



“I LOVE YOU ALL VERY MUCH AND I LONG TO SEE YOU”

Maestra Thecla, Sister and Mother

Maestra Thecla was a woman who communicated with others on a profound level. She treated every sister as a unique individual, establishing bonds of communion by relating to each person objectively and as an equal, recognizing the individual's positive qualities and showing her that she trusted her. Maestra Thecla created union among the sisters and roused them to enthusiasm in even in the most difficult circumstances. She knew how to keep her counsel, acknowledge her mistakes and ask for forgiveness. She was above all a woman of great faith.

“Not only kindness, peace and calm, but also great inner strength! She possessed the gentle strength that makes itself felt powerfully but sweetly—a strength impossible to resist” (Cardinal Arcadio Larraona).

Maestra Thecla speaks to us through her conferences, circulars and personal letters. It was a perpetual suffering to her that she was unable to answer the letters she received as quickly as she would have liked. She wrote in one of her circular letters: “If you don't hear from me, don't think I've forgotten you. No! I carry you all in my heart. I remember you every day to the Lord and place you under the mantle of the Blessed Mother” (VPC 112).

The Nuances of Love...

She wrote to the sisters who had just left for Brazil: “I am with you in mind and heart. You are before me at every moment” (23 Jan. 1932).

And to Sr. Paula Cordero: “I just sent you a letter yesterday and now I am sending this one by express mail so that, if possible, it will reach the steamship before it sails! Sometimes I am seized by a powerful yearning to drop everything and go to see you! I can picture you in

spirit and I am in the midst of you.... I love you all very much and so I long to see you.”

And again to Sr. Paula: “I wrote to your mother yesterday because she said it has been a long time since she has had any news about you and she is worried....”

A month later, she advises: “Write to your mother once a month. If you include a letter for her when you write to me, I will see that she gets it. She is all alone and you are very far away. I am sorry when your letters arrive and there is not at least a note for her included.”

Maestra Thecla's respect for every person was manifested in her ability to keep secrets, her discretion, the sincere love with which she corrected others, her attention to everyone's health, and her encouragement to the branch houses to practice charity among themselves (cf. VPC 291). Her teachings about love touch the details of daily life. She is sure that “we will do good to the degree that we live in charity at home, among ourselves” (VPC 81).

Maestra Thecla was especially concerned about fraternal life and interpersonal relations. She wanted the sisters to cultivate a strong sense of belonging to the Institute and to feel that they were a part of a single, large family: *one in heart and soul*:

“The model for all the houses of the Daughters of St. Paul should be the little house of Nazareth where Jesus, Mary and Joseph lived in perfect unity of heart.... May our model be the humble life of Jesus. Let us work as he worked: intimately united to God, doing everything out of love for him, with the maximum perfection and precision. The faithful performance of our duties, harmony, peace, humility, mutual compassion and sincerity: all these virtues will make our religious houses warm nests of affection—places where one can grow ‘in wisdom and grace’ and enjoy a foretaste of the joys of heaven. Is our family really like this? If we notice that it differs from the Nazareth model in some ways, then let us resolve to correct the situation.”