



AS CLEAR AS GLASS

In his homily for Maestra Thecla's funeral liturgy, Cardinal Arcadio Larraona said, "You don't know—you can't know—how much [your Prima Maestra] suffered, worked and prayed.... At this point, you find everything done. But things didn't get done by themselves. How much hard work, how many inspirations, how much correspondence [to grace], how many sacrifices, and how much faith were involved! How necessary it was to 'hope against all hope'! Your Prima Maestra's life was a poem from the very beginning of her religious life. [...] I remember your Mother. Her life reflected her essence: she was as clear as glass; in her, nothing was exaggerated."

Placed in charge of the Congregation, Prima Maestra stood out not because of her role but because of the simplicity with which she lived it. Her life was simple but sublime, characterized by constant, generous self-dedication. She sought to develop the many virtues she had already been practicing at home: obedience, humility, poverty, chastity, prudence, love of God and union with him. All these virtues were admirably woven together in her life.

Like all human beings, Prima Maestra had limitations and shortcomings. She experienced struggles, victories, defeats and the need to start over again. The people who knew her from the beginning of the Pauline foundation up until her death witnessed her steady ascent toward God. She became kinder, more loving and more humble with the passing of the years.

Led by the Power of God

Prima Maestra's spiritual notes reveal how profoundly she felt her "nothingness." In her notebooks, we find over and over again the words, "I am nothing. God is everything." "I must reach the point of fully grasping my nothingness." This feeling of "nothingness" derived in part from her delicate health and limited edu-

cation but above all from her profound sense of God. It was reinforced by her awareness that "God is everything." Consequently she was able to exclaim, "Every good thing comes from God. Everything is his! Therefore I want to trust him completely."

Prima Maestra's spiritual life can be summed up by her constant declaration: "By myself I can do nothing but with God I can do all things." This attitude of "doing all things with God" extended to every aspect of her life: apostolic projects, community life, study, poverty, suffering, financial investments, trips, etc. As a result, she was not afraid of obstacles, poor health or long hours of exhausting work. She was borne along by the power of God.

Her spiritual notes of 1927 contain the following reflection:

My God, in your goodness you have allowed me to begin this year.

Beginning right now, I offer all my prayers and sufferings for the intentions of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist and I want to renew this offering with every beat of my heart. When I am asleep, may each breath I take reinforce my communion and union with you, my God. With every breath I take, I want to say: "I am with Jesus and Jesus is with me." I beg you with all my heart to grant me victory over my principal defect. Help me to live [the virtue of] love the way you want me to, my God.

Blessed Trinity, Virgin Mary, St. Paul, my guardian angel, my holy protectors, bless my resolutions and help me remain faithful to God up to death. May your will be done. (T 1 January 1927).

Maestra Thecla instilled in the first FSPs the profound conviction that if they sought God alone, he, their good Father, would take care of their material needs: "If we allow ourselves to be nourished by the immaculate flesh of our Savior and by his Gospel, then he will give us something to eat and something to wear each day" (January 1932).