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The Provincial Superior

Turin, 3 September 2014

*"...the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father,
and then he will repay everyone for what has been done". (Mt 16:27)*

Dearest Sisters,

The liturgy of Sunday, 31st August presented to us the image of a true disciple of Jesus, the one "*who takes up his cross daily and follows Him*". This was also the journey undertaken by our dear Sister Carmelina who left us to embrace the fullness of the cross of Christ, her Bridegroom.

Sr. Carmelina (Distefano Carmelina) was born at Catania (CT) on 20th October 1928.

On 8th September 1958 she entered our Congregation in Turin – Mother House, where she celebrated the various events of her formative journey:

On 10th August 1959 she made her Vestition

On 10th August 1961 she pronounced her First Vows

On 8th September 1967 she consecrated herself to the Lord through her Final Vows.

When still very young, she felt drawn to consecrated virginity and to the Religious Life. Convinced of her vocation, she wanted to join the Salesian Sisters, but in ways that only Providence knows and makes use of, she was led to our Community of Santonoceto, Acireale where, without the knowledge of her family, she often took the bus from Catania to meet the Sisters of St. Ann and deepen her vocational discernment. More and more convinced of the call to the Consecrated Life, she had to wage a tough tug of war with her mother, who begged her not to leave the family.

It was one of the most poignant moments of her life, a struggle between two great affections: Jesus who was making her feel the fascination of discipleship and her mother who had in mind a different future for her. She prayed, wept, but at last allowed the grace of God to triumph in her. She made her choice. The Institute of the Sisters of St. Ann with its spiritual formation and its educative charism was meant for her.

In 1961 she was sent to the Community of the Croce Santo Spirito as needle work teacher.

In 1967 she was transferred to Portacomaro as assistant in the Kindergarten and in 1969 to Carmagnola - Ronco Kindergarten with the same task. A few years later, in 1971, she was sent to the Community of Numana as Kindergarten teacher. Right from the beginning, Sr. Carmelina proved to be a good teacher: she had a special and effective aptitude for teaching, at the educational and formative level. She knew how to enter into relationship with the little ones by whom she was loved and knew how to establish a frank rapport with the parents. Gifted with human qualities such as intuition and determination, in the many activities of the Congregation she had chosen, she found the space to work with joy and without fearing fatigue. Trials never discouraged her, hard work did not frighten her. In the communities where obedience led her, she found her place of work, devoting herself with all her strength to the task assigned to her, without complaining and regardless of the fatigue.

After the first experiences of teaching, in 1974 she was sent to the Community of Ribolla as Superior, where she remained until 1980, the year in which she was destined to the Community of Sangemini as teacher and the following year, in 1981, to the Community of Rosolini. In 1982 she was transferred to

Augusta as Kindergarten teacher. Sr. Carmelina would perfectly remember the faces and names of her students whom she had accompanied in the early stages of life and for whom she felt a motherly concern, so much so that she used to say that to be a teacher was to be a mother and that she had loved being a mother.

In 1988 she was appointed Superior of the Community of Rosolini and in 1990 she was sent to San Giovanni Gemini as Kindergarten teacher. Sr. Carmelina was girded with thick armour, beneath which was hidden a large and sensitive heart. In the few instances in which the outer covering would open up, her true identity emerged: a sensitive woman, a lover of beautiful things, capable of gestures of affection that revealed her true essence. She, who seemed like a sister with an austere and rigid look, was actually a timid woman, used to fighting since a very young age, always on the defensive, at times afraid to manifest her deepest feelings, for fear of being hurt and misunderstood: only in the secrecy of spiritual intimacy would she reveal the riches that she treasured in the depths of her being.

In 1992 she was appointed Superior of the Community of Augusta – St. Lucia where she carried out a great work of supporting the poor of the neighbourhood in which the Community was situated. Even today, many remember the long walks of Sr. Carmelina to take the children playing in the street back to school, mothers without the means to make both ends meet whom she helped in every possible manner, sometimes even accepting to face serious danger. After these years of hard work, in 1995 she was transferred to the Community of Augusta city as teacher.

In 1997, she was sent to the Community of Numana as Superior, and in 2000, after the closure of the Community, was inserted in the Provincialate at Rome - Via Giusti.

The following year she was appointed Superior of the Community of Narni Station and in 2005 she was in Ribolla as assistant in the Kindergarten.

In 2006 she was transferred to Castelfidardo where she was available to render small services.

In 2010, due to her precarious health, Sr. Carmelina was inserted in the Community of Rome - Stella Maris. Tired, full of memories and experience, she went there to spend what she called “her rest”. Gradually she inserted herself into the rhythm of everyday life, giving her contribution, practicing patience with herself and with the Sisters. These last years gave the finishing touch to her life: she made good use of the time that was given to her to work on herself.

In the silence of her inner life she repeatedly asked the Lord to purify her. A rapidly developing illness forced her to a long and painful stay in the hospital, assisted lovingly and constantly by the Sisters of her Community who did not spare any effort and travel, when hospitalization seemed long and difficult because of the distance, in order not to make her miss their presence which was always regular until the last hours before her death, which took place in a hospital in Rome, at 1.00 a.m. on 31st August.

At the funeral Mass, celebrated in the Chapel of Stella Maris, the Sisters of the Community of Viale Marconi, the General Council and some Sisters of the neighbouring communities were present. After the celebration, the body was taken to the cemetery of Catania, where she rests close to her dear ones.

Dear Sisters, let us pray that Sr. Carmelina continues to help us from Heaven, while we ask her to support, through her intercession, Mother Francesca in the delicate service of leading our Congregation.

I greet you affectionately


Sr. Gabriella Profita, Provincial Superior