

**Suore di Sant'Anna**

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Provincial Superior

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*"I live and you also will live... I am in my Father and you in me and I in you" (Jn. 14:19-20)*

Dearest Sisters,

This is the true, great, good news that the Word of God in this Easter Season gives us: death will not put an end to the good existence that the disciples had been able to experience by being with Jesus: *"I live and you also will live."* Jesus gives us a completely new Life, a life that has passed through death and is now eternal: His life. Recalling the departure of our beloved Sr. Franca, who lived her life with great fidelity and fecundity, we are certain that we can count on her intercession in Heaven.

**Sr. Franca** (Macchioni Oliva) was born in Bagnoregio (Viterbo) on November 19, 1914.

On August 27, 1931 she entered the Roman Noviciate of Stella Maris, where she celebrated the stages of her formative journey:

on October 30, 1932 – she made her Vestition

on November 1, 1934 – she made her First Profession

on September 15, 1940 – she consecrated herself to the Lord forever through the Perpetual Profession.

She was only 17 years when she left her family with the great desire to be a missionary, willing to leave for far-off India. A great fire burned in her heart and drove her to consecrate her youthfulness to God. The course of her life would prove the richness of this great heart through her beautiful testimony. Baptism first and then the call, deeply and joyfully marked her conscience for which she felt she had to love the Church and pray and offer sacrifices for her, leaving also her own land to be a missionary ad gentes.

At the end of the Novitiate in 1934, Sr. Franca was assigned to the Boarding School of Rome-Via Buonarroto where she spent a period of 23 years as assistant boarding mistress, carrying out this task as an opportunity for evangelization and education to the faith for generations of girls entrusted to her care.

In 1957 she was transferred to the new site of the School in Viale Marconi to continue her assistance in the Boarding. Sr. Gianna remembers her thus: *"Sr. Franca was a woman of faith, of sacrifice, of virtuous, joyful, simple and humble prayer. She did not know everything, but always listened, in order to learn; she might not have understood everything, but she learnt by watching others. Her humility led her to be wise, for which she became the point of reference for so many young Sisters who in that Community of Rome, under the wise guidance of Mother Salesia Giordano, truly lived in fraternity. One can really say that the Sisters gave witness to being of "one heart and one soul". We Boarders, perceived strongly this unity and Teacher Franca, as we used to call her, was always the first. She was concerned about the problems of each one and with the Sisters she implemented strategies to overcome the difficulties. She formed generations of girls who with the passing of time, used to come back to thank her for the teachings received, and each one for having found her own vocation"*.

In 1971 she was sent to Rosolini with the appointment as Superior and here too she felt that the priority should be animation of the Community, so that it could generate fraternity, freedom and responsibility. Therefore, under her wise guidance, the Community learnt a lifestyle, a way of being and of relationship: the Sisters inserted themselves in that locality and in the ecclesial reality, establishing with everyone relationships that were fraternal, beautiful and serene.

At the age of 62, when she least imagined it, the Lord's invitation came to her to leave as a missionary, not for India that she desired so much, but for Brazil, as the pioneer of the new mission in Latin America: it was in 1976. She left for Tamarana to coordinate the new mission and to render her service as Superior of the new Community. A few years later, in 1979, she was appointed Delegate Superior of the Brazilian Mission and in 1981 she was transferred to Londrina to the new seat of the Delegation and appointed Superior of the Community until 1983.

In 1986, she was transferred to the Community of Curitiba while she continued her service as the Delegate and the following year, was appointed Superior of the same Community. In 1989 she was Superior of the Community of Londrina and in 1991 again the Superior of the Community of Curitiba.

In 1992, when she left the service as Delegate, she was appointed Vicar and in 1994 she was transferred to Curitiba with the appointment of Superior.

This service that required not little responsibility for the growing mission, marked about thirty years of the mission lived by Sr. Franca in the Brazilian land.

Hers was a wide-ranging mission, an apostolate dedicated to caring for the education of children, their human and spiritual growth, the problems concerning the families and the urgencies of the poor. She always felt attached to the Brazilian mission which she lived with a great heart and profound sensibility, putting into service her wisdom and experience in bringing the message of God's tenderness and compassion. She was a 'neighbour' to everyone so as to be close to them, especially to the poor; she involved herself with tenderness in the various human realities just as a mother would have done in the life of her own children.

In 2005, after 29 years of mission, having fully completed her mandate, Sr. Franca returned to Italy and was inserted in the Community of Roma-Viale Marconi. Her spirit of tireless service continued to be expressed beside every Sister in need of help, since, despite her advanced age, she enjoyed good health. Her love for the Lord and her sensitivity towards the needs of those beside her, made her presence always serene and caring.

In 2009, the dear Sister was welcomed into the Community of Stella Maris, and as long as her health permitted it, she continued to offer her service without reservations.

With the passing of the years her body underwent a slow decline, debilitating and losing strength little by little. After long months of immobility, almost on tiptoe, Sr. Franca went to meet the heavenly Spouse with a serene and peaceful face, while Mother Francesca, who, during those days was visiting the apostolic community of Viale Marconi, prayed together with the Sisters who were around her bedside: *"Dearest Sister, I commend you to Almighty God, and may the Virgin Mary in the company of the angels and saints come to meet you. May Christ the Lord, Son of the living God, welcome you in heaven"*. It was 6:15 p.m. on May 26, 2017.

The funeral Mass, celebrated by the chaplain of the Community, took place on Monday, May 29, in the Chapel of Stella Maris in the presence of the Sisters of the General Council, Sisters of the Generalate, the two Communities of Viale Marconi and Sr. Franca's grandnieces and grandnephews and great grandnieces.

The celebrant during the homily, referring to the resurrection of Lazarus said: *"Today it is useless to say: Lord if you were here Sr. Franca would be alive; in fact we have to say: thank you, Lord because today Sr. Franca lives beside you. Dear Sr. Franca, go in peace, remember us, and when you see the Founders and Mother Enrichetta, do not forget to tell them to continue interceding for the Congregation. May the angels lead your soul into the presence of the One and Triune God."*

At the end of the celebration, the General Councillor Sr. Fatima Marafon read a message from the Sisters of the Delegation of Brazil: *"On this day we are united to you as you thank the Lord for the gift of Sr. Franca. We too want to express our gratitude to the Lord and to Sr. Franca. We were always struck by her missionary ardour, she often told us with her beaming eyes and youthful joy how she had prepared herself for the mission and how that 'yes' given to the Lord at the age of sixty-two, had renewed her strength and rejuvenated her. What she told us, we could touch with our hands; she always animated and*

*led the mission among us with love and sacrifice. She had joys and disappointments, but was steadfast in her simple, austere way of life, work and prayer. With her life she witnessed the importance of fidelity in little things, her love for the Congregation, and the importance of not ceasing, but to try to discover the will of God in difficulties. She was a strong woman who knew how to combine sweetness and firmness. She knew to conquer hearts for God and she was loved by adults, young people and children. One of her characteristics was the ability to cultivate friendships and relationships: while she was here with us, her former students and friends from all over the world still wrote to her. We are very grateful to the Lord that in His designs He gave us this great woman who left the marks of God's love wherever she went. She loved with predilection the poor, towards whom she always tried to direct the whole mission. Thank you dearest Sr. Franca! Pray for us that we may correspond to God's Plan, as you did! Rest in peace and receive from Jesus the reward for all the good that you have sown among us. Deus te abençoe! God bless you!"*

Sr. Shaila then added her testimony, paying her last respects to the Sister: *"Dearest Sr. Franca, on behalf of the Community, I would like to thank you for the precious gift of your presence in this Community; you have been, a serene presence, open to welcome with your beautiful smile all those who came into your room to visit you, especially during the last nine months spent motionless in bed. Who knows how much you suffered, in silence. Never a lament, you who were always on the move, always caring and solicitous to help with tenderness and profound sensitivity anyone who needed it. Our Chaplain jokingly called you "Super Franca" and you were really "super" in everything. Thank you, dear Sr. Franca, we will never forget your smile and your beautiful testimony of life lived in goodness and fraternal charity. Now that the Lord calls you to contemplate His Face, we ask you to entrust to Him all the needs of this Community."*

After the Mass, her mortal remains were accompanied to the Monumental Cemetery of Verano, where she now rests.

Dearest Sisters, let us thank God for Sr. Franca, for the gifts of nature and grace which in His Mercy He granted to her and which she was able to make abundantly fruitful, even during the last period of her long infirmity, offered to the Lord.

We thank the Sister-Nurses and the Sisters of the Community who, though elderly, constantly took care of Sr. Franca through their silent and attentive presence. Let us ask her to intercede so that the blessing of the Lord may descend upon the Community of Stella Maris and let us also entrust to Sr. Franca the many necessities of the Communities and of our Religious Family.

I greet you all with affection,

  
Sr. Gabriella Profita, Provincial Superior