

SUORE DI SANT'ANNA  
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The Provincial Superior

Rome, 6<sup>th</sup> April 2012  
Good Friday

*“For our sake Christ was obedient,  
accepting even death, death on a cross”*  
(from the Liturgy)

Dearest Sisters,

On Tuesday evening 3<sup>rd</sup> April, precisely during the Holy Week, in which the great mystery of Jesus' self-offering to the Father for our salvation was being commemorated, our dearest Sr. Alma also completed her self-offering to the Father, in the Community of Viale Marconi – Rome, where, a few days earlier I had begun my canonical visit. Thus, once again, the mystery of suffering and death made its presence felt in our Province.... We contemplate it through the eyes of Mary, who lived her *“Here I am”* and who *stood by the cross* to the end. And to the heart of Mary, who received Jesus taken down from the cross, we entrust our dearest Sr. Alma who always had a tender devotion towards her.

Sr. Alma's *Way of the Cross* began in the month of November last year, when suddenly and unexpectedly, the illness, which had gripped her body probably for some time already, manifested itself. At the beginning, the doctors thought it was a simple fibroid in the uterus, but soon more accurate and complete tests revealed that several metastases were already present in her body.

Sr. Alma accepted this trial from the Father's hands with a serene spirit, entrusting herself earnestly to the prayers and affection of the Sisters. The rosary that was always in her hands and the little medal of Mother Enrichetta that was always on her bosom, showed her continuous prayer and the hope of healing she entrusted to the intercession of our Saints.

With much optimism and fortitude, she endured the several hospitalizations and therapies – chemotherapy and radiotherapy – which she underwent. The excellent response of her body to the treatment and the smile that was always on her lips seemed to make us forget the dismal diagnosis given by the doctors and strengthened our hope and desire for her healing. Nevertheless, on 27<sup>th</sup> March her condition worsened abruptly. The tumour in her brain developed rapidly, visibly deforming her skull and impeding her speech and movements of the left side of her body. In an ultimate attempt to reduce or control the tumour, another hospitalization, unfortunately, proved to be useless. The next day, our dear Sr. Alma was already in coma. Since nothing more could be done medically, it was considered opportune to bring her back to the Community, where she was assisted and watched over by the Sisters and also by her sister-in-law and niece who came from Piedmont. Even the Sisters of the Generalate Community – whom I wholeheartedly thank – lent their generous service to our Sister, above all during the night.

After a week in coma, our dear Sr. Alma, who, lying motionless on her bed looked really like a “meek lamb”, let her self-sacrifice be completed. Quietly and almost imperceptibly, in the presence of Sr. Shaila, she ceased to breathe, just before 7:00 p.m. While the Sisters of the Community were meditating on the first Stations of the Way of the Cross, Sr. Alma had already reached the end of *her own Way of the Cross* and was reaching out towards the *Way of Light*, into the unending joy promised by the Risen Lord.

Her earthly life began a little less than 67 years ago.

Sister M. Alma (**Chiabotto Lucia Anna**), was born in Rivoli, Turin, on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1945. While attending our Elementary School in Reano, she came to know Sr. Immacolatina who, having seen her

good and lively nature and her tendency to pray, followed her up with particular attention and invited her to join the Apostolic School of Turin, Via Massena. Having felt the seed of vocation growing in her, she entered the Postulancy in our Mother House at Turin on 29<sup>th</sup> September 1964. On 8<sup>th</sup> September, the following year, she entered the Novitiate in Turin, made her First Profession on 8<sup>th</sup> September 1967 and consecrated herself definitively to the Lord through the Perpetual Vows on 8<sup>th</sup> September 1973 in Rome.

Having been transferred to the Community in Rome, Viale Marconi after her First Profession, she taught in the Elementary School while she was yet a junior Sister. Later, having obtained a degree in Foreign languages and Literature, she moved on to teach Italian and English in our Middle School, where she continued to carry out her service until 1981, when – with the same task – she was transferred to Turin, Via Massena. In 1989 she was transferred to Moncalieri and in 1990 to the Mother House in Turin.

She carried out her educative mission with passion, joy and kindness of heart, encouraging the girls and young ladies to participate even in missionary and prayer groups.

In 1991 she was sent to our mission in the United States at Ebensburg to lend her services, and in September of 1993 she returned to Italy, in the Generalate.

Between 1997 and 1998 – having requested and obtained an indult of exclaustation for one year – she offered her services to the Sacred Heart Retreat House of the Jesuits in Galloro, to which she always remained strongly and spiritually attached.

In 1998 she was transferred to Rome - Via Giusti and the following year, once more to Viale Marconi, where she remained until her death. During these years, she carried out her apostolic service with zeal and precision at the Pontifical Lateran University, first in the English Section of the Secretariat of the Rector's Office, then in the Library of the John Paul II Institute for Studies on Matrimony and the Family, establishing very cordial relationships with the Staff and the students.

Cardinal Angelo Scola, the present Archbishop of Milan, who was the Rector of the Lateran University during the early years of Sr. Alma's service, wrote among other things, in his message of condolence: "The help which Sr. Alma gave me during my term as Rector at the Lateran was invaluable not only for the work she did, but above all, for the dedication with which she identified herself with the delicate ecclesial task of education being given in the University of the Holy Father for the benefit of all the particular Churches".

The funeral Mass was celebrated on Holy Wednesday evening, 4<sup>th</sup> April. Fr. Agostino Montan CSJ, Chaplain of the Community of Viale Marconi and Episcopal Vicar for Consecrated Life, presided over the Mass concelebrated by a Josephite confrere and other 3 priests: Msgr. Livio Melina, Director of the John Paul II Institute, a Professor and a student of the same Institute. They gathered around Sr. Alma, together with us, Sisters of St. Ann and of other Congregations, her sister in-law and many friends of the School of Viale Marconi, from the Lateran University and a group from Galloro, as if to say thank you which the Church, through its diverse members, expressed to our dear Sr. Alma for her consecrated life and for her service. Even her former classmates from the Teacher's Institute of Turin were present through a kind message that was read at the end of the celebration. Finally, Msgr. Melina, on behalf of the Pontifical Institute John Paul II, also expressed verbally much gratitude for Sr. Alma's service and presence at the University.

The next day, the body of Sr. Alma was buried in our tomb at the Roman Cemetery of Prima Porta, where it now rests, awaiting the final resurrection.

Dearest Sisters, while we thank the Lord for the precious gift of Sr. Alma, let us bring before Him our dear Sister's entire life, in the certainty that He will also immerse all her limitations and weaknesses into the infinite ocean of His love and mercy.

Once again, I wish you all a Happy and Holy Easter and I greet you all with affection,



Mother Franceschina Milanese, Provincial Superior