



Dear Sisters,

On the vigil of the feast of the Transfiguration, August 5, 2022, at 12:15 PM, in the community of Sanfré (Italy), the Lord of glory showed his luminous Face to our sister

**SR. M. AGNES – AUGUSTA ASTEGNO
born on March 7, 1927 in Bolca (Verona – Italy).**

Seven days after her birth, she was brought to the baptismal font in the the parish church dedicated to St. John the Baptist, and received the name Augusta. Educated in the Christian faith by her parents, with her sisters and brothers, she grew serenely, maturing in the desire to dedicate her life to God and to do good for others.

On January 6, 1939, as an adolescent, she left her place nestled upon the Prealpi Venete and entered the Community of Casa Madre in Alba. In written testimony, we read: “We remember her with eyes wide open in the large new dwelling that received her, in contrast to the small house in the green fields of her native place that she left behind”. This acute and smiling gaze, capable of receiving the surprise and the mystery of life is a characteristic that would always accompany her in her fraternal relationships, in activity and in sickness, bearing witness to a delicate spiritual sensitivity.

These were difficult years in the history of Italy: across the twenty years of Fascism that would lead to the Second World War. But they are also complex years for our Institute which was undergoing the journey of canonical approval, thanks to the charismatic initiative of Mother Scholastica Rivata. The documents confirm that on March 24, 1944, in the novitiate chapel in Alba, the rite of admission to the novitiate was celebrated. It was presided by Signor Maestro, Timothy Giaccardo, who had also examined the candidates previously. The novices were received by the Superior, Maria Scolastica Rivata. Among these novices was Astegno Augusta.

On March 25, 1945, with her companion novices, she made the Religious profession, as written in the Registry of the Records of the Daughters of St. Paul, *sub conditione*: given the current situation of the war which did not allow for communication between Alba and Rome. As her writings testify, she maintained throughout her life a special bond of affection and devotion for her Novice Mistress, Mother Lucia Ricci, who later became Superior General.

She would make her perpetual profession on March 25, 1950, always in Alba at Casa Madre.

During the first years of her religious life she was dedicated primarily in the area of propaganda, such as door-to-door diffusion of the good Word, of the good Press.

It was an activity that she lived also as a meeting of the persons and families, receiving their concerns and hopes. These became intentions for prayer which at the end of the day were brought to Jesus Master and Shepherd, the only one who could offer a solution. They were truly blessed steps, those which brought the Good News of the Kingdom, and she took them through the streets of Milan, of Lugano (Switzerland), of Cinisello Balsamo, of Nice and Nogent sur Marne (France), between 1946 and 1963.

She was also available for collaboration in the workrooms or in the Liturgical Apostolate Centers in Florence (1956) and then in Milan, in Via della Signora for a long time.

But, at different times, Sr. M. Agnes spent almost thirty years in France, in Paris and Nice, in the *Maison d'Accueil "Les Cedres"*. Here priests and religious, who were guests there for rest or because of frail health, found in her a Pious Disciple who was serene and gentle. They knew that they could count on her kindness and patience. For three years (1981 – 1984) she also offered her service at the Episcopal Palace in Nice, guaranteeing prayer and an attentive presence in the spirit of the House of Bethany.

Upon her return to Italy in 1997, she was sent to Centrale di Zugliano, in the House of Prayer, to welcome the guests who found in this natural and spiritual oasis a place for renewal in faith and in daily life. Sr. M. Agnes, in the simplicity that transpired from her smile and her gentle manner, placed everyone at ease, which contributed to the creation of a welcoming atmosphere.

Unfortunately, in 2006 she suffered a serious cerebral ischemia, which radically changed her way of dealing with daily life, even in the smallest gestures. With patience, she allowed herself to be treated and tenaciously faced a course of rehabilitation, bearing witness to the positive manner in which she had always faced life and its trials.

She spent long years limited in her movements and totally dependent on others, but she was never lacking in a kind gaze, gratitude, trust without defensiveness or bitterness. Her constant relationship with Jesus, through intimate and confident prayer, formed within her the disciple who knew how to remain, not only under the cross with Mary of Nazareth, but also on the cross, embraced and sustained by her Master and Lord.

Filled with years, she was slowly and silently consumed, like a candle, while maintaining her spirit of peace and patience with which she had learned to face the harshness of life.

She entrusted herself into the hands of Mary, the Mother of God, on the day in which the Church celebrates her as Our Lady of the Snows. And the Mother, together with her Son Jesus, presented her to the Father.

To you, Sr. M. Agnes, now in the arms of God, we ask for prayers for our young women in formation and for our Congregation in our journey toward the 10th General Chapter: that we may truly be witnesses, through our actions and words – when necessary – to the beauty of the Encounter and the joy of the mandate.

Sr. M. Michaela Monetti