

On the passing away of our Blessed Mother Enrichetta

My dearest daughter,

I have the very burdensome task of giving you the painful news about what we were fearing for several months, and trying to keep it far away through fervent and constant prayers. God, in his Divine Wisdom, has accepted them, I am sure, perhaps for other purposes, no less great and advantageous for us. But He took away from us, the one for whom we were praying, He took her away after having made her a victim of His Divine Will with a very terrible disease which she heroically endured. I feel that I am opening a very bitter wound in my heart and yours, imagining that God (always blessed in the trials He sends us) has released our Most Venerated Mother General from her sufferings, calling her to the blessed possession of His glory. Her incurable and grave illness borne with heroism in silence, until the Lord willed that it was discovered for the greater sanctification of His Spouse, is well known. And the field of sanctification through patience was great, it was edifying for all those who had the grace of seeing her, of speaking to her, of assisting her during these last three months of illness. The disease advanced inexorably, without ever giving any sign of improvement that would bring relief to the heart. We turned to God, to the Virgin Mary, to the Saints, we asked for a miracle that was also fervently hoped for. But the crown was accomplished: the Heavenly Father wanted to call to Himself His faithful and generous daughter!

On the 15th of this month there was a deterioration which alarmed us. The fever rose very high, the stomach of the dear Invalid could no longer retain any nourishment, the pain caused by the cruel ailment became spasmodic, no medical aid was able to offer any effective remedy. In that most violent pain, our Venerated Mother could foresee that the end of her sufferings was near, she found comfort by invoking the Holy Name of Jesus, exhorting us to thank the good God for what He willed and worked in her.

On the evening of 16th, the nature and the advancement of the disease forewarned us of the painful future happening, and in keeping with the desire and request of the Venerated Invalid, she was administered Extreme Unction, while she tried to accompany the prayers of the rite, with what emotion on our part it is impossible to say. Already in the morning, Holy Communion had been brought to her as Viaticum, though the illness did not permit her to keep the fast. On the 18th, celebrating the Closing of the Jubilee of the Holy Father, the Viaticum was brought to her again, to her comfort and support in the bitter sufferings she was going through.

Then, on the 19th, at 6 p.m. our Venerated Mother, being very serious, was once again solemnly given the Holy Viaticum, at which our Most Reverend Father Superior assisted till the Thanksgiving, which he himself concluded with a special blessing. The same evening, the dear Sisters were led by their affection to the bedside of the Venerated Invalid who was very serious and drowsy, almost in lethargy due to cerebral congestion that added to the other disease. Awakened from slumber and requested to bless her daughters, who were praying for her, she opened her eyes, gave a look all around and said with great difficulty: *“May the Lord bless you! I recommend humility... and it seemed as if she wanted to say something else but she repeated again: “and humility...”*. Then she stopped and fell back into a state of unconsciousness. The 20th was a day of unspeakable anguish, we believed we would lose her, but she continued to remain in a state of lethargy which did not anymore let her feel the spasms of the disease, waking up when called by the Nurse and our good Father Confessor, very obedient even in those final moments. It was for an instant, she repeated breathlessly the ejaculatory prayer suggested to her with particular feeling *“Fiat voluntas tua”* and then fell into a coma again. On the morning of the same day, having informed the Cardinal Vicar through a special telegram of the very serious state of the Venerated Invalid and implored the blessing of the Holy Father, another telegram was received in response, thus worded: *“Holy Father sends blessing. I add prayers, promises”*. The promises were for Paradise into which her entrance was nearby. In the afternoon our Archbishop Monsignor having known about the gravity of our Beloved Mother, came in person to visit her, received with much gratitude by the holy Invalid. He said words of comfort and blessed Mother and her grief-stricken daughters.

Yesterday the **21st** at **1.30 a.m.**, the Venerated Invalid began to fall into a state revealing the extreme misfortune that was going to strike us. Total drowsiness, from which she woke up for just a few seconds, when she was called, agony which you could tell had to be the last. Oh, with what sorrow, and with what tender concern we looked out for the moment in which her maternal eyes would open, but already around 6 a.m. she gave no sign of seeing and hearing.

With what desolation we called her, besought her, but in vain, a look, a blessing! Thus 3 hours of anxiety passed by, the Sisters in tears, were all around the death bed of the Most Venerated Mother. Suddenly she opened her eyes, gave a meaningful look all around and at the request of our good Father Confessor, she blessed all her daughters, near and far, responding with a tender and motherly “yes” to all our requests. Oh! At that moment there was a flash of hope that we would have our Mother back again; but those lips soon became mute again. It was an improvement that was a forerunner of death. At about **2 p.m.** a painful but quiet agony began; some signs barely visible indicated that she could still understand, but that precious life was ebbing away; the slow breathing, the missing pulse warned us that the end was near. **At 3:35** without effort, without clamour, the dear soul flew free from its body so afflicted and troubled into the embrace of God. I leave it to your hearts as daughters to imagine all the rest, I cannot bear to describe it.

All the virtues of our Most venerated Mother are very well known. We shall remember them and they will do us good in the many circumstances of Religious Life. For the present, with anguish so vivid in my heart, I will just say that the Holy Abandonment to our good Heavenly Father, so much recommended and heroically practiced by our late Mother, is the first thing that we need in order to resign ourselves with love and with merit to such a grave and premature loss. This was also her testament, seeing that during these days of so much suffering for her, she said it was the Good Father who made her suffer so much, but that she loved Him all the same “Oh yes, she replied, tell the Sisters, to always take gladly from God’s hands all that He sends them”.

Let us love this last, fond remembrance of our Mother, confirmed by her example, pronounced in moments that make it sacred and effective. Our Most Venerated Mother, born on 10th October 1829, entered Religious Life on 19th November 1850 and professed on 27th July 1953, assumed the General Governance of our Holy Institute on 1st July 1861.

We know how much she did to sustain it, expand it in the midst of difficult trials overcome with patience, with prudence and with sacrifice. It is our debt to pray for her, but I do not need to say this, the heart of a daughter knows too well what she must do. Let us recommend ourselves also to her! She herself promised that from up there she would be of still more benefit to us!

Let us put our trust in God and bind ourselves in these painful moments with firmer bonds of observance and affection to the Religious Institute that she loved so much! Thus we will be grateful to her even after death.

The Venerated body, laid out in the room where she used to write and receive people, transformed into a funeral parlour, today still receives a tribute of affection from her daughters, from the Boarders, from many people who esteemed and loved her. Let us seek comfort in the Heart of Jesus, I do not know in which better refuge to leave you in this painful circumstance. He alone is our everything down here, when all the rest is taken away from us.

Trusting in Him,

Turin Institute of St. Ann 22.2.94

Your affectionate mother
Sr. María Eufrosía