

Suore di Sant'Anna

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10122 TORINO

The Provincial Superior

*Cling to him, forsake him not;
thus will your future be great.
Accept whatever befalls you, in crushing misfortune be patient;
For in fire gold is tested,
and worthy men in the crucible of humiliation. (Sir 2:3-5)*

Turin, 9th April 2021

Dearest Sisters,

These words, from the book of Sirach, narrate well the meaning of the human and spiritual story of Sr. Antonina, who remained united to God without forsaking Him, going through purification in the crucible of pain, and who left us to finally return to the Father's embrace on 29th March at 7:10 p.m., on the first day of "Holy Week", that great week in which everything is accomplished and from which everything begins.

Sr. M. Antonina (Vanda TERRINONI) **was born in Fiuggi (Frosinone) on 3rd October 1926**, the second born of Anemone and Speranza Corradini. When she was not yet a year old, she was deprived of the dearest affection of her mother. She remained with her father and her beloved sister, Geltrude, three years older than her, who at the age of 17 entered our Congregation, our dear Sr. Speranza, who died in 1983. Their father remarried, to Adele, who became their second mother. When Geltrude entered Religion, Vanda was in the prime of adolescence: she was 14 years old. The choice of her sister challenged her also because of the great fascination she had for her, however, she preferred to continue her studies and work.

On 19th January 1952, at the age of 26, after long discernment, Vanda entered our Congregation at the Mother House in Turin, where she went through the phases of her formative journey:

*in August of the same year she made her Vestition and two years later,
on 10th August of 1954 she made her First Profession.*

Through the Perpetual Profession, on 10th August 1960, she consecrated herself forever to the Lord.

A woman, open and intelligent, she was not used to all the practices of piety in the Convent, however, she allowed herself to be formed by adhering with awareness and commitment to all the formative proposals of the time.

The first season of Sr. Antonina's religious life was indeed fruitful and rich with human and spiritual experiences that shaped her and made her taste the beauty of relationships and community life.

Immediately after her First Profession, in 1954, she carried out the service of Assistant Boarding Mistress in Rome - Via Buonarroti, a true mission for her in which she manifested her maternal skills, becoming a stable human point of reference for many boarders.

After obtaining her Teacher's qualification, to this service was added that of elementary teacher which she carried out first in Bagnoregio in 1961, then in Turin Via Massena (in 1962) and in Rome, Viale Marconi (from 1971). This work brought out her natural propensity for the educative mission. Endowed with a good memory and sensitivity, she loved the Italian language, literature and philosophy. Over the years she combined this kind of reading to that of spiritual texts, an in-depth study which, with the onset of illness, became the sap from which she drew life, hope and strength.

After a three-year term as Superior in Grosseto, in 1973, Sr. Antonina was transferred to Sicily, to Acireale, the Community she would forever bear in her heart along with the memory of that sunny land. There, she carried out the service of Secretary in the School, while the signs of illness that would accompany her for the rest of her life appeared on the horizons. Her state of health required long periods of rest and did not permit the mental fatigue related to teaching with all that it entailed.

Despite her health problems, her human gifts and spiritual richness were such that in 1982 she was asked to be the Mistress of formation in the Postulancy – Noviciate of Rome, Viale Marconi. Unfortunately, although Sr. Antonina nourished a great passion for such a delicate mission, she had to leave the young ones entrusted to her after just a few months, with great suffering, bearing in her heart the pain of not having been able, as she often repeated, to continue despite the interior and physical malaise.

In fact, after such an incisive though brief experience, and after the death of her sister, Sr. Speranza, which occurred in Lent the following year, for many years Sr. Antonina lived in her own flesh the experience of a long Gethsemane. God the Father permitted that she go through a very long period of physical and moral trial. Whenever one met her during long hours spent in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, she would often repeat: *"remember prayer! Ask for the gift of prayer, the real one! I am here without strength, but I am not giving up. The Lord has given me this gift, even if I cannot do anything else"*.

For a long time, Sr. Antonina harboured the regret of not being able to do "anything else", feeling within her the contrast between the strong desire to be at the forefront of the mission and the absolute lack of interior and physical energy that kept her from doing any movement.

Nonetheless, when her strength seemed to have given her more room to breathe, in 1987 Sr. Antonina was sent as Superior to the Formative Community in Rome, Viale Marconi where she remained for two years. Then, once again, she had to stop, alternating moments in which she seemed to glimpse a crack in the dark which afflicted her, at times, even for long periods, in which her only refuge was her room which became her altar, her crucible, her offering. Even in darkness, she continued her prayer, offering and supplication: *Lord, give me the gift of prayer, prayer, the real one!*

Once again for a brief period of time, in Viale Marconi, in 1991 and then in 1996 she resumed minimum contact with the outside world, offering her help in the elementary school secretariat and assisting a bit the children when her strength allowed her to do so.

Thus, through ups and downs, Sr. Antonina lived her Calvary, to which was added other problems and ailments of various kinds that aggravated her mood and limited her movements until 2015 when, in order to guarantee a full-time assistance, she was transferred to the nearby Community of Rome-Stella Maris, where she lived the rest of her years.

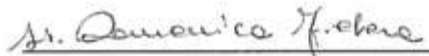
This event, which initially gave Sr. Antonina much suffering, little by little, became a place of grace: the last years of her life were filled with light and peace. Finally, surrendering herself, she

found peace and joy, by abandoning herself to a prayer of trust, as she used to write daily in her notebook of notes, thoughts, intuitions and spiritual insights. Peace, which she drew from the Eucharist and the Word of God. Peace, which she communicated to those who went to visit her. Peace, which the Sisters who had accompanied her on the last stretch of the road, saw on her face, until the last moment, when she seemed to be asleep. And this peace was imprinted on her lifeless body, so that looking at her in the coffin, one seemed to see Sr. Antonina younger by twenty years, in reality, transfigured into perennial youth, a gift from the Bridegroom.

The Chaplain, Fr. Jesus, in his funeral homily said: "Sr. Antonina was among the disciples of Jesus, among the friends He sent into the city to prepare the Passover. Sr. Antonina has preceded us to celebrate the eternal Easter in Paradise. Like her, we too, are called to be among the number of friends of Jesus who are preparing the Passover to be celebrated with Him".

Now, she rests with her loved ones in the Cemetery of Fiuggi. Let us be generous in offering our prayers so that our dear Sr. Antonina may enjoy forever the Father's tender and merciful embrace. And let us ask her to intercede for us the desire for God and fidelity to our "Yes".

I greet you all with affection,



Sr. Domenica Fichera, Superiora Provinciale