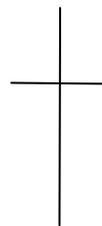


Suore di Gesù Buon Pastore "Pastorelle"
Casa Generalizia
Via Leonardo Umile 13 – 00144 Roma



Today, 22 January 2010, at 2 am, Italian time,
in the Sacred Heart Hospital of Negrar (VR)

the Risen Jesus Good Shepherd entrusted forever to the Father our sister

SR RAFFAELA PIERINA GRAZIO

73 years old and 53 years of religious life

On the fifth day of prayer for Christian unity on the theme: *"Witnessing in suffering"*, our sister Raffaela enters in the womb of the Holy Trinity in order to sing forever the joy of having lived the suffering of these past months of earthly life, as praise and thanksgiving to the One *whose love towers to the heavens; his faithfulness, to the skies* (cf. Psalm 56).

Pierina was born on 9 February 1936 at Badia Polesine (RO), fourth child of a hardworking Venetian family. Baptized on 16 February 1936 in the parish church of Villa d'Adige (VR), she was educated in the climate of a solid Christian faith in which she matures the choice to consecrate herself to the Lord. On October 18, 1950, a little adolescent, enters the Congregation at Genzano (RM) and on April 12, 1953 made her clothing at La Stella of Albano Laziale (RM). On September 2, 1955 enters the novitiate at Albano Laziale, mother house, and on September 3 of the following year made her the first profession at Albano Laziale.

After first profession, she spends two years at Budrione (MO) as an assistant of the kindergarten school and then is transferred at S. Lucia of Fiamignano (RI) where she stayed from 1957 to 1967. It is in this period that she prepares her perpetual profession, celebrated on September 3, 1961 at the mother house of Albano. She remained in the same house for a year from 1967 to 1968 as a student and she still returned as student, for two years, from 1978 to 1980. In 1970 she achieved the Diploma of qualification for teaching in the preparatory schools. In the mother house, Sr Raffaella in fact, did not only receive the formation to be a good Pastorella, but also learns the art of taking care of children. An art that she exercised with passion in the different communities where she carried out her pastoral mission: Diano S. Pietro (IM), Sestri Levante (GE), Villimpenta (MN), Solara (MO), Cive di Correzzola (PD).

With simplicity, always with a smile on her lips, Sr Raffaella knows how to share herself with generosity for the good of the people; manifests the capability of pastoral collaboration with priests and the lay, she does not spare anything for herself. A parish priest, in a letter addressed to Mother Celina in 1971 writes of her: *"This year, Sr Raffaella has done so much and so much good. So many times I have wondered how she did to attend to everything: kindergarten, after school, choir and rapid visits to the sick. She is really consumed in doing good. She is like the woman of the Sacred Scriptures who watches over on everything."*

Along the years, Sr Raffaella conserved this attitude manifesting great love for the Institute and for the apostolate. Cultivates her prayer and always carries with joy and in spirit of obedience the commitment assumed. She sacrifices gladly for the common good and always seeks the positive side, even in difficult and problematic circumstances.

After a year of break at Negrar 2007 - 2008, she returns in apostolate at Cadè (MN) where she remains only until November 19, the day when she goes to Negrar because she was not feeling well and it was suggested that she undergoes some medical check-up. The following day she goes to the Sacred Heart hospital for the prescribed check ups, but immediately her health situation was serious and disturbing. The result of the clinical examinations is clear: "locally advanced Adinokarsinoma in the pancreas, with multiple liver metastasis". Such was the stage of the illness that surgical intervention was not possible.

Sr Raffaella welcomes with serenity what was communicated to her about the course of her illness and she commits the few strength and courage she has to live each day well, beginning in the encounter with Jesus in the Eucharistic Celebration, together with the sisters of the community of Negrar. She arrives slowly while procession is formed for communion and immediately retreats, as if scared to cause disturbance and in that instant savours totally the renewed: "*Here I am.*"

In a sufficiently long dialogue with her at Negrar last December 26, I sensed a deep docility and a serene surrender to what the Lord would have prepared for her. She told me thus: "*I am grateful to the Lord for all that He has given me these years of consecration among the Pastorelle. I am serene. If He wants to give me some more time, good; if He wants to take me with Him now instead, I am ready. I offer all for the Congregation, for the vocations in the Church.*" She confided to me all this with her usual smile that already seemed to taste the definitive encounter with the Lord.

From the end of December until the first days of January, she experiences an alternation of more difficult days, until it was thought of another hospital admittance. She asks for the Sacrament of the anointing of the sick wherein she participated intensely. The sisters who alternated in keeping her company these days testify her serenity and her affectionate gratitude for every little attention: attitudes that are part of her good character, generous, courageous beyond appearances.

Sr Raffaella, thank you! You have known how to live each day in that hope which Blessed J. Alberione defines: "*(...) certainty to obtain the heavens through good works and His grace*" (PrP, III, 1948, p. 244). Intercede from Heaven for all the Pastorelle, for your relatives and for the people dear to you, the gift to live in hope which makes transparent on this earth the compassionate face of the Good Shepherd Jesus whom you contemplate now forever!

Sr Marta Finotelli
superior general

Negrar, 22 January 2010
Fifth day of prayer for Christian unity