

**“It is good to sing praises to your name, O Lord,
to declare your steadfast love and your faithfulness...”**

(Ps. 92: 2-4)

Dearest Sisters,

On Monday, 27th April 2009 at 4.45 p.m., our dearest Sr. Modestina passed away due to pulmonary oedema. She had joined our community at Pianezza on 22nd January this year, so as to receive the necessary treatment, after having being discharged from the Cottolengo hospital (TO), accompanied by the affirmation of the doctor that “*every day of life was a gift*”. On the other hand, the conviction that life is a gift to be offered to God and to others, was deeply rooted in her. She lived in this dimension, in a harmonious synthesis of being and doing.

SR. MODESTINA (MAGNETTI Maddalena) was born on 2nd December 1921 at Brandizzo (TO).

She was the third in a family of four children. Having reached the age of maturity she entered the Novitiate of Turin on 8th September 1942. Seven years earlier, her elder sister Sr. Luigia, had preceded her into our Religious Family. The Magnetti Sisters, in spite of the diversities of their characters, brought with them the richness of the values that their family, deeply rooted in faith, had transmitted to them and had also helped them to deepen it, in order to have a firm human and Christian maturity.

Sr. Modestina completed the various stages of Religious Life: 10th August 1943: Vestition at Carmagnola; 10th August 1945: First Profession at Turin; 10th August 1951: Final Profession at Turin.

The exuberant group of novices, to which she belonged, lived the difficult period of war and learned to face the fear of bombs, the hardships of the evacuations, the lack of the comforts of food and lodging, the uncertainties of tomorrow. It was a demanding school that helped the young Sisters to go down to the essentials and to intensify fraternity. This was deepened thanks also to the “practice” of reciprocal corrections.

In the meantime Sr. Modestina obtained her Diploma of teaching in the Kindergarten, which she at once put into practice in the various fields in which obedience had the mission entrusted to her:

1945: at Venaria – Village SNIA (TO); 1970: at Cigliano (VC); 1971: a Santena (TO); 1974: at Leini (TO); 1979: at Altessano “Kindergarten” (TO).

The educative passion urged her to give her best to the children amidst whom she generously offered her services to the very end. She was aware, in fact of the delicate responsibility that, as an educator she had towards children and their future. Therefore she kept herself updated in pedagogy and didactics and above all felt the need to create an atmosphere of respect, attention, serenity that would permit each one of them to grow in an integral manner. Her open and jovial temperament, harmonious creativity and a strong sense of duty helped her in her educative service.

These characteristics of hers were highlighted in the salutation which a teacher of Altessano addressed to her on the day of her funeral, on behalf of all the personnel of the school.

“We were accustomed to see you every morning ready to welcome the children who loved you much. During this last period you used to say: “I have become a grandmother to them”. But the passing of the years had not changed you: you were always you, able to communicate with the children, able to make them smile and captivate them with your stories. The years had not dimmed in you the figure of a virtuous teacher, as you have always been, ready to give yourself totally for this school without sparing yourself. We remember your smile, your affectionate and noble manners, your

activity, your delicacy in not making your pains and your suffering weigh on anybody. Thanks for all that you taught us. We will never forget you and your presence will remain forever in our school and in our hearts as an example to be followed”.

Besides teaching, recitals and handwork prepared with precise ingeniousness, the meetings with the parents and the precious time she dedicated to listening to them and helping them... she would find time to dedicate herself to the Parish, to this great Family in which she would once again find her children who had become adolescents, youth, adults.

She had close at heart the continuity of education through the trinomial family-school-parish. She had perceived its importance above all when, during the post-war period, a strong migratory current had transformed the society, according to the various regional differences and more structured around the rhythms of the industry. In the educational sphere a new reality was taking shape and she was aware of it.

Also in the Parish, Sr. Modestina, determined as she was, gave her best. She took care of catechesis, the oratory and, particularly, the singing. She knew to play the organ very well with which she accompanied the singing during the celebrations, animated by the choir. The “practices”, organized and precise, always brought forth exceptional results that favoured prayer. These hours put her into contact with young people and adults and increased their trust which led to confidence. During these personal conversations, the journey of life became clearer because they felt her closeness as a “sister”. Music was so much incorporated in her that, even after undergoing an eye operation for glaucoma, she was able to accompany the hymns of the Holy Mass on the organ.

Sr. Modestina collaborated with the Parish Priests, towards whom she nourished much esteem. She was also attentive in collaborating with the Presidents and the Boards of Directors of the Administration of the Houses in which she had been. She appreciated these persons who dedicated energy, time and resources so that the school might function well and the children receive better education.

She was a precise and determined person above all with the Lord, to whom she gave the “primacy” of significance and time. Even in moments of doubt she declared to Him her love and her fidelity, which she renewed daily in the Eucharistic Liturgy, prayer and adoration.

In the Community Sr. Modestina had been a “Superior” (at Venaria, Leinì, Altessano) and a “Sister”. In both the “positions” she understood that “*only with Christ and in Christ can we walk fast along the way marked by the Lord, according to the Charism of the Sisters of the St. Ann*” (letter of 27.06.2003).

She was deeply aware that each one of us is a “gift” to the Community. Therefore with much generosity she put her abilities at the disposal of the Sisters. One of them testified: “*Thank you, dearest Sr. Modestina, because with you, I have learnt many things, I have also learnt Italian. If today I am able to communicate and to carry out my educative service it is also thanks to you, because with firmness you were a guide and a ‘teacher’ to me. But you also taught me to discover the gifts God has given me and, above all, not to hold them back only for me, but to put them at the service, not only of the children, but also of my Religious Family*”.

On 29th April, according to the desire of the Administration and the people, her Funeral was celebrated in the Parish of “St. Lorenzo” of Altessano, with the great participation of persons who through their presence and prayer wanted to express their affection and gratitude to Sr. Modestina. The Celebrant, Fr. Livio Recluta, with whom the Parish priest of the Parish “St. Francis of Assisi,” Venaria concelebrated, commented on the Word of God applying it to the life of Sr. Modestina, appealing to the “memory” of the assembly. Her family members, many Sisters of the nearby Communities, children with their families and ex-students of all ages were present. The celebration was animated by the choir which thus rendered an affectionate homage to their “organist”.

After the solemn and well-participated function, we accompanied her mortal remains to the Monumental Cemetery of Turin, where she was buried beside her sister Sr. Luigia. During the burial we sang the hymn Hail Holy Queen, praying that Mary might show the Face of Jesus to our dearest

Sr. Modestina and also through the intercession of this Sister of ours, her sister Giovanna, her relatives, the families and our Congregation be given the grace to live in the beauty and the harmony that come to us as gifts from the love and the fidelity of Him who is always with us.

May the Lord, through Mary grant us to live the Jubilee pilgrimage of our Religious Family in the light of the testimony of Sr. Modestina and our many other Sisters.

Faternally,