

WHO PRIMA MAESTRA WAS TO ME



Prima Maestra Thecla was a Mother to me, to all the Daughters of St. Paul and to the whole Pauline Family. She was a great woman—very human, humble and simple; a woman of immense faith; a saint! Her eyes

shone with the light of God and it seemed to me that her penetrating gaze was able to read our hearts.

In May 1955, I had just entered the Congregation as an aspirant. I was going down the staircase of the St. Joseph community in Alba and I saw Prima Maestra coming up the steps. When we met, I was wordless. I stopped and she looked at me, smiled and asked: “What’s your name?” When I told her, she said, “I’m glad you are here. Let’s thank the Lord together for the Pauline vocation. After that, I hope you will continue your journey serenely and joyfully.”

This simple welcome touched me profoundly. In fact, from that moment on I felt truly welcomed into the Congregation...by no less a personage than Prima Maestra Thecla herself!

During my time of formation, she often gave our group conferences. Using simple language, she spoke to us about the virtues and about theology, applying what she said to our concrete life as Daughters of St. Paul. She frequently asserted: “Our vocation is beautiful! We mustn’t be afraid of difficulties.”

As a young professed, I was stationed in Milan—a big community made up of many “propagandists.” Prima Maestra came to see



us often and during those visits she would offer us guidelines, saying: “Our life is beautiful. We have all the means we need to become saints and to do good to others through our mission. We have to reach everyone! Let us become holy so that we will do a lot of good by giving people the Word of God. In heaven, many of those people will thank us for the good they received through us.”

Prima Maestra always listened to us, including on the one-to-one level, and provided us with animations. She was deeply interested in everyone. Her visits were truly like having God in our midst.

It always moves me deeply to picture her recollected in prayer in the Queen of Apostles Sanctuary in Rome or in the chapels of our small communities. It was clear that she was in contemplation and that she was praying for all of us. That certitude filled me with great courage.

During Prima Maestra’s visits to the local communities, and also when she was at home in Rome, many beautiful recreations were organized and she often played a lead role in them, manifesting her creativity and goodness toward everyone.

I will always carry Prima Maestra in my heart and even today I continue to entrust to her any problems I might have in my life and in the apostolate. I am sure that from heaven she continues to look after me with solicitude, just as she did on the very first day I met her.

Francesca Mancini, fsp

MERCY



It is not enough for us to personally experience God’s mercy; we must become a sign and instrument of it to others. Don’t go hunting for impressive things to do. Start with the simple things that the Lord shows you are the most urgent.

Pope Francis