

SUORE DI SANT'ANNA

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The Provincial Superior

Turin, 28 January 2012

"We will all be changed by the victory of our Lord Jesus Christ"
(1Cor 15: 51-58)

Dearest Sisters,

During the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, while we were praying and meditating on the theme that made us enter into the mystery of death with a gaze of hope: *"We will all be changed by the victory of our Lord Jesus Christ"* (1Cor 15,51-58), our dear Sr. Celestina was already experiencing her passage from death to life. Prayer transforms us into that which we pray for; this transformation can be fully understood only within the salvific mystery of the death of Christ.

In Baptism, Sr. Celestina already received this Life of Grace and day after day, through the little "daily deaths", she united herself more intimately to the Risen Christ.

Since quite some time, our dear Sister had to face many health problems until, stricken with cerebral haemorrhage, she succumbed to death: **Monday morning, 23rd January, at 11.45 a.m.** in Chuv Hospital of Lausanne where she had been admitted on 8th January.

Sister Celestina (Modica Salvatrice), was born in Comiso, Ragusa (RG), Sicily on 29 May 1930. She entered our Congregation in Turin on 30 January 1957. In the Chapel of the Mother House, she celebrated the different events of her formative journey: her Vestition on 7 July 1957; her First Profession on 10 August 1959 and her Perpetual Profession on 8 September 1965.

For some years, she served as Sister in charge of the Refectory, first in the Mother House, then at Ala di Stura, always ready to serve wherever needed.

In 1959 she was transferred to Renens (Switzerland) where she remained until her death and where, for 53 long years, she gave her beautiful testimony of life offered to the God of Love, in service to the Sisters of the Community and to all those who have met, known and esteemed her.

Sr. Celestina was deeply aware that each one of us is a "gift" to the Community, thus, with great simplicity and availability she put her gifts at the disposal of the Sisters.

The Sisters of her Community remember her thus: *"Sr. Celestina was loved by all, she was a person simple and serene; in the Community she had always been an important support for all, and when she perceived disagreements and obstacles to fraternal charity, she would invite us to rebuild harmony and peace"*.

In a special way, Sr. Ermelinda who lived with her for several years, has this to say: *"We had been together in Renens for 42 long years. Sr. Celestina was a docile person and she accepted my advice whenever she made a mistake: we helped each other. She had a good rapport with everyone. She loved flowers and she took care of them with great dedication. She loved very much the children of the nursery school where she was a teacher for several years."*

Our dear Sister sensed the needs of the heart, above all of the children received in the Foyer Sainte Famille, taking special care of those who were deprived of the affection of their parents.

Sr. Giulia says: *"Very early in the morning, before going to work, the parents used to accompany to school their children with their eyes still sleepy and filled with tears. Sr. Celestina would make them lie down on a deck-chair or on a bench, she covered them well, kissed them and regardless of the language she spoke (Sicilian dialect, Italian, French), she used to console them. When they woke up, she would try in every way to*

provide them with cookies or some hot drinks. The parents then, would arrive one by one to take back their children (many times even late at night). Sr. Celestina never gave up. She always listened to the confidences of the mothers who turned to her for advice and she in turn would direct them to our heavenly Mother, urging them to pray and to offer to her all their needs and sufferings. Sr. Celestina was loved by all for her simplicity and serenity”.

On Wednesday, 25th January, I participated in the celebration of the funeral Mass together with Sr. Celestina’s brothers, sister in-law and niece. In the Parish Church of Renens, filled to capacity, the solemn concelebration with 11 priests was presided over by Fr. Jean Glasson, who in his homily, commenting on the passage from Genesis about the creation of man, made in the image and likeness of God, affirmed: *“the full realization of man consists in being the reflection of God on earth. God invites man to collaborate with His creation so that the world may be more conformed to His Will: a world of justice, of peace, of harmony and of love especially towards the weakest and the poor. In Baptism, Sr. Celestina received Sanctifying Grace which conformed her to the Love of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. But through the Religious Profession, the Lord called her to reflect in a radical way His Love towards the little ones, especially at the Foyer Sainte Famille where she spent her energies to teach, to visit and to encourage all those whom she encountered along her journey. She was a reflection of God’s Love who stoops down towards the little ones. Mine is not a eulogy to Sr. Celestina, who deemed herself incapable of responding with fidelity to Christ’s call, it is rather to give thanks to God for the presence of His Spirit in the life of Sr. Celestina. May she continue to help us and to intercede for us before God, so that we may all understand that we are called to happiness and strive to become a reflection of His Love on this earth”.*

At the end of the Eucharistic celebration, the President of the Foyer and the Italian Catholic Mission Renens-Lausanne, bid farewell to Sr. Celestina and thanked her for her tireless educational work at the Foyer Sainte Famille.

Soon after, the President of the Parish, Xavier Burrus, also spoke: *“We will not forget the stretch of the road she used to trod, almost trotting along from the Foyer to the Church, in order to prepare the beautiful flower arrangements which everyone admired. She was always smiling and serene even when she could no longer walk, she accepted her illness with courage and love. Today, all together we say a big “thank you”. Now, her Master has called her to Himself, to eternal rest. I am sure that from the highest heaven, Sr. Celestina turns her gaze to Renens and to her dear children to tell them: “Oh, you whom I have loved much, let not your hearts break, do not look at my life that is over, but look at the one that I am beginning to live”.*

Then, Sr. Nicoletta, who spoke on behalf of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Ann, addressed the following words to our dear Sister and to those who were present: *“Our heartfelt thanks to you, dearest Sr. Celestina, you were a simple Sister, affectionate and helpful: we have learned many things from you!*

Thanks to all the Priests for the spiritual assistance extended to our dear Sister and for their valuable support to the Community. A special thanks to all the faithful of St. Francis’ Parish and to all the persons who with their presence and their prayers accompanied Sr. Celestina during her illness.”

On Thursday morning, 26th January, Sr. Augustina and myself, together with the brother and sister-in-law of Sr. Celestina, accompanied her mortal remains to the Monumental Cemetery of Turin, where she now rests together with our other Sisters.

While with deep fraternal affection we pray so that our dearest Sr. Celestina may have the fullness of Joy, Love and Peace, let us turn to her with confidence to obtain through her intercession, heavenly blessings upon our Congregation, in particular on the various needs of our Province.

From heaven our dear Sister will certainly continue to watch over the little ones who are suffering and over their families, sustaining the delicate task of the Sisters at Renens who today, are still devoting themselves to help children who live in difficult situations.

Fraternally,


Mother Franceschina Milanese, Provincial Superior