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The Provincial Superior

Turin, 6 January 2011
Epiphany of the Lord

*“At the end of your journey,
may you find, with immense joy,
Christ, light of eternal glory”*
(Liturgy of the Epiphany, Blessing)

Dearest Sisters,

The life journey of our dear Sister Donatilla ended at dawn on the 31st of December 2010 in the Community of “Stella Maris” in Rome and we would like to believe that she has encountered with immense joy, Christ, whom she had sought and served on earth for many years.

Sister Donatilla (Italia LEONE) was born at Ispica (Ragusa), in the southernmost part of Sicily, to a family rich in civic and religious values. She came to know the Sisters of St. Ann in Rosolini through a priest. At the end of the Second World War, after a tedious and adventurous journey which lasted for 3 days due to the lack of adequate transportation, together with the future Sr. Annunziatina and Sr. Almarosa, she reached Acireale where she entered the Postulancy on 18 August 1945. She made her Vestition on 8 September 1946 and then together with her companions, she was sent to complete her formation in the Roman Novitiate of “Stella Maris”. She made her First Profession in Rome on 15 August 1948 and her Perpetual Vows in Turin on 10 August 1954.

Soon after her Profession in 1948, she was sent to Grosseto to assist the Boarders as a nurse and as Sister-in-charge of their wardrobe. She remained in this Community for 26 years, taking upon herself also the responsibility as Local Bursar. It was the Community of Grosseto that witnessed Sr. Donatilla’s youthful and enthusiastic self-offering, her great love for God and for others, which made her accept even sacrifices and hardships with joy. In order to meet the expenses for the construction and extension of the house, how many times did Sister Donatilla willingly give up her bed for the guests, thus, assuring the Community of some small income! And how many sleepless nights and sacrifices she joyfully offered in order to take care of the Boarders!

In 1974, she was transferred to Acireale, here too as Assistant Boarding Mistress. She remained there for 9 years, with the same dedication and maternal spirit.

In 1983, she was sent to form part of the International Juniorate Community at the Generalate in Rome. From the service offered to young girls, she thus moved on to taking care of the young Sisters in formation from the different Provinces and Delegations. “Suor Dona”, as the Juniors fondly called her, was always ready to meet their needs, with that simplicity, discretion and wisdom that came from experience and from a sincere love for each Sister. Her dynamism, her many

practical abilities, her maternal instinct, made her an active presence in the Formative Community, even though she loved to remain always hidden in humility.

In 1992, she was transferred as Superior to the Community of Via Giusti, Rome –which for some years was the seat of the second phase of the Juniorate – and remained there for 6 years. Between 1998 and 2004 she was back in the Generalate, then in Rome-Viale Marconi, again in Rome-Via Giusti and once more in Rome-Viale Marconi.

Her health was declining and after 2 operations of the carotids, her memory weakened gradually. This caused great interior suffering aside from the physical pain. With dignity and humility, she accepted the will of God entrusting herself to the protection of Mary. Sr. Donatilla, who before was always ready and prompt to help and to care for others, now found herself in a condition of having to accept the help and the care given by the Sisters and of having to depend on their assistance for everything.

During the last months, her worsening health condition made it necessary to admit her at various times into the hospital and at the end to transfer her to the Community of Stella Maris. Here, watched over by the Sisters, she passed away around 5 o'clock in the morning of 31 December 2010.

During the Sunday Mass on 2 January, the Sisters of the Communities of Rome, together with numerous relatives and friends, bid farewell to Sr. Donatilla, whose coffin was then taken to Ispica, her birthplace. There, in the beautiful Church of Our Lady of Carmel, the funeral Mass was celebrated the next day in the presence of some Sisters from Rome, the Sisters of the Community of Augusta, besides her nieces and nephews, grandnieces and grandnephews and friends. Now, the mortal remains of dear Sr. Donatilla rest in the family tomb, awaiting the final resurrection.

Sr. Donatilla was a gift to her family, to our Congregation and to the Church. She was a presence of the maternal and paternal love of God for all those whom He put in her path. So many were the persons – lay people and Sisters – who benefitted from her loving presence, from her charity made up of few words but of innumerable, concrete, silent and humble gestures, that were at the same time courageous and efficacious.

In all parts of the world where we, Sisters of St. Ann are present, there are Sisters who have known Sr. Donatilla during the period of their formation in Rome and who have had an experience of her delicate attention and of her availability that was unconditional and often fruit of sacrifice.

Let us now raise to God our prayers of suffrages for dear Sr. Donatilla and let us entrust to her intercession the fidelity and perseverance of the Sisters, whom she had taken care of and of every Sister of St. Ann, so that in humility and simplicity of heart, we may give glory and praise to the Most Holy Trinity through our life.

In the light of Jesus who reveals himself to us, I greet you all with love,


Madre Franceschina Milanesio, Superiora Provinciale