



Toward Supreme Self-Offering

With Maestra Nazarena Morando, Maestra Thecla was “an open book,” to the point that she asked M. Nazarena to serve as her corrector. And it was precisely to M. Nazarena that Prima Maestra confided her desire to offer her life for the Daughters of St. Paul. She wrote:

Dearest M. Nazarena, I want to tell you what I have in mind, namely: I want you to correct me about everything you see or feel that I am not doing properly or that I could do better. Do you remember that I asked you to be my corrector? I would be very grateful if you would do this for me in the coming days.... For some time now, my resolution has been to surrender myself to God and to Mary most holy; to practice patience in an attitude of humility, and to perform some small acts of penance in a spirit of reparation. Primo Maestro told me: “Reduce everything to love.” I don’t know how to do this except by doing the will of God. What do you think? Thank you as of now for performing this great act of charity toward me. Pray for me: I am nearing the end of my life and I’m still so far behind in all I need to do. *Deo gratias!*

In another letter to Maestra Nazarena, dated 27 May 1961, Maestra Thecla wrote:

Thank you from the bottom of my heart. The moment you see something [that needs correcting], let me know about it immediately. *Deo gratias* for your help. May the Lord reward you for your charity toward me. Think of me as your novice, OK? Tomorrow, the Feast of the Blessed Trinity, I want to offer God my life so that the Daughters will all become saints!

And on 28 May 1961, she concretized this offering:

With a humble and contrite heart, I pray to you, the divine Persons of the Most Holy Trinity, asking you to accept the offering of my life for the entire Congregation of the Daughters of St. Paul so that everyone may become a saint.

She made her decision official at Christmas that year, writing to all the sisters:

I am praying fervently for all of you, asking that each one will attain the holiness to which she is called. These words pour forth not only from my pen but also from my heart. I want you all to be holy. For this I have offered my life—that we might all reach the degree of holiness the Lord wants of us.

“Reduce everything to love”

It is interesting to note how Fr. Alberione accompanied M. Thecla toward her act of total self-offering to God. When she visited Asia in 1962 she was already in poor health and he wrote to her:

“Good Prima Maestra, I don’t know where to send this letter. But in the meantime I thank the Lord for the fact that you had a good trip up to now. May he accompany you with his grace. I am worried about your health, which is clearly not good. Is it prudent for you to continue your trip? At least, spend a little more time in a community where the climate is favorable and where the atmosphere is one of serenity and trust. Rest well on the adorable breast of Jesus and in the arms of Mary, in serene self-surrender. Don’t even bother to pray. Let Jesus inspire you: he is in us and we are in him. I send you my blessing. Our Father in heaven loves us. I want frequent news about you. In everything, only and always: trust.”

On the last page of her personal notebook, after many blank pages, Prima Maestra recopied the words of Fr. Alberione in the above-cited letter, in which he invited her to surrender herself to God. It was this advice that led Prima Maestra to make her self-consignment to the will of the Father. The brief notes she jotted down just before her final illness help us understand the depth of her spiritual experience:



31-10-1963: I take everything from your hands: good health or illness; physical and moral sufferings. I am united to you now and always.

10-11-1963: Everything only and always for God and for the Blessed Mother. I entrust myself to you. I am a wretched but repentant creature. My merciful Jesus, how many graces [you have given me]! How many absolutions every day this week!

11-11-1963: May I be always prepared for death.... Jesus and Mary, forgive me!

15-11-1963: Lord, I am ready to do your holy will in everything. I can't remember things anymore. I can't remember the names of people. I can't breathe. But I accept everything for your sake, out of love for you and in a

spirit of penance... for all the needs of the Congregation, for the Pope, the Council, Primo Maestro and the whole Pauline Family.

16-11-1963: Five months have gone by since [the first attack] of the illness that almost took me to heaven. Today I'm in bed with a cold and Primo Maestro gave me an absolution that covered my whole life. To think only of God, and with great trust. To do his holy will now and always.