

SUORE DI SANT'ANNA
Provincia "Carlo Tancredi e Giulia di Barolo"
Via della Consolata, 20
Tel.: 011/234.22.30 - Fax: 011/234.23.37
E-mail: casamadre.to@libero.it
10122 TORINO

The Provincial Superior

Turin, 30 June 2014

*"For you, O Lord, are my hope,
my trust, O LORD, from my youth.
Upon you I have leaned from my birth;
it was you who took me from my mother's womb". (Psalm 71)*

Dearest Sisters,

On 24th June, Solemnity of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist, our dearest Sr. Anna Lucia left us to celebrate the Feast of Life in heaven. To prepare, to discern, to let the Lord increase and she herself decrease, is how we can sketch out the life of Sr. Anna Lucia, as the Saint whose feast we were celebrating that day reminds us.

Sr. Anna Lucia (Chiarulli Vittoria) was born in Ruvo di Puglia (Bari) on 1st August 1940.

On 13th August 1959 she entered our Congregation in the Mother House, Turin, where she celebrated the various events of her formative journey.

She made her Vestition on 10th August 1960.

She made her First Profession on 8th September 1962.

She consecrated herself to the Lord through the Perpetual Profession on 8th September 1968.

After having obtained her Teacher's Training Certificate in 1966, she was transferred to the house of Viù Colonia as elementary teacher and after some years, in 1969, to the community of Turin - Via Massena, as teacher and Boarding Mistress.

In 1970 she was sent to the Community of Rome - Viale Marconi to begin her university studies while she taught the young Sisters in formation at the Generalate, inspiring esteem and admiration in the Sisters for her tireless work.

This is how Sr. Gianna Vendoni remembers her: *"Sr. Anna Lucia was zealous about her vocation and she transmitted the same to others. She experienced the Lord as her Saviour and Spouse. In the Juniorate she used to invite the young Sisters to cultivate the spirit of sacrifice and tried to inculcate in their hearts the joy of giving themselves gratuitously, without asking anything in return. If someone resisted sacrifice or let herself be taken by laziness, she was the first one to act, thus drawing the others to follow her example. She used to love all the Sisters indistinctly and if anyone was in difficulty or had some problem, she was able to understand them and stand by the person as an elder sister. If anyone made a mistake, she would never judge, and without humiliating the person she would make her realize the mistake. Even to the girls at school she showed all the possible care. Her death leaves a great void because even during her sickness she knew to pray, love, suffer and offer for others"*.

In 1977 she was transferred to the apostolic community of Rome - Viale Marconi as a philosophy teacher. Sr. Noemi Scarambone writes about her like this: *"I lived with Sr. Anna Lucia for sometime in the "large" Community of Viale Marconi. We used to teach in the Teachers Training School, she as philosophy lecturer and I as lecturer in literature. In the "ambit of work", knowledge and friendship between us grew, which lasted over the years, in spite of the distances. She was a "woman", a mature woman who knew to merge her ability to do everything (cooking, sewing, embroidery, teaching...) with a clear and strong identity: to be a Sister of St. Ann, with the hint of "Salesianity", given to the youth for their Christian, therefore integral formation.*

Her roots undoubtedly lie in her family and also in her parish. I think that what greatly contributed to her thinking and deepening of her motivations to act” was her philosophical preparation. She did not consider philosophy a subject to be taught, but a means which she used to arouse in the youth a critical ability in order to know reality with a gaze always open to Christ, who gives meaning to our existence. She was meticulous in preparing lessons and was very strict with the students in this regard. She was not rigid, absolutely not, but she knew how to and could demand from them, because she taught with passion and the students sensed it. They also understood that her great love for Christ and His positive image of every creature was the background and motivation of her accompaniment in their lives.

It was natural, therefore, during conversations to pass from discussions on school events, to what united us more deeply and they were transformed into spiritual conversations, that is, our attention was drawn to what the Spirit was urging us through people, events and personal prayer.

For Sr. Anna Lucia, the priority of a personal encounter with the Lord was unquestionable. The time with Him had the top most priority even during moments a bit different, like school camps with the pupils of the school. These were beautiful experiences: we used to discuss, pray, and enjoy ourselves. Sr. Anna Lucia was fluent at words, she was internally serene and communicated her serenity even in a witty manner.

I would like to underline another aspect. We were living at the time of “large” communities and the number of Sisters seemed to favour anonymity. There was also an attempt to divide it into three groups, but the “technical” experience did not have the expected result. In all these experiences Sr. Anna Lucia continued to be an advocate of communion of life founded on the strong conviction of belonging to Christ and following Him, which would make one free and able to love, and to begin again to love. Even in our friendship it was like this: there was a period of estrangement followed by the continuation of our friendship, after “reciprocal understanding”.

After her experience at Rome, in 1978 she was transferred to the Community of Acireale where she spent the most intense and fruitful years of her apostolic life, to which she applied all her energies of mind and heart. Even here she carried out the role of lecturer in philosophy and she was entrusted with the task of Principal of the Teachers Training School, which she continued to carry out till her sickness.

The life of Sr. Anna Lucia, in fact, underwent a profound turning point when in September 1995 she was affected by a cerebral stroke with hemorrhagic mass formation. After a period of hospitalization, however, she recovered and was able to continue her activity, though physically marked by the illness, which from that moment, made her increasingly invalid. Meanwhile, in 1997, she was sent to the Community of Rome - Viale Marconi, where she could still teach for a few years, while undergoing continuous treatment and care.

In spite of the gravity of her illness, till December 2000, she enjoyed fairly good health; but little by little, her body began to suffer attacks which were more and more frequent and widespread, so much so that the next year she had to be admitted into the hospital of San Raffaele at Milan, for a re-evaluation of her clinical-therapeutic condition.

Sr. Anna Lucia then became progressively worse, so much so that she lived for several years in a state of apparent absence, a condition which Sr. Anna Lucia herself later recalled as a state of emptiness and absolute darkness, during which her mind was not able to record anything. Yet, little by little, thanks to the attentive care of the neurologist and Sister-nurses who in those years continued to stimulate her, talk to her, and try in some way to reach out to her in her world, little by little, Sr. Anna Lucia was awakened from this state of deep slumber, such as to make them consider this recovery a miracle, that she attributed to Our Lady of Sterpeto, venerated at Puglia, but about which until then nobody knew anything.

Therefore, when she “awoke”, the Sister continually thanked God in an attitude of gratitude and renewed self giving. From that moment she began again to speak, to write, to do those little things which permitted her to spend her time in the best way possible. Above all she became a “sentinel”, continually attuned to the Spirit, continually in prayer for herself, for her family, for our Religious Family, in continual offering and intercession.

This state of good health of body, psychic and spirit lasted for more than a year. Then little by little, already during the last months of 2013, Sr. Anna Lucia began to understand that the energy which had sustained her during her recovery was beginning to decline.

Gradually her physical condition began to worsen again, and in March it was necessary to admit her into the hospital of Sant'Eugenio, Rome because of a series of complications connected with her precarious state of health. On returning home, her condition became still worse, in spite of all the loving and continuous care given day and night by the nurses. Thus, day after day, fluctuating between consciousness and slumber, there was a slow and inexorable deterioration until, without any signs of further gravity, almost on tiptoe, Sr. Anna Lucia, returned to the Father's House in the evening of 24th June at 5.15 p.m.

Sr. Anna Di Bisceglie, the Superior of the Community, remembered her thus during the funeral Mass:

Dear Sr. Anna Lucia,

Your Religious Family wishes to thank you because during all these years you have witnessed to us that suffering is not an obstacle to the realization of God's plan in us. Through your witness of life, you reminded us that to be happy is to do God's will moment by moment. Even those who were close to you, together with us, were able to glimpse through your life, a piece of that beauty of which you were a witness and they have shown this through the messages sent to us:

Fr. Lubomir, who often visited you says: *"The news of the death of Sr. Anna Lucia fills me with sadness, joy and gratitude at the same time, for this Sister of ours, so beautiful and noble in her long suffering. I will work and pray for her, today and in the coming days"*.

Your neurologist, Dr. Sama expresses himself in this way: *"It is truly incredible how my thoughts this afternoon were always turned to Sr. Victoria (Anna Lucia). She certainly has completed the journey undertaken 52 years ago that led her to our Lord. A warm embrace to you who took so much care to accompany her in the best way"*.

Some of your former students remember you thus: *"Sr. Anna Lucia was a guide and role model for us; all of us will miss her a lot, but she will always remain in our memories and in our hearts."*

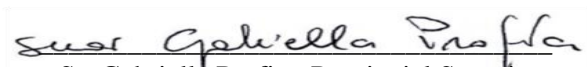
Dear Sr. Anna Lucia, now that the Lord is calling you to contemplate His face, we ask you to entrust to Him the needs of our Religious Family and that of your natural family too.

At the funeral Mass, celebrated in the Chapel of Viale Marconi, were present some relatives who came from Puglia, together with the Sisters of the Community of Viale Marconi, the General Council and Sisters of the neighbouring Communities. The next day her mortal remains were transported to Ruvo of Puglia, her hometown, accompanied by her relatives and by Sr. Anna Di Bisceglie, the Superior of her community.

There the people who had known her and many relatives of our Sisters from the same place paid their last respects to Sr. Anna Lucia, as a sign of communion with our Religious Family. On Friday, 27th June in the Parish Church of her family, the funeral rite was celebrated. On the following day, the burial took place in the cemetery of the town, where she now rests next to her loved ones.

Dearest Sisters, let us pray for Sr. Anna Lucia, so that she may continue to help us from Heaven, while we ask her, through her intercession, to support the work of the forthcoming General Chapter.

I greet you with affection...


Sr. Gabriella Profita, Provincial Superior