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The Provincial Superior

Turin, 7th February 2012

*"My eyes have seen your salvation:
a light for revelation to the Gentiles
and for glory to your people Israel". (Lk 2:30;32)*

Dearest Sisters,

The day after the Feast of the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple, when the Church commemorates the saintly Elders - Simeon and Anna, our "eldest Sister" Sr. Gisella pronounced her "*nunc dimittis*". After a long but serene agony, she died at **11.15 a.m. on the 3rd of February**, the month dedicated to Mother Enrichetta and it could only be so, given her profound devotion to Mother Enrichetta to whom she had always entrusted herself.

Sister Gisella (Terzi Maria Teresa), was born in Agnosine, Brescia (BS) on 10th October 1909 (10th October, a happy coincidence with the birthday of Blessed Mother Enrichetta). She entered our Congregation in Turin on 23rd July 1929. In the Chapel of the Mother House she celebrated the various events of her formative journey:

23rd April 1930 - Vestition; 10th August 1932 - First Religious Profession; 9th August 1938 - Perpetual Vows.

From 1932 to 1940 Sr. Gisella carried out her apostolate in various Communities: Mother House - Turin, Barolo Kindergarten - Altessano, Consolata - Cigliano, Mother House – Turin and Monticelli.

We cannot forget that way back in 1939, the dying Sr. Gisella, was admitted into the Hospital of Cottolengo and on 10th July, experienced in her own body the powerful intercession of Mother Enrichetta, passing instantly from death to life, or as the Doctor certified: "*a body of wood turned back into flesh*".

Sr. Gisella, just thirty years old then, was suffering from polymyositis ossificans and though she underwent all the necessary treatment for such cases, nevertheless, she gradually became more and more immobilized. Recalling that moment, she wrote thus: "*I felt I was dying, I thought it would not be long before I took my last breath, when suddenly, I felt warmth flow back into my whole person and my limbs which had been paralyzed for months became lighter, my lips and eyelids became flexible. I couldn't understand at that moment, being uncertain whether it was a return to life or death ... I felt an urge to sit up in bed without any help ... and a cry burst out: «Mother Enrichetta, Mother...».*"

In 1943, she was transferred to Viù as Directress of the new National Institution for Maternity and Infancy. Some years later, on the night of 12th December 1947, the extraordinary and sudden healing of the boy Bruno Colla from acute appendicitis took place in Viù. It was the fervent prayer of Sr. Gisella, with that of another Sister and of all the children present there in the Institution, which once again obtained from Mother Enrichetta the longed for miracle. **This was the miracle by which on 7th May 1978, Mother Enrichetta was proclaimed Blessed.**

In 1968, she was transferred to Turin-Via Massena as Superior, and in 1971 to Carmagnola, as Superior of the Community of the Immaculate.

In 1974, she returned to Viù, as Assistant Mistress and remained there where, she spent many years at the service of the little ones.

In 2008, advanced in age and ailing, she was transferred to Pianezza where she spent the last years of her life.

She did not close her eyes in front of weakness, nor before the waning of strength. The fragility of life, even that which comes with the passing of years, becomes new energy when it meets the love and the power of God.

On 10th October 2009, the birthday of Blessed Mother Enrichetta, our dearest Sr. Gisella celebrated 100 years and in Pianezza, where she was staying, she was felicitated by her Community, by the Sisters of the nearby Communities, by her relatives and many lay persons who were very fond of her.

We celebrated the Holy Mass for her suffrage on Sunday, 5th February at 9.00 a.m., in the Chapel of the Mother House. Present were the Sisters of the two Communities of the Mother House, some Sisters of the nearby Communities, the relatives of Sr. Gisella, a group of persons from Viù and Bruno Colla, whose presence awakened in us the memory of the miraculous events which we re-lived with deep emotion.

At the beginning of the celebration, Sr. Franca Rita, addressed these words to Sr. Gisella: *“Dearest Sr. Gisella, I thank the Lord for having given me the possibility and the joy of being near you, together with the Sister-Nurses, during this last stretch of your long life. I had been with you in various moments of your illness and during my brief stay in Viù. On these occasions, I came to know your moral and spiritual greatness and the traits of your strong-willed, determined and sensitive character, which made you pursue your goals always. But what struck me most during this last period of time, was your spirit of prayer, the expression of your authentic faith and of your passionate love for Jesus. Yours had been a continuous prayer and how much joy you manifested whenever we brought you Holy Communion! We too have learned your fervent prayers of thanksgiving and supplication: <Oh, Jesus, how good you are, how much love you nurture for me. I thank you for the great gift you have given me, oh, King of Kings> ... and the other: <Oh, Mary, please tell Jesus that I love Him alone and no other>. How many times you raised your eyes to heaven, tracing over yourself the sign of the cross, or crossing your hands over your chest to express your love to God and your adherence to His Holy Will. You knew how to be grateful for every little service, for all the times you received a sign of our love for you. Now that you are with God, remember us, pray for each one of us, for our beloved Religious Family, so that we may be faithful to the Lord and like you, we may give witness of God’s tenderness to all. Pray for your dear ones and for all your children who are now parents and grandparents and ask Jesus to bless the whole world”.*

At the end of the Eucharistic celebration, Bruno Colla spoke, to give his brief but meaningful testimony: *“When a person dies, he leaves behind a void, his absence is felt. Today, I don’t feel the same sentiments, I feel enriched because Sr. Gisella remains present in my life as she has always been, in the joyful as well as in those painful events of my life. Her faith was accompanied by an indomitable energy which made her strong in every situation and enabled her to give strength and courage to those who turned to her. When my wife died, leaving me alone with my children, Sr. Gisella with her straight-forward, genuine faith, consoled me. She gave me comfort and strength to be able to move on in my life. Today, her death doesn’t sadden me, because I can always turn to her and I know that she will continue to be near me”.*

Simultaneously with the funeral Mass at the Mother House, also at Viù, the Parish Priest celebrated a solemn and well-attended Mass, in memory of our dear Sr. Gisella, considered as “benefactress” and citizen of Viù.

On Monday morning, 6th February, the body of our dear Sister was transported to Agnosine and was buried in the cemetery of her hometown, where it now rests together with her loved ones. A group of Sisters, some people from Viù, including the Mayor, Dr. Daniela Mairano, were present.

Dearest Sisters, Sr. Gisella had been waiting for this moment, meditating, praying, making of all her life a continuous vigil for the joyous encounter with Jesus whom she loved much. Now her soul celebrates the God of Love; she is face to face with Him who gives life and transforms it.

Embraced by the tenderness of the Father, through the intercession of Mother Enrichetta, she will surely continue to obtain the graces which our Congregation needs.

Let us thank the Most Holy Trinity for the gift of Sr. Gisella’s long and beautiful life, spent in the service of the little ones. We are grateful to our Sister-Nurses for the fraternal dedication with which they have cared for her, while we raise a profound thanks also to Blessed Mother Enrichetta, as we prepare to celebrate with joy her Feast which is fast approaching.

I greet you all with affection,


Mother Franceschina Milanese, Provincial Superior