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The Provincial Superior

Turin, 6th January 2019

*"Daughter of Zion, exult; shout aloud, daughter of Jerusalem!
Your King is coming, the Holy One, the Saviour of the world"
Zech 9:9*

Dearest Sisters,

The long-awaited Saviour came to take with Him, our dearest Sr. Santangela, in the Community of Rome-Stella Maris, at 13.35 on 25th December 2018, which has thus become the Birthday into Heaven of our dear Sister. She repeated her "Here I am" that she had pronounced in a clear voice on 8th September during the celebration of the 75th Anniversary of her Religious Profession.

SISTER SANTANGELA (SERRA MARIA) was born at Augusta (Siracusa) on 8th January 1922. She was left an orphan by both parents at an early age and their absence was partly attenuated by the affectionate relationships she established with her uncles, aunts and cousins, which she always maintained.

When she was 18, she entered our Congregation, where she celebrated the stages of her formative journey:

Entrance into the Congregation on 28th July 1940, for the Postulancy in Turin-Mother House;
Vestition on 10th August 1941, in Turin-Mother House;
First Profession on 10th August 1943, in Carmagnola;
Perpetual Profession on 10th August 1949, in Turin-Mother House.

Always available to go where the Lord called her, she was an active member of the following Communities: San Pedretto, Ribolla, Buriano, Turin-Mother House, Viù, Zubiena, Narni, Castelfidardo, Ravi, Acireale, Monterotondo, Augusta, San Giovanni Gemini, Grosseto, Rocca di Botte and Narni Stazione.

In these Communities, she worked as a Teacher in the Nursery School and even when her strength began to decline due to her age and precarious health, she continued to lend her help and collaboration.

On 1st August 2002 she became a member of the Community of Rome-Stella Maris, where her "apostolic service" became the offering of her suffering and prayer for all the people she had known, for our Religious family and also for the problems that were presented by the mass media, about which she was informed and she shared, together with her reflections, with the Sisters of the Community. Even in this environment she was not closed within herself, but widened her horizons.

The priest, Fr. Francesco Scalmati, her former pupil in the School of Castelfidardo, who had often visited his "teacher" in Stella Maris and who wanted to officiate her funeral, outlined the personality of Sr. Santangela pointing out clearly:

- her passion for education,
- her passion and her accompaniment of priestly and religious vocations,
- her constant prayer for the people she met.

The experience of this priest was confirmed by two of our Sisters who, as young girls in the Parish Youth Group, had been approached by her and whom she accompanied to the Novitiate of the Sisters of Saint Ann. They were “attracted” by her serene and convincing life-witness.

At this historical moment in which people in general, and especially young people, expect from us the witness of true fraternal Communities, an exigency also echoed by Pope Francis, it seems providential to me to recall the words of Sr. Amata who had “fraternally” shared the life of Sr. Santangela for a good 30 years! In the final salutation she addressed her with the following words.

“Dear Sr. Santangela, we do not say goodbye to you, but see you later!

You have already met the Heavenly Bridegroom who must have said to you: «Come spouse of Christ, enjoy the reward for your “YES”, generously pronounced when, at a very young age, I called you to follow me in the evangelical counsels. Without delay, without “buts” and without “ifs” you responded to my invitation».

Dearest Sr. Santangela, you have been faithful all through your long life, interwoven, like for every human being, with roses and thorns. With courage and a spirit of faith you overcame the difficulties you encountered during your earthly pilgrimage.

I remember with joy the long time we spent together. Indeed in the Community, there was a family atmosphere. There was understanding, collaboration, mutual help, serene and deep relationships among the members of the Community”.

Sr. Amata also outlined the lifestyle of our Sister in her apostolic service, an appreciation that was widely shared by those who knew her in the active life. We find in Sr. Santangela the conviction of Carlo of Barolo on the “sacredness” of every child. The “teacher” loved and understood her pupils, and her pupils, feeling loved, immediately understood her every gesture, her every expression.

“Sr. Santangela was an energetic, determined Sister, endowed with many talents, faithful to her duties and to all the responsibilities that were assigned to her. Available, she was always ready to help those who asked her a favour and did it with competence and grace.

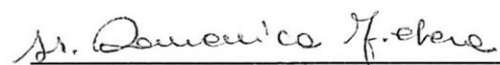
She stood out as a kindergarten teacher. She possessed an uncommon communicative ability and a rare hold on the children who were entrusted to her, so she was much appreciated and loved by the parents”.

Taking up again the image of the writer Alessandro Pronzato who considers the people who have marked his life’s journey as “stars”, Sr. Amata also testifies: *“I too have encountered luminous stars on my path and one of these is Sr. Santangela. Thank you so much, dear Sister, for all you have given and witnessed to me”.*

At the funeral, celebrated on 27th December in the Chapel of the Community of Rome-Stella Maris, were present our Mother General, Mother Francesca, the Sisters of the Community and some Sisters of the Generalate and of Rome-Viale Marconi. Now her body rests in the Roman Cemetery of Prima Porta.

With love let us pray that Sr. Santangela can contemplate God face to face. We also pray with gratitude for this Sister who has communicated to us through her life “what she has heard and what she has contemplated: God is Love”. Through her intercession we ask the Lord that we too may communicate the beauty and gratuitousness of Love to others, especially to the little ones and to the poor.

I greet everyone with affection, renewing my wish to “dream” because He has for us *“plans of peace, to give us a future full of hope”* (Jer 29:11).



Sr. Domenica Fichera, Superiora Provinciale