



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



Today, 6 September 2016 at 0.40,
in the community of Albano Laziale (RM) – casa madre,

LAVINIA SR ERMENEGILDA MANTOVANI

went back to the Father.

She was 84 years old and 60 years in the religious life.

At the beginning of a new day today, while the Liturgy of the Word reminds us of the calling of the Apostles, our sister Lavinia too was called by Jesus Good Shepherd, not for a new mission, but to enter definitely into eternal life, after a life spent in self-giving and in loving her vocation as Pastorella.

Lavinia was born on 5 July 5 1932 in Bonavigo (VR) and was baptized on 17 July. Second of four children, she grew up in a hardworking Venetian family where she learned to love life and to cherish the Christian faith as a precious gift rendering it stand out in everyday life. The young Lavinia attended the parish community and at twenty years old, she took the decision to donate her whole life to the Lord, entering the Congregation on 11 February 1953 at Albano Laziale at the Via Stella. On 2 September 1955 at Albano Casa madre, she entered the Novitiate and on 3 September 1956, made her first profession and took the name of Sr. Ermenegilda.

She was immediately sent to Conche di Codevigo (PD) where she remained until 1960 as a kindergarten teacher dedicating herself to the catechesis of children and in visiting the poorest families in the parish. On 3 September 1961, she made her perpetual profession at Albano, after spending a year in Albiano (TN), where she devoted herself to the formation of young girls.

From 1961 to 1966 she was sent to Bovara di Trevi (PG), and from 1966 to 1968 in Pumenengo (BG). In these parishes, aside from being the superior of the community, she carried out with passion the pastoral ministry, especially the liturgical animation and catechesis of Christian initiation. In 1968 she returned again to Albiano (TN) where she remained until 1976 as a kindergarten teacher and in the youth and family ministry. She was very much appreciated especially for her love for the youth whom she took care through the dressmaking and sewing workshop in which many young persons participated with enthusiasm. The Parish Priest of Albiano wrote about her on the occasion of her transfer: *"I feel sad because I was able to appreciate her value in any field, but especially in the workshop. She carried it out so well that all the young girls were very satisfied."*

From 1976 to 1978 she was transferred to Bari and even here she expressed her good religious spirit, her love of work and sacrifice, accompanied by a practical intelligence and attention to the sick people.

Sr. Lavinia devoted much of her life to the care of the elderly and sick sisters. Since 1978 in fact, she was in Albano casa madre, where she competently put into effect, for more than thirty years, a gift that she herself described as *"I consider my work useful, even if my capabilities are always limited, but with God's help one can do everything."*

A woman always attentive in the life of prayer and in fraternal life, she believed in a sober life and manifested contentment about her choice. She lived her vocation in the loving care of this particular flock that the Good Shepherd entrusted to her: the elderly and sick sisters. Quick and sincere in relationships, always ready to accompany any sick sister, Sr. Lavinia made her service as a reason for living, expressing that particular characteristic of Jesus which is compassion.

Indefatigable in contacting doctors, in making appointments, in promptly distributing the necessary medicines for the therapies of the sisters, Sr. Lavinia lived everything with availability, always accompanying with consolation and encouragement. She was known in the Regina Apostolorum Hospital in Albano Laziale, she knew how to listen to the needs of many Pastorelle, who relied on her mediation consisting of concrete attention: from providing for the needs of a hospitalized sister, looking for a specialist, picking up diagnostic results, the accompaniment to delicate medical check-ups.

In the different hospital ward, she was loved and well-liked by doctors and nurses. She maintained cordial relationships to facilitate or speed up surgeries or treatment, until the day in which she herself, in 2013, was admitted in the Regina Apostolorum Hospital for complicated acute diverticulitis. Later she was diagnosed with intestinal and ovarian cancer. She survived the surgery and as soon as she recovered her strength, she took again her service toward the sisters as if nothing had happened, until she was forced to a new hospitalization. She remained in the hospital for two months where she accepted suffering with dignity and abandonment to God. She often invoked the Good Shepherd confidently and openly expressing her readiness to make the final passage. She manifested strength and tenacity in dealing with her sickness and remained vigilant and lucid until the last days before returning to Casa madre where she confidently handed herself over to the merciful embrace of the Father.

While we thank Sr. Lavinia for all the good she has done in her earthly life, we also thank the Surgery Team who had been dear toward her throughout the time of hospitalization.

Thank you, Sr. Lavinia, many of us have experienced closely your loving care with which you have passed on the goodness of Jesus Good Shepherd, who now welcomes you and *will give you the reward at the resurrection of the just.*

Sr Marta Finotelli
Superior general

Roma, 6 September 2016