

SUORE DI SANT'ANNA

Provincia "Carlo Tancredi e Giulia di Barolo"

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The Provincial Superior

Turin, 16th May 2012

*"Give her a share in the fruit of her hands,
and let her works praise her
in the city gates" (Prov 31: 31)*

Dearest Sisters,

Our capacities, our life, our actions, our talents are a gift from the Lord, but also a responsibility and a task about which one day we will have to "render an account" to God, who will not ask us if we have accomplished extraordinary things, but only if we have lived our Life to the fullest. And so, remembering our dear Sr. Michelina, it is nice to recall the figure of that woman in the Book of Proverbs, a simple but concrete image of a faithful, generous, hardworking woman, attentive to other persons.

Sr. Michelina (Cavallo Carmela) was born in Rosolini (Syracuse) on 1st October 1925, in a deeply religious family, which offered three daughters to the Lord in the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Ann. On 4th January 1949 she entered the Noviciate in Rome, where six years earlier, she had been preceded by her sister, Sr. Annunziatina. She was vested with the religious habit on 15th September 1949, made her First Vows on 15th September 1951 and her Perpetual Vows on 10th October 1957.

Soon after her First Profession, she was transferred to Turin, Via Massena to continue her studies. In 1954 she began teaching in the Elementary School of Grosseto and in 1967 was nominated as Provincial Bursar of the South Central Province of Italy.

In 1971, she was sent to the Community of Bra Mendicità, again as an Elementary Teacher but at the same time she served as its Local Superior. In 1977, she was transferred to Turin, Mother House, where she continued her work as an Elementary School Teacher and the following year, was nominated Superior of the Community.

In 1979 she was assigned as the Provincial Bursar of the Northern Italian Province, a service she carried out for 30 long years, gradually acquiring great competency and knowledge of the personnel in the various offices she used to frequent.

In 2009, by now advanced in age and ailing physically, she was transferred to the Community of Via Massena in order to carry out less demanding tasks.

Sr. Michelina was a woman of great faith who knew how to harmonize fidelity to prayer life and assiduous communitarian and apostolic work. Neither fatigue nor worries stopped her, she was always present during times of community prayer and found time every day, for her personal prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, from where she drew strength to offer herself generously.

As Superior, she immediately attended to and provided for the needs of others, most of the time, even without being asked. She felt glad to make others happy and urged her Sisters to do the same.

Through her various duties, she came into contact with employees, clients and public officials and through her good and simple ways, she won their esteem, help and benevolence, leaving a memorable impression in each one.

Despite her delicate health, she carried out her tasks with courage, generosity and assiduousness without the slightest complaint, rather, she was the first to lend a hand in order to meet the needs of the Community and she also knew how to encourage the Sisters and stimulate them kindly to offer themselves.

For many years, our dear Sister had been suffering from diabetes and chronic bronchial asthma which caused the weakening of her heart. Last February, she underwent coronary angiography after which she was struck by a severe cerebral haemorrhage which she miraculously overcame, thanks to the intercession of Blessed Mother Enrichetta. She spent her last months in the Mother House, preserving her rich human qualities, her spirit of prayer and service. Unfortunately, her heart continued to weaken, hence, at the beginning of May, it was necessary to rush her again to the hospital and to do another coronary angiography, but her kidneys suddenly failed, causing her death: **she passed away** in “Maria Vittoria” Hospital at **10.10 a.m. on Wednesday, 9th May** in the presence of her sister, Sr. Assuntina, who had come from Rome.

In the morning of 12th May, Holy Mass was celebrated in the Chapel of the Mother House with a big number of persons participating in it. Also present were Sr. Marcia Lobo, Vicar General, Sr. Assuntina, her cousins, Sr. Angela Bertanza and the Sisters from almost all the Communities in North Italy who had known and loved Sr. Michelina.

The Celebrant, Fr. Sergio Giordani, exhorted us to reflect on the meaning of life in the light of the Word that was proclaimed: if *everything* depended on us, we would be like beings destined to be locked up in a sealed coffin, but *everything* does not depend on us: we are children of God, “*It is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ – if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him*”(Rom 8:16).

Even Jesus was locked up and sealed by a stone, but it was rolled away and Jesus is risen: it happened because **God conquered death**, and we believe it is so for our Sister and for ourselves. This certainty is not derived from our own experiences and victories, but from the Gospel which admonishes us to be like little children and learners, open to the truth, in the light of the Word which gives meaning to our Sister’s life and to that of each one of us. So, let us shift our gaze from the coffin to the Easter candle, to the Risen One, who illumines the path of our own life and that of Sr. Michelina’s as transition to true Life.

In the farewell messages, the fundamental characteristics of Sr. Michelina were remembered: her convinced and serene obedience, her availability and generosity.

Sr. Cecilia Profita, who has replaced her as Provincial Bursar, bid her goodbye with these words: *Dear Sr. Michelina, when I arrived in Turin and I came to know you, I was at once struck by your balance, your kindness towards me, but above all by your serene obedience, despite the pain of detaching yourself from a reality which had been yours for many years and to which you have given much. How can we forget your accuracy, your orderliness, your warm personality, your witty responses which were so quick and spontaneous and most of all, how can we forget your concern expressed in attentive and discrete collaboration, always ready to share the wealth of experience you have acquired over so many years. Dear Sr. Michelina, I want to say thank you. Oftentimes, jokingly, I used to call you “my guardian angel”, I am sure that you will continue to be so, rather, you’ll be much more than that.*

The mortal remains of our dear Sister were buried in the monumental Cemetery of Turin.

All of us have experienced, especially during these last months, that life is a continuous pruning: suffering, weakness and pain, have often knocked at our door... The experience of death surely transforms us, makes us better persons and makes us grow. What is true for the vine and the branches that are pruned, is also true for us: for our life, when pruned, is led towards its fullness.

With this certainty, let us pray for Sr. Michelina so that she may continue to help us from Heaven, at the same time, let us support Sr. Assuntina with our closeness and affection.

I greet you all fraternally,



Mother Franceschina Milanesio, Provincial Superior