

Suore di Sant'Anna

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The Provincial Superior

Turin, 29th January 2016

"Look! Here is the Bridegroom! Come out to meet him!" (Mt 25: 6)

Dearest Sisters,

On 20th January, our dearest Sr. Costanza, after a long and painful illness, peacefully left her bed of suffering. Now, she rests in God, in that repose that follows a trustful encounter with His mercy. To remember those who are no longer with us means anchoring our hope in the love of God our Saviour beyond the pain of separation. It means having an experience of solidarity with humanity which only love knows how to cherish.

The fourth child of ten siblings and twin sister of Sr. Angelita, who also entered our Institute, Sr. Costanza received a solid Christian education. The Milanese sisters, despite their diversity, brought to the Congregation a wealth of human and Christian values which their family, deeply rooted in faith, had transmitted to them.

Sister Costanza (Milanese Lucia) was born in Bra (Cuneo) on the 1st of July 1934.

On 21st January 1952, she entered our Congregation in Turin – Mother House, where she celebrated the various events of her formative journey:

on 10 August 1952 she made her Vestition

on 10 August 1954 she made her First Vows

on 10 August 1960 she consecrated herself to the Lord forever through the Perpetual Profession.

In 1954, after her First Profession, she was sent to Grazzano Asilo, in 1956 to Chieri, then to Frassinello in 1958. Thus, her apostolic experience began among the people; a mission which she incarnated more and more, and ever better in the Communities where obedience called her.

In 1963, she was sent to Monticelli as cook and in 1967, to Turin – Mother House as Sister-in-charge of the wardrobe. Generous and deeply sensitive, she was aware that each of us is a "gift" to the Community, and with great simplicity, she put her abilities at the disposal of the Sisters.

In 1971 she began her teaching experience, first in Venaria as a trainee, then in 1973 as a Kindergarten Teacher in Altessano, where Sr. Costanza made good use of her gifts of mind and heart. The experience lived in her large family, had trained her to exercise the virtues of attention, generosity and concern towards the little ones entrusted to her, therefore, she followed up her children with a maternal and thoughtful gaze just as she had done at home with her younger siblings.

In 1978, she was transferred to the Community of Carmagnola - Borgo Salsasio, where she spent almost a decade, both as a teacher and Superior; a place which she felt was like her second home, so much so that up to this day, many still remember her with affection and esteem.

In 1987, she was transferred again as a teacher to the Nursery School in the Community of Moncalieri where she remained for almost 15 years. Apart from school work, Sr. Costanza carried out a wonderful ministry in the Parish, in Catechesis and as a Eucharistic Minister.

In 2001, she was asked to carry out the service of Superior in the Community of Pianezza, a service that Sr. Costanza fulfilled like a true mother, despite her poor health. She had great respect for the elderly and sick Sisters, in whom she saw the Suffering Christ; she worked hard so that they lacked nothing, lavishing on them warmth and care.

The last phase of her apostolic life was spent in Turin – Mother House, where she carried out the duty of Portress since 2007. With Sr. Costanza, the Reception area of the Mother House became a place of peaceful and fraternal welcoming because she knew how to gracefully entertain the children, youth, adults and persons passing by, welcoming everyone with a smile, followed by a good word of consolation or encouragement.

Although previously she already had frail health, in recent months she began to suffer more serious health problems until May 2015 when she was asked to “offer” her greatest obedience: her “yes” to illness and the cross, which she faced with a strong will and serene spirit. Our dear Sister, aware of the gravity of her illness, knew that she was approaching the moment of her definitive encounter with the Lord.

In a letter addressed to Pope Francis on the occasion of his Pastoral Visit to the City of Turin, which included a visit to the Cottolengo Hospital, Sr. Costanza, who was admitted there precisely during those days in June, wrote to him: *“From the very beginning, I felt that I have received a great gift. The Spirit wants to save the world, there is need for souls to offer themselves... I desire with all my little strength, threatened by poor health, to be a co-redeemer with my Saviour. How can we not feel the urge to take up each day our cross, the cross of our daily life in order to follow Him?”*

Nothing more than these words, can express the deep dimension present in the life of those who consecrate themselves to God, which is a hidden life, made up of intimacy, of loving acts for God, which He alone knows and which our distracted eyes often miss.

After her return from the Hospital, the last months of Sr. Costanza’s life was a slow succession of moments of apparent relief and evident deterioration. They were months in which Sr. Costanza had become increasingly a silent, docile presence, grateful for the care that was given to her, often unable to express herself, but always wanting to make those who were before her, understand her desire to thank them. Little by little her strength became inexorably less, without however taking away the light that was always bright in her eyes, attentive to every movement, every gesture, to each one who was beside her. And it was so until the end, in a long-drawn agony, even though surrounded by the loving and untiring care of the Sister Nurses, the constant presence, day and night, of Mother Franceschina and Sr. Angelita, and the Sisters of Casa Betania with whom she had shared the last few months of her life; until the Lord received Sr. Costanza into His final embrace on 20th January at 7:30 p.m. surrounded by the prayers and affection of all the Sisters.

The funeral Mass was celebrated on the 23rd in the Chapel of the Mother House, presided over by Fr. Giovanni Manella, Parish Priest of San Bernardo, Carmagnola, with concelebrants Fr. Mario Berardo, Parish Priest of Blessed Enrichetta Parish in Carmagnola and Fr. Tonino Borio, former Parish Priest of Salsasio. Present were her sisters, nieces and nephews, friends, the Vicar General and a General Councillor and the Sisters of the nearby Communities. At the beginning of his homily, Fr. Giovanni pointed out: *“We are not living the sorrowful mysteries, but the glorious ones: the encounter with the Bridegroom in eternal life, because our faith makes us believe that death is an encounter with God. In the “Yes” pronounced by Sr. Costanza, there is all the beauty of what happens when we put ourselves into the hands of God. God makes us see something of His beauty that captivates us, that makes us his own”*.

In the farewell messages given by the Vicar General and Sr. Franca Rita, her basic characteristics were remembered: her faith, her smile, her ability to always relate serenely with everyone.

On behalf of the Sisters of the two Communities, Sr. Franca Rita said:

Dearest Sr. Costanza, we are here to bid you our last farewell filled with prayer, affection and esteem. The Lord associated you to His passion and you received the cross in silence without ever lamenting, without asking why..., for you, only the palliative cure to ease the pain and lighten your breathing at times very difficult. When you were asked "How are you?" you used to reply with a smile saying, "I am fine" in order to reassure us and to carry with Jesus your cross, which you offered to Him for your whole family, for us, and for every creature. Your strong character, moulded by hard work and fatigue, without manifesting tiredness, accompanied you till Calvary which you went through in order to meet the Lord after your last breath. Your admiration for Pope Francis accompanied you all throughout your illness. You edified us through your silence, your great serenity and ability to thank for every gesture of attention which the Sisters Nurses showed towards you. A special thanks goes to Mother Franceschina and to Sr. Angelita who accompanied you with so much sweetness and thoughtfulness, particularly during this last period of time. Thanks to your entire family which was close to you and prayed for you. We entrust to you the Mother House, your Community, and Casa Betania where you lived your daily holocaust. We assure you of our prayers.

Sr. Victor Pais, Vicar General, also gave her message on behalf of the Superior General who was on a visit to the Northern Province of India: *"On behalf of Mother Francesca, who is with us here united in prayer, I express my gratitude to the Reverend Priests who have celebrated the Mass, along with our prayers of suffrage for our dearest Sr. Costanza. Together with the other Sisters of the General Council and the Generalate Community, we are particularly close to Mother Franceschina, Sr. Angelita and the entire family of Sr. Costanza. We thank you for having offered her to us. We thank the Lord who crowned her with the virtues of dedication, a spirit of faith and sacrifice, love for the Church and for our Congregation. Our heartfelt thanks to the Communities of Casa Betania and the Mother House who have been beside her, assisting her with love and care. Let us ask for Sr. Costanza's intercession for Mother, who is concluding her Canonical Visit to the Northern Province of India, so that the Lord may fill her with strength, light and wisdom".*

After the Holy Mass, her body was taken to the family tomb at Our Lady of Pilone (Bra), where she now rests with her dear ones. Dearest Sisters, in faith let us accept the Father's will, knowing that Sr. Costanza continues to smile at us and to intercede for us, transfigured by the light of Christ who makes everything more beautiful and powerful. Through the intercession of our Sister, may our Congregation be granted the gift to live in beauty and harmony that are given to us by the love and faithfulness of Him who is always with us.

Let us remember also in our prayers our dearest Mother Franceschina and Sr. Angelita, who are particularly afflicted by the loss of their beloved Sister.

On behalf of them and their family, I express my special thanks to the Sister Nurses for the care they have given to Sr. Costanza during her long illness.

I greet everyone with affection,


Sr. Gabriella Profita, Provincial Superior