

Turin, 2 April 2012

*"Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am,
there will my servant be also" (Jn 12:26)*

Dearest Sisters,

The words of St. John, the Evangelist, prove to us the love of predilection that the Lord has for everyone who follows him to the end. His promise that where He is, there will also be Sr. Lucia, comforts us, because we know that our Sister will enjoy His glory in the communion of the Saints.

Sr. Lucia, who was suffering from bronchial asthma, lately became increasingly weaker. Sister death visited her unexpectedly and found her ready to be lead into eternal Life: she passed away at **00:04 a.m. on 24th March**. Her face, relaxed and peaceful, gave us a foretaste of peace, a gift from God.

Sr. Lucia (Zanini Lucia), also known as Sr. Massimina, was born in Dello (Brescia), on 12th August 1913. From the time she entered our Congregation in 1930, our Sister had always manifested her desire to be a Missionary in Africa. God's will, expressed through the requests of her Superiors, asked her to remain in Italy and to dedicate herself to teaching. However, the yearning to leave for distant lands remained in her heart.

In Turin – Mother House, Sr. Lucia celebrated the events of her formative journey:
her Vestition on 8th April 1931
her First Profession on 10th August 1933
her Perpetual Profession on 9th August 1939.

Having obtained her diploma to teach in the Nursery School, she was sent to serve the little ones in various Communities. She always gave the best of herself to the children, both in terms of teaching and in terms of formation in the moral and Christian values, always involving the students' families.

Her first Community was Caorso in 1933, where she remained for some years until she was transferred to Turin – Mother House in 1938 as Boarding Mistress, and in 1941 she was sent to Bra – St. Andrew's Nursery School as a trainee.

At the end of her Teacher's training in 1942, Sr. Lucia began her apostolate with the children of the Nursery School in the Community of Pertusio, then in 1948 she was sent to Cigliano, where she remained for 10 long years until 1958, when she was sent to the Community of Turin – Mother House, again as a Teacher.

In 1974 she was transferred to Santena with the same task and in 1978, to the Mother House as portress. In 1981 she resumed teaching in the Nursery School. During the years spent in various Communities, she was observed to be a Sister who was always hard-working, generous and attentive. She tried to fulfill the Will of God in everything, always nurturing in her heart the desire to go to mission lands.

In 1989, free from school work, she began to fulfill her missionary vocation by visiting some families of African immigrants. Sr. Lucia was inspired by our dear Sr. Giustina Vicari, who for some time, had already been teaching catechism to some migrant families in order to regularize their situation through the Sacraments of Baptism and Matrimony. Besides her serene presence, optimism and comforting words for those who were suffering, Sr. Lucia also brought some material help to the homes she visited, distributing to the most needy, the goods she received from the food bank and committing herself to find a job and a house for them. With simplicity she invited these friends of hers to attend the Sunday Mass, celebrated in the Chapel of our Mother House.

Thus, the first group guided by her, was born and was put under the patronage of Blessed Enrichetta. The group gradually grew, and even a francophone choir was formed. Fr. Fredo Olivero, the one in-charge of the immigrants, followed up the first steps of their journey, celebrating the Sunday liturgy in French.

For this group, which has grown significantly in recent years, Sr. Lucia was a true “mother” serene and affectionate. Everyone remembers her with affection and willingly recounts some episodes, especially her listening to their difficulties and the help she gave in finding solutions to their problems.

On 26th March morning, in the Chapel of the Mother House, her funeral was attended by many of her friends of the francophone community, who also animated the celebration in a festive atmosphere and with deep emotion. The songs chosen for the occasion were sung well and underlined the profound gratitude and affection for her who was a “mother” for all. Sr. Lucia’s nieces, nephews and grand nephews were also present, as well as the Sisters of the two Communities of the Mother House and some Sisters from the nearby Communities.

At the beginning of the funeral Mass, Sr. Felicia spoke about her, and said:

“I have known Sr. Lucia personally since I was a Novice, when I was assigned to teach a class of children in the Nursery School. For one year I collaborated with her for the good of the little ones, the majority of whom came from Porta Palazzo. I met her again here in the Mother House, I have lived with our Sister during these last 8 years, and I noticed in her what I hadn’t known before and which amazed me: her missionary vocation and her great love for Africa and for the immigrants.

Dear Sr. Lucia, we are grateful to our Good Daddy for your example of obedience to the Superiors, for your faithful participation in Community life despite your age, and for your dedication to others until the end. For this witness of your love of predilection for the least, whom you loved as your children, we thank you.

We pray for you, so that you may soon enjoy that happiness which you had always wished for your “children” and that you may remember all of us before our Good Father, so that we may continue to believe with you “that grace and mercy await those He has chosen”.

Father Paul of the francophone community celebrated the Holy Eucharist. In his homily, interrupted often by feelings of deep emotion, he remembered Sr. Lucia: *“I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have revealed to infants the mysteries of the Kingdom of heaven” (Mt 11: 25). One of these mysteries is that in Jesus, we are all brothers and sisters. Animated by this certainty, our dear “mother” Sr. Lucia put herself at the service of her brothers and sisters of the African continent. It was not easy for her to continue this project, she experienced both successes and failures, but she knew how to read with optimism and perseverance the desires of our common Father.*

Living her missionary vocation by choosing to be near the immigrants of Porta Palazzo, our dear “mother” Sr. Lucia understood fully the words of Jesus: “Whatever you did to one of these little ones you did it to me.” This decision of yours to take upon yourself our suffering and to walk with us, has not been a waste of time, but a school of wisdom. Even if your passing away now makes us feel alone and abandoned, we are comforted by the certainty that you are in the peace of God and that your hope is now filled with immortality.

Ten years have passed from the time some of us met you at Porta Palazzo, filled with that maternal tenderness of which only you knew the secret. Dear “mother” Sr. Lucia, with you a part of the history of the francophone Community of Turin has passed away, the first and very difficult part. With you, the second part, even more difficult, also begins, but is full of hope, because from the Father’s House you will continue to look upon us and to say to us: pray, come for Mass, Jesus is waiting for you that you may take Him to your homes. With you, we will continue to keep Jesus in our hearts and to make Him known to our brothers and sisters. Thank you, “mother” Lucia, for the gift which you have been for each one of us.

Sr. Lucia left us on tiptoe in order to respond for the last time to the Lord: *“Here I am”*. At the end of the funeral Mass her body was accompanied also by the group of her beloved “children” to the Monumental Cemetery of Turin, where she was buried together with our other Sisters.

The reality of death which we are all experiencing with the passing away of so many of our Sisters, is for us a great source of hope, because we are sure that from Heaven they will continue to watch over each one of us and our Congregation. Let us continue to pray for our dearest Sr. Alma who is experiencing her passage from death into Life. May the Living God, in His great Love, grant her the joy of unending Easter in Heaven.

In Christ, we will all rise up to new life.

Faternally,


Mother Franceschina Milanesio, Provincial Superior