



Dear Sisters,

Today, December 2, 2022, in the DM community of Warsaw (Poland), at 5:00 AM, the Lord called to eternal life our sister

**SR. M. SCHOLASTYKA – ANTONINA MARIA SZYMAŃSKA
born on May 4, 1937, in Pleszew (Gniezno).**

Antonina, the fifth of the six children of Feliks and Jadwiga, was baptized on May 16 in the Parish of Saint John the Baptist. She was raised in a family that defended its Catholic faith in a social setting dominated by Communism. The love for the Virgin Mary, the Madonna of Częstochowa, Queen of Poland, helped her to make courageous choices like that of generously following the Divine Master in a Congregation that was new for Poland, a presence which sought a way to affirm itself in the Polish Church, which had its own identity.

At the age of 20, she decided to enter among the Sister Disciples of the Divine Master. In her request for admission, she wrote: «I want to offer my life in sacrifice to God so that in this way the glory of God will be magnified and the others helped to attain salvation». The pastor presented her as a girl of prayer and apostolic commitment.

Antonina was received into the “Queen of Poland” community in Częstochowa on March 10, 1958. After the regular novitiate, she made her first profession on September 8, 1961, and her perpetual profession on September 8, 1967, always in Częstochowa. At her religious profession, she received the name of Sr. M. Scholastyka and celebrated her feast day on February 10, with the entire Congregation that celebrates its *dies natalis* on that date.

In the development of the mission, she collaborated in the ways that were possible for the beginning community of the Sister Disciples who, due to the Communist regime, were required to adapt themselves and work secretly, both for the preparation of rosaries and the sewing of vestments.

In 1972, she was the Delegate Superior *ad tempus* in Grabówka; in 1974, she was the cook in Częstochowa RA; in 1983 she was the sacristan in Łapy. In 1986 she spent some time in Italy at the Saint Paul Seminary in Rome and participated in a course of ongoing formation. She returned to Poland in 1995, where she offered her collaboration to the community of our Pauline brothers. In 1999 she was transferred to the house in Warsaw where she fulfilled successively the duties of cook, portress, and preparing the refectory.

All of the sisters, young and those not so young, affectionately called her “nonna” (grandmother). She had a strong character, a particular sense of humor that was somewhat

rude, but she would ask forgiveness for the trouble she would have caused by her words, even when she had to do so with a much younger sister. This stirred up respect and admiration in everyone. She had a special love and prayer for the priests and brothers of the Society of Saint Paul, whom she served as cook for a number of years. The brothers emphasized her hard work and dedication and her interest for vocations. A priest recalled: «She surrounded the first Polish Paulines with prayer and attention and always found something for us to eat, especially when we did not yet have our own house». Another underscored: «She was very close to us. We saw her as a woman of faith because we often saw her in prayer. She was enamored of her vocation, peaceful and not imposing in her work, immensely hospitable and open to persons, something that was especially evident in the difficult years of the seventies. She always said that the most important thing is to live according to God's will. In the seminary we affectionately called her "Aunt Scolastica"».

With gratitude, one of the Sister Disciples shared: «I remember the first time I went to visit the Sisters in Warsaw, a few months before joining them, and the evening I was seated alone in chapel, crying a great deal. It was difficult for me to discern my vocation, especially because I had many difficulties in the family and it was all very painful for me. "Nonna Scholastyka" entered the chapel and, hearing me crying, she approached me after a while and told me: "Sometimes suffering is necessary. God never promised that this journey would be easy. But, whatever the cost may be, it is worth it!". This simple message from an elderly sister, and probably tested by the experience of her life, was and remains very important to me. In the following years, living in the same community, I often had the opportunity to see firsthand how this sister lived her daily life, her joys and her many sufferings, as a gift, as a sacrifice offered to God out of love for priests, for young people, for all those who entrusted their intentions to her, and also for the intentions of the Pauline Family, the entire Church and for the world».

She loved books, both old and new: her room was like a library. She was often seen bent over a notebook in which she kept spiritual notes and copied passages from books, prayers, homilies and conferences. She enjoyed "tinkering": crochet, sewing by hand – especially books, but also various small containers, pencil holders, toiletry bags, etc. She always wanted to be helpful, always ready to substitute the sisters, for as long as her strength permitted. She could be counted on for the turns of adoration, even at night. She was always punctual and faithful to our fundamental Eucharistic-priestly-liturgical apostolate. In her last years she spent several hours a day in chapel.

During the summer of 2022, she was diagnosed with stage four malignant stomach cancer. As long as she was able to walk, she could be found in chapel, at the Eucharist and in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. The disease progressed and the cancer spread. She spent the last two months confined to bed, assisted and visited by the sisters. Each day she requested and awaited communion: "When is the Lord Jesus coming?". This was her priority. She had the grace of having the Mass celebrated in her room many times. Until the end, she was deeply interested in the life of the community. This morning her heart stopped due to cardiac arrest.

She died peacefully in her sleep, during the Jubilee Year of the Centennial of the foundation of the Congregation she loved and to which she remained faithful until the end, offering

her prayers and her sufferings for all the sisters and for the new vocations to our religious family.

Dear Sr. M. Scholastyka, now that you have been admitted to the eternal dwelling, continue to present to the Divine Master these intentions that you have made your own here on earth. Implore special graces for the Provincial Chapters that are being celebrated in preparation for the 10th General Chapter.

S. H. Paolo Mancini