain there from 1967 until 1981, collaborating with the formation and the development of the apostolate in this reality. She dedicated herself primarily to the priestly apostolate, commuting to the Pauline communities from the nearby Divine Master community.

In a letter written from Australia to Mother M. Lucia Ricci, then Superior General, (May 21, 1971), she wrote: *«I always try to live with great charity toward my sisters. I ask myself: How can I be of help to my sisters? Before expecting things from them, I see how I can go toward them»*. Following a course of Spiritual Exercises in Ariccia in 1980, she

wrote: *«I am very happy and I seek to live intensely these days of special grace for me. I am sure that, in turn, I will be able to communicate these gifts I have received through the example of my life, also to the sisters with whom I live in community»*. These words are echoed in the words of today's Gospel: *«You are the salt of the earth... you are the light of the world»* (cf. Mt 5:13.14). The testimony of her life can be read in the radiant smile on her face, even after death!

In 1981, Sr. M. Palmira returned to Rome. Initially she lived at the General House and then, from 1997, at the Saint Peter Community in the Vatican. Her apostolate was at the Souvenir Center where the knowledge of many languages – Spanish, English, and Italian – was not only useful but also an apostolic communication that made the pilgrims who visited there feel at ease. Because of her presence there for many years, Sr. M. Palmira, became a reference person also for many people who, coming from Australia, desired to attend some religious functions with the Holy Father. They found in Sr. M. Palmira a facilitator, a person to open the way to arrive at a point that would seem to be impossible. Naturally, her privileged time was dedicated to the adoration in Saint Peter's Basilica, even in the heaviest hours of the day. As if a long period of time being present was not enough to make a person known in the Vatican, in 1996 there was a special event in which her picture was in the newspaper with this wording: *«SPEEDY! Sister Palmira Santalucia, the religious sister who followed and stopped the thieves stealing from the souvenir shop in the Vatican, where she works. As soon as she was aware of the theft committed by the criminals, four youths pretending to be tourists, she left the store and pursued them, despite the fact that she had already passed sixty years of age for some time. “Unfortunately, I was able to stop only two of the thieves”, the sister said, “the others were able to vanish with the loot”»* (from Settimanale Gente, 10.10.1996).

Many testimonies have been received from persons who knew her, especially from her years in the Vatican. With gratitude, they wrote of her: *«Meeting her in Saint Peter's Basilica as she accompanied a group of friends, perhaps coming from another part of the world in the Center at the exit of the Vatican grottoes, hyperactive with 200 things to do, or seeing her absorbed in prayer saying the Hail Mary on her rosary beads before the Blessed Sacrament in the Adoration chapel, was always a great joy. To see her speaking with tact and discretion with a Cardinal or listening with such goodness to a poor unknown person, to her meant offering the same respect, listening and assistance. Her lively and sometimes anxious temperament mixed with a radiant smile, her serene gaze, her refined manner and polite and always intelligent ways, remain vivid in our memory»*.

Perhaps in those years, the worsening rheumatic pathology which progressively manifested itself and led to the necessity of passing to the Beato Timoteo Community in 2017, to join the elderly and infirm sisters, was not yet evident. In the last decade there was also the gradual manifestation of Parkinson's Disease, a slow and progressive debilitating disease that primarily affects the control of movement and of balance. The decline led to the conclusion of her earthly pilgrimage which ended in the heart of the night. Present at that moment were the Provincial Superior, Sr. M. Paola Gasperini, and other sisters who accom-

panied her offering with continual prayer, entrusting her to the Virgin Mary and to Saint Paul.

Dear Sr. M. Palmira, there are many intentions that we entrust to you: the XI General Chapter of the Society of Saint Paul currently taking place, the Centennial of our Foundation and the upcoming General Chapter of our Congregation, vocations and the development of our mission in Oceania!

Now that you are in the Father's House, sing to Christ the Master your joy at being always with him and present to him the richness of your faith that you spread with such great love.

S. H. Paolo Hancini