

SUORE DI SANT'ANNA

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**"O Emmanuel, God with us,
the expected of the nations and their Saviour:
Come to save us, O Lord our God".**

(from the Liturgy)

Dearest Sisters,

While we were invoking with the whole Church the coming of the Emmanuel at the dawn of day, our dearest Sister Bona returned to the Father's House, to celebrate the Feast of the Incarnation of the Son of God in Paradise.

Sister Bona was getting ready to go down to the Chapel to pray, after doing her morning exercises, when she suddenly had a heart attack. She fell to the ground and died instantly. It was 5 a.m. on December 23, 2009. Our dearest Sr. Guadalupe, who is rendering her service to our elderly Sisters in "Stella Maris"-Rome, rushed when she heard an unusual sound, but found her already dead.

Our Sister was quite well till the previous night, so much so that she lingered as always in the Community room, to close the shutters and serenely bid all a good night. The death of Sister Bona came almost without anyone noticing it, just as she lived, as if not wanting to disturb anyone in the silence of the night.

SISTER BONA (ISAIA Maria), born at Catena Nuova (Enna) in Sicily, on 4 February 1912. At the tender age of seven she lost her father during the war. Her mother brought Maria to her aunt in Catania, where she spent her childhood and adolescence helping in her aunt's business and in domestic work. Maria attended the Catholic Action Group and had a beautiful friendship with Sr. Agatina, who was also a young girl then, and with whom she participated in the Retreats held at the Santonoceto College in Acireale (CT).

This was how the two young women came to know the Sisters of St. Ann, who nurtured in them the seed of vocation and helped them to respond to the call of the Lord by entering in our Congregation.

Sister Bona entered the Postulancy at "Stella Maris"-Rome on 28 February 1938, made her Vestition on 15 September 1938, the First Profession on 15 September 1940 and the Perpetual Profession on 15 September 1946.

Soon after the First Profession, she took up a Teaching Course and in just two years, obtained her diploma and began her "teaching" mission in Rome, first at Montagnola and then in via Buonarroti, for a good 25 years.

During the scholastic year of 1967, she was transferred to Narni where she remained for 32 years as an elementary teacher, a catechist and Parish animator.

She spent the last 10 years of her life in the Community of *Stella Maris*, the place that had welcomed her as a young girl, full of energy.

She was "Bona" ("Good") in name and in deed. The children used to call her Sister "Buona". Everyone loved her much and her students, who are now parents and grandparents, remember her with great love and esteem. One of them, Fabrizio Passone, writes thus:

"I was a six year old child and I was just beginning my life's adventure in the school of the Sisters of St. Ann in Narni. Dearest Sister Bona was there, waiting for us at the door. She was a very small woman, but of

such great personality that just one look was enough to frighten us. What we did not see as children, we have seen as adults. She was a Sister with a great soul, deep faith, apparently severe but was very sweet at heart. Her memory will never fade... Goodbye, dear Sister Bona, I greet you also on behalf of my sister Francesca and my mother Luisella... We know that the Lord will prepare a special place for you close to Him and we will remember you always in our prayers”.

In the Community, Sister Bona offered herself to do all kinds of work and was very attentive to every little service, doing everything... above all, she never gave trouble to anyone and was very attentive to the needs of others.

A very beautiful witness for the Sisters of the Community was the time when Sr. Bona's mother was present and Sr. Bona took loving care of her. *“Mother and daughter were two angels”*, one Sister said.

In the Home for our elderly sisters, Sr. Bona distinguished herself for her kindness, her silence and her great prudence. She suffered much because of arthrosis in the knees, but she never complained and in the Community room, she was attentive to the Sisters who might need something, ready to help. A woman of prayer and sacrifice, she really *“pondered in her heart the things of her Lord”*.

I willingly recount what was written to me by Sr. Giovanna Maria Cocco, who, in spite of the difficulties due to the early hour and the bad weather, wanted to be present at the funeral of Sr. Bona, which was celebrated on 24 December 2009.

“Thank you, Lord, for the gift of Sr. Bona. She was a great teacher of life for me during the years when we lived together in Narni. Her continuous prayer, her joyful availability, her adoring and fruitful silence, her serenity, her attention towards others, especially to the poorest and the weakest students whom she loved with tenderness, were, for me, testimonies of love. Thank you, Sr. Bona, because you always encouraged me to do everything for the love of the Lord. Thank you, because as you lived so you died, leaving me with a profound peace and a great desire to live only for the Lord, so that when He comes I may hear Him say: “Come, wise virgin and faithful spouse!”.

In the joyful atmosphere of Christmas Eve, the Chaplain, Don Gino Giansanti, who celebrated the Funeral Mass in the Chapel of the Community, said in his homily: *“In a few hours we will hear the joyful tidings of Christmas. This news has already reached Sr. Bona and she will celebrate Christmas with Jesus in heaven. Death scares us, above all when it comes suddenly, death creates in us an affective emptiness... But faith in this proclamation gives peace: You will find a little Child! How much faith is needed to recognize in that little Child the Son of God! How much faith is needed to see in the Eucharist the Body and Blood of Jesus! How much faith Sr. Bona had and how much she waited for the Spouse in simplicity and in hope. She often said: «Jesus, when will you come to take me?»». And she seemed to be almost impatient! Now, He has come and He will lead her to the heavenly banquet”.*

Now the body of Sr. Bona rests in the cemetery of Prima Porta in Rome.

Dear Sisters, we feel poorer when these Sisters, our treasures, depart, but our hearts experience immense gratitude for the gift received. Let us pray for her and certainly Sr. Bona will intercede for us.

With our prayers, let us accompany our dearest Mother who is on her visit to the Province of Central India, so that the Emmanuel may be her enlightening companion in her journey.

I wish everyone a peaceful and a fruitful New year in tranquillity and serenity.

With much love.

Sr. Franceschina Milanese
Provincial Superior