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The Provincial Superior

Turin, 3 March 2015

*"We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves.
If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord;
so then, whether we live or whether we, die we are the Lord's
For to this end Christ died and lived again,
so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living ."* (Rom 14: 7-8)

Dearest Sisters,

Everything is a grace and there is God's grace even in pain and in darkness. This is what we have experienced during the illness of Sr. Franca Jose: suffering moulded her and her spirit crossed the desert and consolation in search of signs of God's presence which she had experienced through the persons who lived with her especially during the last moments of her life. Nothing of hers will be lost, because all of herself is going towards Consummation, up to being transformed into the likeness of the Holy One.

Sister Franca Jose (Alfonso, Antonina) was born in Castronovo (Palermo) on 9 January 1925.

On 3 January 1956 she entered our Congregation at the Mother House in Turin, where she celebrated the various events of her formative journey:

on 10 August 1956 she made her Vestition

on 10 August 1958 she made her First Vows

on 8 September 1964 she consecrated herself forever to the Lord through the Perpetual Vows.

Sister Franca Jose was an only daughter. Her father had already found a good match for her and wanted to give her in marriage to his best friend's son. With her refusal, a real battle between father and daughter began. Only after some years, with the help of her mother, Sr. Franca Jose was able to win her battle. She preferred to choose Christ as her spouse and disobey her parents. This decision of hers created coldness in their relationship, so much so that the conflict between them was healed only a few years before her mother's death.

Soon after her First Profession in 1958, Sr. Franca was sent to Acireale as Boarding Mistress. Having obtained her Diploma as Kindergarten Teacher, in 1973, she dedicated herself to teaching at Acireale. During the years in which she was with the children, first as a trainee and then as a teacher, Sr. Franca gave her best. She was able to be both strict and motherly at the same time: with her love, she made the little ones feel at home so that they wouldn't feel much the first moment of separation from their parents.

In 1977 she was sent as Superior to Carsoli, where she remained until 1980. Here, Sr. Franca worked specially in the Parish. When she prepared children for their First Communion, she used to dedicate much time to them even outside the catechetical schedule. She used to elicit from the children a great desire to receive Jesus for the first time in their life. The parents were also involved so that they could prepare their own children spiritually. In this way, children and parents would make their journey of faith together. When she brought holy communion to the sick, Sr. Franca would remain to listen to them, having always a word of encouragement for everyone. She was the point of reference not only for them but also for the parishioners.

From 1983 to 1994 she was in Rome in the Community of Viale Marconi as a Teacher in the Kindergarten and as Superior. Sister Franca was always punctual in everything. She used to prepare

herself with dedication for anything and much in advance in order to improve the service that was being asked of her.

In 1994 she was transferred to Castronovo as Kindergarten Teacher and then as Superior, a task she carried out for three consecutive triennial periods. She wanted her children to be well prepared to move to the first grade, therefore, she paid attention to teaching through small activities, songs, recitations; and when she noticed that someone was a bit behind in learning, she would give more time trying to look for a suitable method to help them to understand. She had good relationships with the parents, to whom she used to give some advice to follow up their children better.

In 2004 she was transferred to the Provincialate in Via Giusti where she served as the local Bursar and portress.

Elderly and ill, in 2005 she became part of the Community of Rome - Viale Marconi where she spent the last years of her life. They were years of great pain and prayer in which the Lord, little by little, accompanied her to accept, as far as she could, the mysterious plan of God who united her to Himself through sickness and increasing total immobility.

Last week, Sr. Franca Jose was hospitalized in "Villa Pia" Clinic for serious heart problems, resulting to ischemia and respiratory problems. During her passage from this world to the Father, the Lord granted to Mother, who came to visit her, the chance to accompany her in the last moments of her life. On **26 February** at 6:30 p.m., Sr. Franca passed away.

On 28 February, in the Chapel of her Community, the Funeral Mass was celebrated during which Sr. Anna, Superior of the Community addressed Sr. Franca Jose with these words:

"Dear Sr. Franca Jose,

Your Religious Family wants to say "thank you" because during these years of living in this Community, you have shown us, through your suffering, your love for life. Yes, you've always struggled with strength and courage to overcome the illness that hindered you from being autonomous; you, who were by nature active, energetic, and have always been hard-working. That's how I, who have lived with you for the past few years in this Community, remember you. I have always felt your closeness and affection.

Dear Sr. Franca, you did not give up even in the latter period in which your illness was getting worse. You wanted to be healed, you desired to live and be useful, so that it was hard for you to listen and follow the instructions of the doctors and the Sister Nurses, who lovingly took care of you.

Your neurologist, whom you used to call "mamma", having heard the news your return to the Father's House, cried and said: "Sr. Franca ran until the end, now she has finished her race". Yes, you wanted to be healed, but you also felt within you the desire to accept the Will of God who kept calling you to unite you to the suffering of His Son, until your last breath.

Now that the Lord is calling you to contemplate His Face, we ask that you entrust to Him the needs of our Religious Family and of your natural family which you loved much.

The celebration was attended by Mother General and her Council, the undersigned who was then visiting the Scholastic Community, the Sisters of the Communities in Rome and her cousins who came from Castronovo to pay their last homage to Sr. Franca. After the Holy Mass her mortal remains were transported to her birthplace.

Dearest Sisters, our life is not a slow journey towards the *disfiguration* of ourselves, but a journey of *transfiguration*: "So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day" (2 Cor 4:16).

Let us continue to pray for Sr. Franca Jose who will surely not fail to intercede for the needs of our Congregation. May the Lord welcome her into His abode of peace and abundantly reward her fidelity and perseverance.

I greet you all with affection,


Suor Gabriella Profita, Provincial Superior