



Dear Sisters,

Today, February 10, 2024, as the celebrations in Italy for the Centennial of the foundation of our Institute were taking place, at 6:30 PM in the community of Sanfrè (CN), Jesus Master called our sister to join the community of Heaven,

SR. M. EPIFANIA – MARIA BRIGNONE

born on November 23, 1932, in Monastero di Dronero, Cuneo (Italy).

The second of nine children, Maria was brought to the baptismal font in the parish of S. Antonio on the day of her birth, November 23, and entrusted to the Virgin Mother of God. From a farming family forged by faith, by love for the land and the family, she attended the obligatory schools and actively participated in the Young Women's Catholic Action group.

In a short narration, she shared the story of her call: «I have always thought of my vocation among the Sister Disciples as a **GIFT of God's generous love**. Raised in a good family and a parish where the priests sought to give us a good formation for the future, my desire was to prepare myself well to form a good family. I knew some Institutes, but I was indifferent. On CHRISTMAS night in 1952, in prayer, I sensed and understood the gift of the Lord: to consecrate myself to him. Without delay, I said "yes" and I always considered it as final. I reached **Alba on August 6**. At that time they were celebrating the Feast of **JESUS MASTER**. Gradually, with renewed surprise and joy, I understood the beauty and the greatness of our VOCATION and MISSION, the reality of the PAULINE FAMILY, the Charism and the Holiness of Fr. ALBERIONE, GIACCARDO, M. SCHOLASTICA. The certainty that **God is faithful** was my guide, light, strength through the difficulties and doubts. I committed myself to confirm and become ever more conscious of my "yes" to his gift and to render it fruitful. **THANK YOU, LORD, thanks to my family, thanks to my Congregation**».

She would reach her twentieth birthday in the months following her entrance into the House, in Alba (CN), to begin the formative journey among the Sister Disciples of the Divine Master. Two years later, she would be followed in the choice for her life by her sister Anna, who with the Religious profession would take the name Sr. M. Albina († 07-09-2023). She would have the gift of accompanying the priestly and missionary vocation of her brother, Father Pier Mario, with the special charismatic nature of the Sister Disciple: intercession in prayer and participation in the joys and challenges of his priestly ministry.

With the religious profession, made in Rome on March 25, 1955, she intensified her academic and doctrinal preparation: having completed her Middle School diploma, in 1958 she obtained the teaching diploma and, in 1960, the diploma for higher doctrinal studies at the Catholic University in Paris. Following her perpetual profession in Rome on March 25, 1960, she departed the following year for Montréal

(Canada) with the mandate as Local Superior. She remained in Canada until 1967 and, upon her return to Rome, she assumed the duties as treasurer for the community of the General House. After the III General Chapter, in 1969, she was appointed General Treasurer of the Institute, a service she would provide until 1981, with responsibility for the communion of goods and the patrimony of the Institute. She prepared for this also by participating in the renewal courses aimed specifically for the Treasurers of the communities, in order to learn to administer the goods and protect the charism of the Institute.

In 1981 she returned to Canada as the Regional Superior, for a three-year term. She then returned to Italy definitively and made use of this time for spiritual and academic renewal, attending Courses of Spiritual Theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University. For some years (1986-1988) she collaborated at the Liturgical Apostolate Center in Paris.

From 1988 until 2002, for 14 years, she served at the Congregation for Divine Worship and Sacramental Discipline as Archivist, where she was valued for the dedication, zeal, precision and discretion that had always characterized her everywhere. In 1991, she received the diploma from the Scuola Vaticana di Paleografia Diplomatica e Archivistica.

Concluding her service due to reaching the age limit, she remained in the Regina Apostolorum community in Rome and fulfilled various ministries, as archivist and switchboard operator.

She loved the Congregation and especially her mission in the Church; she believed in the power of the prayer of adoration and intercession that enabled her to continue to expand her heart before the Mystery of God and of humanity, even when the physical energies were diminishing and the frailty became more pronounced. Afflicted by double pathologies, she had to deal with a reduction in activity and, at times, a sense of uselessness and weakness: the kidney disease caused renal insufficiency that continued to worsen, and the respiratory insufficiency caused diffuse inflammatory problems. She demonstrated herself to be a decisive person, at times gruff, and if one is unaware of the key of her interior life and her spiritual and intellectual sensitivity, it is not always easy to enter into communication with her.

In 2019, the proposal was made for her to leave Rome and to transfer to Sanfré where her sister, Sr. M. Albina, was residing. Here she found a community more suited to her health condition: it is a difficult detachment, but she prepared herself carefully, especially spiritually, seeking the essential of the consecrated life. The person who accompanied her more closely in these last years gathered her direct testimony: *«In December of last year, she became aware that the encounter with the Spouse was approaching. Thus she wanted to re-read her story. She was aware that she had greatly loved the Congregation, but due to her ugly character, she had caused suffering for many sisters. She asked forgiveness. But she was also suffering. It was her thorn in the flesh: she wanted to ask forgiveness from everyone. Truly the Lord prepared and transformed her».*

In the last weeks, due to her serious pathologies, her general health worsened. Accompanied by prayer and the care of the sisters, she died serenely, entrusting herself to the Mercy of God in peace.

And while the Congregation begins a new Centennial of life, as a gift of God and ecclesial responsibility, you, Sr. M. Epifania, enter into the Wedding Banquet of the Lamb, clothed as a Bride in justice and right, in goodness and in love (cf Hos 2:21). May Mother Scolastica Rivata, Mother Lucia Ricci, and many Sister Disciples of the heavenly community welcome you and present you, with Mary the Mother of God, to the throne of the Most High to receive the reward of the good and faithful servant. Pray for us, as we continue our pilgrimage.

Sr. M. Micaela Ronetti'