



Dear Sisters,

On February 10, 2023, the Memorial of St. Scholastica and the 99th Anniversary of Foundation, in the Beato Timoteo Community in Rome, at 2:30 PM, the Lord called to the banquet of eternal joy our sister

SR. M. LELIA - ELVIRA MATERA
born on September 20, 1950 in Sortino (SR) – Italy

On October 15 of the same year, Elvira was brought to the baptismal font of the Mother Church of Sortino, by her father, Sebastiano, and her mother, Vincenza Nunzia Marino, and thus she was soon associated to the Paschal Mystery of Christ and made a daughter of God.

Still an adolescent, Elvira, entered the Congregation on September 12, 1964, where she completed her initial formation. She continued her formative journey in Rome with the novitiate in 1967 that prepared her for the religious profession, which she made on March 25, 1968. She received the new name of *Sr. M. Lelia* with the following motivation: “a lily name, that evokes purity, innocence, offering” and she will celebrate her feastday on the solemnity of the Immaculate Conception. The Madonna will be for her light, guide, comfort in the journey of her consecrated life. It was suggested to her to recite frequently: *Jesu Corona Virginum* [Jesus, Crown of Virgins] and, as a particular intention, she was entrusted with the prayer and offering for her brother, at that time a deacon among the Missionaries of PIME, for missionary priests and for mission lands.

After the period of temporary vows, Sr. M. Lelia made her perpetual profession on June 16, 1974, solemnity of *Corpus Domini*, always in Rome. In her request, she wrote: «*desiring and content to follow my vocation with generous correspondence and complete fidelity, I ask humbly and with the assistance of Mary Most Holy, to be admitted to the profession of perpetual vows...*». In the evaluation of the sister responsible is written: «*She has proven herself during the period of temporary vows. She is capable of assuming responsibility, trusting that she is able to keep herself pious and simple as she has shown until now*».

In her existence, Sr. M. Lelia vibrated for and with her brother, Fr. Gaetano Matera, of the Pontifical Institute for the Foreign Missions, who was a missionary for 25 years, first in Hong Kong and then in Taiwan. In March of 2016, he preceded her into Eternity.

In her apostolic activity, for many years, Sr. M. Lelia was involved in the ecclesiastical tailoring in various communities: Cinisello Balsamo, Milan (1968), Rome SMM (1972), Alba

(1974), Trento (1980) and again at Alba (1982), where she was also the Local Superior. She established a fraternal and cordial relationship with the priests, whom she assured of her prayer. In 1986 she was sent to Rome as assistant to the novices. In 1987, in completing her studies, she chose as her thesis the Italian region of Piedmont, giving the following motivation: *«Although I do not come from Piedmont, I chose the region of Piedmont for two reasons: the city of Alba is the land in which the great Pauline Family was born and took its first steps, and therefore, also our Congregation which is inserted within it. Second: because I lived in this land for about 10 years. Even if the differences between this land and my native land may seem to be great, I must acknowledge that during the time I spent there and the persons that I met, I was well received. So much so that I would willingly return to Piedmont, and while I do not have the opportunity to do so, I like to return there at least in my thoughts to see the smiling hills covered with vineyards and the other marvelous landscapes once again»*. This choice expresses her commitment to be attentive to the social-cultural context into which she was called to fulfill the mission.

From 1987, Sr. M. Lelia was called in obedience to a series of successive mandates in a role of responsibility for communities: in Florence (1987), in Palermo (1990), in Sanfrè for two terms (1993), in Bordighera *ad tempus* (2000), in Rome RA (2001) while frequenting a course of formation at the *Claretianum* on the service of authority in the religious community.

She then continued her service as Local Superior: in Rimini (2003), in Palermo (2006); in 2009 she was a counselor and local treasurer for the RA community, then in 2011, Provincial Counselor and, in 2015, superior of the Provincial community for two terms. Finally, in 2021, we find her in the sewing workroom of the RA community in Rome and then, for health reasons, she went to the Beato Timoteo community. In the course of the years and also in the infirmary, Sr. M. Lelia remained serene and helpful. To the extent possible, she continued to work in the workroom and collaborated, as a Local Counselor, to the functioning of the community, especially in the animation, also utilizing the digital instruments with mastery and creativity.

The precarious health conditions that afflicted her for many years were not burdensome in her relationships with the community. To those she met, Sr. M. Lelia was always a person who was vivacious, available and generous; anyone could freely go to her for sewing or digital needs and she did everything possible to assist them. She was intelligent, ingenious, capable and always attentive to the needs of the sisters. God alone knows the sacrifices that this entailed, but Sr. M. Lelia certainly never made anyone feel that the assiduous exercise of evangelical charity was a burden.

From the Eucharistic Divine Master she learned to live in a constant “going out” of herself and for various periods she also exercised the ministry of Extraordinary Minister of the Eucharist, always with special devotion, availability and care.

In her writings, she constantly expressed her gratitude for the greetings, for the interest and her awareness of her own poverty. To Madre M. Lucia Ricci she wrote: *«Madre Maestra, I must tell you sincerely that I feel very small for the responsibility that I have (Superior in Alba)»* (February 11, 1983). And again to Sr. M. Regina Cesarato: *«Thank you for your interest in my health (if you could have some scaffolding made so that I am straighter! I’m kidding). I give thanks to the Lord for the way that I am and for what he gives me each day*

in health and holiness». «For the 9th General Chapter and for your intentions I will intensify the night adoration and some additional mortification» (Christmas 2016). She is truly to be praised for her attention to identifying the hours for turns of adoration that were not covered, and personally take those turns. She did this until these last days of her life.

Sr. M. Lelia loved singing and music: she lightly and joyfully played the harmonica that she carried with her to every community. She diffused the simple music of the Gospel, in simplicity, joy and peace, making the conversations and relationships with her easy and pleasant. Her smile helped to relieve tensions and apparently complex situations. All of this was the fruit of a constant care for her interior life, of her love of Jesus Master, of her profound vocational identification as a Pious Disciple of the Divine Master.

For a number of years, her respiratory system was deteriorating due to a progressive deformation of the thoracic cavity (rotoscoliosis) that caused a displacement of the abdominal and cardiac organs, which progressively reduced the necessary space for respiration. Especially in these last weeks, the respiration and then the dyspnea continually worsened, leading to the conclusion of her earthly existence.

Upon receiving the news of her death, Sr. M. Micaela Monetti, Superior General, who was visiting the communities in South Korea at the time, wrote: *«This definitive call of God to Sr. M. Lelia testifies that he is the Lord of Life. For this prompt “here I am” that is coherent in life and in death, and which is tragic (for us), we give you thanks, dear Sister. Lord, we do not ask why you have taken her from us: we thank you for having given her to us».*

Sr. M. Lelia, you shared our concerns, present to Jesus Master that which is for the benefit of all for the glory of the Heavenly Father and the good of humanity. Ask for the Spirit of wisdom and missionary courage for the participants in the upcoming 10th General Chapter!

Sr. H. Paolo Mancini