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## MAESTRA THECLA'S TENDERNESS



19 March 1955, the Feast of St. Joseph, was an unforgettable day for me because it was the day of my first religious profession. On that day, I also had the chance to personally experience Prima Maestra's tenderness toward her daughters. My parents had notified me that due to health problems, distance and tight finances, they would not be able to attend the profession ceremony and share my joy at consecrating myself to the Lord. I understood and accepted this, realizing that I was not alone—several of my co-novices had also been informed by their families that they would not be attending the ceremony for various reasons.

Maestra Nazarena, our novice mistress, was told about this and a few days before our profession she gave us some unexpected news: "The novices who will not have any family members present for the profession ceremony will spend the afternoon with Maestra Thecla," she announced. We were astonished and deeply moved.

The day of our first religious profession was a magnificent day. My heart was brimming over with joy at the knowledge that I was giving my entire being to God, who had called me to follow Jesus Master and filled me with a burning desire to proclaim him to everyone, everywhere.

That afternoon, my "fellow orphans" and I spent a wonderful, joyful time with Prima Maestra. Her tenderness toward us, her daughters, deeply moved me. She talked with us simply and affectionately, asked us about our families and listened attentively to our accounts of their difficulties. She urged us to have great faith in divine Providence. "You will soon be leaving for the branch houses," she told us. "The sisters there are waiting for you. You will help them diffuse the Gospel and many other worthwhile and formative books to families, schools and businesses. I will be praying for you, asking the Lord to help you carry out this apostolate with the same love and enthusiasm as our Father, St. Paul."

That unforgettable day increased my esteem for Prima Maestra Thecla and caused me to read with even greater pleasure the formative and informative letters she sent to all our communities throughout the world. We all deeply appreciated everything she shared with us in those letters because it was the fruit of her prayer and reflections. I often used those texts for meditation.

I am grateful to Prima Maestra for the affection and simplicity with which she spent a little time with me and my co-novices, helping us get through a time in which we sorely felt the absence of our parents and other loved ones.

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