

Turin, 4 December 2015

*On that day, when evening had come, he said to his disciples:  
"Let us go across to the other side". (Mk 4: 35)*

Dearest Sisters,

It is difficult for us to accept how a voice, an invitation, a call could be decisive for a person. Our dearest Sr. Umbertina heard that voice when, on 30 November she left us in order to *"go across to the other side"*. Simplicity, truth, desire: these are the attitudes lived by Sr. Umbertina while waiting to encounter our heavenly Father. The feast of St. Andrew, the Apostle, which we celebrate today, invites us to give thanks to God for the vocation of our Sister to the consecrated life; we are grateful because she rooted her faith on the foundation of the Apostles, giving to it a valuable testimony.

**Sister Umbertina** (Cappuccini Vittoria) was born in Bagnoregio (VT) on 19 October 1921.

On 18 March 1945, she entered our Congregation in Rome – Viale Marconi, where she celebrated the various moments of her formative journey:

- on 15 September 1945 she made her Vestition
- on 15 September 1947 she made her First Vows
- on 10 August 1953 she consecrated herself to the Lord forever through the Perpetual Profession.

In 1947, as a young Professed Sister, she began her Teacher's training in Rome – Via Buonarroti and in 1950, after having obtained her Diploma in Teaching, she was transferred to Acireale as an Elementary Teacher. During the years in which she was with the children, Sr. Umbertina carried out to the utmost her profession; she managed to be exigent and maternal at the same time, making all those entrusted to her, feel at ease through her affection.

From 1957 she taught in the Professional Technical School in Rome - Viale Marconi, a school attended by students who did not intend continuing their high school education, and in 1974 she became its Directress. During the long years spent in this School, Sr. Umbertina felt fully satisfied: the dedication and love she poured out made clear that living to the full the passion for her own work, became the converging point of all her plans. She never gave up in front of difficulties, inculcating in the students values of esteem, honesty, sense of duty and being responsible for what one thinks, decides and does.

Sister Gianna remembers her thus:

*"I lived with Sr. Umbertina from 1953 to 1995 in the School of Via Buonarroti and then in Viale Marconi; first as a Boarder and then as a Sister, and I have shared so many things with her. She was very creative and imaginative, but sensitive and with a very deep spiritual life. When she was invited to participate in the Ignatian Retreat, she accepted it with joy and she returned from it transformed. She used to always tell me: "The Spirit blows on dry bones and brings them to life again, you know?" She wanted also to convey to me the miracle of the Spirit that brings to life what is dry, if not dead.*

*She knew how to be with the girls in order to listen and form them for life. She had more aptitude towards the older girls rather than towards the little ones. She was the woman of the existential peripheries spoken of by Pope Bergoglio, because already in those years, she used to go to the neighbouring Parishes to be close to the poor. She visited the Parish of Trullo, the Forte Ostiense that housed the demented, and the shacks located in the street bordering the grove, as an active Missionary ready to give to those who were in need, not material things, but her very self, her time, her ability to listen, her advice and especially the preparation for the Sacraments.*

*Her sensitivity made her confront despotic parents of some poor girls and suffered the consequences for defending the reputation of the young defenseless girls. She did not spare herself even before those who wanted to sue her, just to keep her word to the young ones whom she followed up".*

In 1981, she was Principal of the High School in Narni, where she remained only for a few years.

In 1984 she returned to Rome - Viale Marconi, where she dedicated herself to teaching Religion until the '90s. After she left teaching, Sr. Umbertina made herself available to render various services: assistance to the children in the school, the

Secretary's office, the reception, and as long as she was able, she put her creativity at the service of the Community and others, by preparing objects for various celebrations or for the lottery for the benefit of the missions.

In Viale Marconi, her second home, Sr. Umbertina spent the last years of her life. They were years of suffering and prayer in which the Lord accompanied her, step by step, to accept His mysterious plan which united her to Himself through illness. On 30 November at 2:00 p.m., Sr. Umbertina passed away due to added complications to her already serious health condition. Her life was cut short, in fact, by chronic obstructive bronchitis.

On 2 December, in the Community Chapel, the funeral Mass was celebrated during which Sr. Anna, Superior of the Community, addressed Sr. Umbertina:

*"Dear Sr. Umbertina, your Religious family would like to thank you because in these long years spent in this Community, you have given us a beautiful testimony of life. Yes, above and beyond your demure character, you always defended with strength and courage the beauty of a life authentically given to Christ. By nature a determined, active, creative person, you have always been hard working and ready to put your skills at the service of those who asked for your help.*

*Significant was your presence in the school where you carried out your educative mission with dedication and passion. Many remember you with kindness and affection.*

*I, who have lived with you for several years in this Community, remember you this way, too, I have spent beautiful moments with you during which it was nice to talk and share reflections and experiences of the interior life, as well as to produce various objects, thanks to your creativity.*

*Bedridden in recent years, you dedicated your time to prayer. Never did you complain, even when, as in the last moments, your health condition was getting increasingly worse. You entrusted yourself totally to the care of the Sister-Nurses who assisted you with attention and kindness.*

*Now that the Lord calls you to contemplate His Face, we ask you to entrust to Him the needs of our Religious Family and those of your natural family whom you loved so much."*

Then, one of her ex-students spoke and said:

*"Last night, before falling asleep. I thought: What have I lost? What will I lose from tomorrow? Many were the thoughts that were frantically running through my mind, but I stopped on two particular aspects:*

- *Point of reference*
- *Spirituality*

*On the first point, there's not much to say, it is a given fact: the feeling that a pillar of my life will be missing, and one is never ready for this..., in times in which, we who were born in the '80s – '90s, need more than ever that certainty and security that Sr. Umbertina was for me.*

*The second is spirituality, which now I am afraid to lose..., a spirituality of which Sr. Umbertina was a considerate and loving custodian. I, very often attracted by the artificial beauty of everyday life, needed those sips of spirituality which she used to give me; of the true understanding of things, of what is important in life...*

*Only a few people know that, before every victory or after every defeat, I used to come, I come and I will come right here to this Chapel to which I am deeply attached, thanks to Sr. Umbertina, thanks to St. Ann's. I also enjoyed praying with her... those few times that I came here to regain strength from her words. This intimate thing I kept within me, a kind of respect for what is sacred... Well, this time, it will be one of my challenges: to keep my spirituality alive; I think this is what Sr. Umbertina would have liked.*

*I wish all the students of St. Ann's to find a Sr. Umbertina along their own journey. As for me, I hope that she will always protect me from heaven.*

*Honour to you, Sr. Umbertina, and thanks for everything".*

The celebration was attended by the Sisters of the General Council and the Generalate, the Sisters of the Communities in Rome and her nieces and nephews, aside from friends and acquaintances. After the Holy Mass her mortal remains were taken to the Prima Porta Cemetery, where she now rests, next to our other Sisters.

Dearest Sisters, entering into Eternal life, means above all, opening up to the wonder of God, to wait for Him and to welcome Him. Advent is the favourable time in which we are asked to realize, to prepare the way, to open wide our heart to the Lord who comes. Sr. Umbertina who concretized this in her life, surely will not leave us wanting for her intercession for the needs of the Church and the Congregation.

Let us continue to offer our suffrage for her soul and let us ask her intercession for Mother Francesca and Sr. Jacintha who are visiting the Northern Province of India.

I greet you all with affection,

  
Sr. Gabriella Profita, Provincial Superior