



*Faith in the resurrection  
opens us to fraternal communion  
beyond the threshold of death...*  
(RoL 24)



Today, 16 March 2018, at 1.10pm (Colombian time)  
in the community of Cali-Colombia  
our sister, DAVIDA SR IMMACOLATA CERVO  
returned to the Father's house.  
She was 77 years old and 58 years of religious life.

The words of the Gospel acclamation from today's liturgy, *"No one lives on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God"*, enshrine Sr Davida's path of discipleship characterized by essentiality and trusting abandonment in the Lord.

Sr Davida was born on 26 May 1940 at Nova Roma – Rio Grande do Sul (Brazil) and baptized on 28 May 1940 in the parish of Saints Peter and Paul. She came from a large family and was the fourteenth of sixteen children: six brothers and nine sisters. She entered the Congregation on 5 March 1953 at S. Pedro – Terceira Léguas/RS at almost thirteen years of age. On 19 January 1954, she transferred to Bento Gonsalves/RS where she remained until 9 December and then transferred again to Caxias do Sul / RS where she stayed until August 1958, the year in which she was sent to Italy to do the novitiate in the Mother House at Albano Laziale (RM).

She entered the novitiate on 7 December 1958 and made her First Profession on 8 December, taking vows for two years and taking the name of Sr Immacolata. Already from the novitiate, Sr Davida manifested her missionary ardor that soon took her to various countries. From 1961 to 1962, she attended the year of preparation for Junior Professed formators, promoted by CIVCSVA in Rome.

In 1963, Sr Davida began "the missionary adventure" that took her to Colombian lands while she was still in temporary vows. Sr Davida was one of the four missionary sisters: Sr Leonia Boito, Sr Teresina Fontanili and Sr Fatima Costella, who on 27 January 1964 pioneered the presence of our Congregation in Colombia, in the cathedral church of Cúcuta, named after St Joseph. In the same year, on 8 December, Sr Davida took her perpetual vows, together with Sr Fatima Costella, in the chapel of the Daughters of St. Paul in Cúcuta. Mother Celina received their vows while Sr Leonia Boito and Sr. Eugenia Miana acted as witnesses.

In 1967, she was transferred to Bogotá where she saw the beginning of the formation house and the seat of government of the Colombia-Venezuela Delegation, since in 1972 a pastoral community had also opened in Venezuela. The construction of the house in Bogotá saw the missionary sisters and the young people in search of their vocation, practice radical trust in Providence and assiduous and creative work, characteristics that, together with a profound abandonment in the Lord, have always been part of Sr Davida's life.

Sr Davida was described as a joyful, humble, simple, sincere sister, who always had the words "my Congregation" on her lips, and inscribed in her heart the love for the Institute and the generosity of self-giving without reserve. She cultivated the spirit of prayer and taught others to pray. She had musical talent and could sing, and she placed these talents at the service of the apostolate. In the Delegation, she was a tireless and creative vocation promoter. She brought numerous vocations – including yours truly - and helped in the formation; from 1981 to 1985, in particular, she was in charge of the Juniorate. She also held positions of governance as Councillor in the Delegation from 1982 to 1985 and from 1989 to 1993.

Sr Davida lived her pastoral ministry with great generosity between Colombia, Venezuela and Mexico. She was in Cúcuta from 1983-1987, with a brief pause in Bogotá in 1988 to attend a pastoral renewal course at Itepal (Pastoral Theological Institute for Latin America) and from 1989 to 1994 where she was also Superior of the Community.

In 1995 she left for Mexico, together with Sr Virginia Odorizzi and Sr Violeta Venco, where on 13 April took place the official opening of our presence in this country. In Venezuela, she worked in Araure from 1980-1983 and in Barcelona from 1998 to 2003, and was the superior of the community.

She returned to Colombia, in Cúcuta, from 2004 to 2007 and was a member of the Cali community. Here, as well as pastoral activities, she was in charge of the Aspirants. On one occasion she said, *"I don't feel worthy of this role but if I can cooperate in spite of my limitations, I will do so willingly. I will share my experience with the young and the Good Shepherd will do the rest. I trust in Him and I will continue to have it because He knows me deeply"*.

In January 2018, after several checks, she was diagnosed with lymphoma. The oncologists seemed confident of identifying a type of targeted chemotherapy to contain the progression of the disease and alleviate pain. Following several tests of nuclear medicine, she had her first chemotherapy on 8 March and on 14 March, on seeing the oncologist; she was found in good conditions and a date was set for the second session. In the course of her illness, she would say to those around her, *"I offer my pain for vocations, but especially for your perseverance."*

However, this afternoon, with the serenity and abandonment that typified her, Sr Davida welcomed the Father's call to enjoy life without end and to contemplate the Face of the Good Shepherd that she has always sought and loved. Our heartfelt gratitude to the sisters who looked after her with love and dedication during this period of trial.

As we join in thanksgiving for the life and vocation of our sister, let us ask Sr Davida to intercede good and holy vocations for our Congregation and for the whole Church. Let us also ask her who had a missionary heart, to intercede graces for our future presence in Chicago, in the multicultural reality of the parish of St Stephen.

Sr Aminta Sarmiento Puentes  
superior general

Rome, 16 March 2018