

L. S. J. M.

Rome, August 2017

Dear Mother Cecilia,

After a very long life you thought the time had come to go "Home" to the Lord.

You were waiting, ready to leave, all that He had entrusted to you, your mission had been done, was finished. Yes, your life had been extraordinarily ordinary, a life of fidelity and love.

You left quietly, as you had lived, no noise, not calling anyone's attention, unexpectedly for us, though we were with you, we were almost not aware that the Lord had come to take you; and you left peacefully, joyfully, with your beautiful smile which will always remain with us.

We have loved you very much and also, you loved us very much. With death love does not disappear but it is reaffirmed, it is love in the Lord on both sides. Thank you for being yourself and for all you gave me.

Excuse me if I acted selfishly wanting to keep you here still longer when you were ready to go "Home" as you said just before you left: "I want to go "Home", to go to the Lord, to eternal life. You are gone, but you continue to be present in a different way, always present in my mind and heart. I will never forget you and will always be thankful to the Lord for having given you to us, for having lived with you many years. I sincerely believe that your presence in this world has made our world a better place.

Now you rest with the Lord, Our Lady, whom you loved so much, Mother Foundress, Dina, your family and so many RJM's who welcomed you. Pray for us.

## SIMPLE AND GREAT MOTHER CECILIA



She was born more than 115 years ago in Manchester, N. H. When she was 21 years old the Lord called her to Jesus and Mary and she responded joyfully; as she answered one day when she was asked which had been the happiest day in her life, without hesitating, immediately she answered, 'the day of my religious profession'. During the 92 years of her religious profession, she lived a life full of love and fidelity.

She was a joyful person with a beautiful smile, very exact in her work and was a person of 'yes, yes or no, no, no middle way. I think that what Jesus said about Nathanael, could very well be applied to M. Cecilia: "Truly he is an Israelite in whom there is no deception", she was so true, she was simply herself.

She loved her Congregation very much and she spent much time of the almost 60 years that she was in Rome, doing research work, working in the Archives to find out about the first missionaries who went to India, about the beginnings of the Congregation. She had notebooks with notes and many typewritten pages. Her work has great historical value and thanks to her many things have been written.

She was sociable and knew how to welcome visitors treating them politely. Everyone who met her loved her; she had something special that attracted. As someone wrote: 'For those of us who were privileged to have met her on our visits to the Generalate, Mother Cecilia's warm and welcoming smile shall always be a symbol of the hospitality we received there'. She was simple, kind, grateful, - she always said thank you for any big or little thing done for her - humble, true, herself, generous, joyful, patient, poor never demanding more than she needed. All who came to visit us here in Rome, from any place in the world, wanted to take a photo of her. She loved to have her photo taken and she would always ask: Was it a good one? If not, take another one.

She was very attentive to practice poverty and did not like to accumulate things or have things that she would not use. She was very generous with the little she had. One day in a community meeting, discussing what we could do, by sacrificing ourselves in something to give to the poor, she said, 'I have no money, but I have some chocolate bars that I could give to them'. She was concerned about others; during the last months when a Sister, Servant of Mary, came to take care of her during the night, she would ask: 'Are you cold? Do you have enough blankets? If not take one of mine, I do not need them all'.

She was gifted with a great spirit of faith and lived it in her daily life. Blindly she accepted as God's Will the election of the Superior General and the nomination of the local Superior. She would speak of them not only mentioning their name, but with great respect: Reverend Mother General, and Mother Superior, never just by their name. Without ever complaining she accepted as God's Will, her blindness and lack of hearing. When she felt that she was losing her eyesight, she would say, I am blind, but until she was able to see a bit, she wanted to play cards; that distracted her and she enjoyed it. As somebody said, 'She was a great woman of faith and a blessing to me. She was a good friend and a blessing for my life. I will miss her but I am grateful for meeting her when she was 103 and making a new friend. She played cards with great skill and loved to win. She often said how bad she felt beating me so much. Her prayers were very powerful. May she rest in the arms of her Lord'. In spite of her limitations, not seeing, not hearing, she was greatly interested in everything that happened and she wanted to know about it...

She was very faithful to her Spiritual Exercises, very punctual for the Angelus, Examination, Visit to the Blessed Sacrament, etc.; all things at their proper time. Thanks to her, I did not miss them especially when I could no longer go out and was with her all day. She recited the three parts of the Rosary daily, had set a time for each part. When Pope John Paul II added the Mysteries of Light, she wondered and asked when she would say them, she thought and discerned and found the place and appropriate time.



She was extraordinary in her daily life. She loved to be with the community and would not miss recreation and this until a short time before her death. Then she would say, 'we are in recreation and nobody speaks'... (She could not hear), then she would ask, 'You want me to tell you a story? She had been in Canada, in USA, in France during the years of World War II and in Rome... so she knew many things, and then she would tell us something, a story, what she had lived during the war, etc. or explain some monument of Rome, etc. But she spoke with such expression and enthusiasm, that we loved and enjoyed listening to her. We loved her very much and we know she loved us and her community.

She loved music; she had studied it and was a music teacher. In our community she was the organist during many years. She also loved art and being in Rome, she knew every monument, every ruin, every stone. Once I asked her how it was she knew so much about everything. She told me she had not studied art but she loved it so much and had learnt about it by reading and visiting the places. She had an extraordinary memory! She really became a 'tourist guide' and guided the groups of our Sisters who came to Rome to visit many places and not only in Rome, but even outside Rome, such as: Assisi, Subiaco, Siena, Orvieto, etc. When she could no longer go out with the groups she would show them slides of the place and explained to them everything thus preparing the visit for them.

She loved her Province and her American sisters very much. She also had some special friends... Once I asked her: If Sister B comes at the same time as Sister A, what would you do?... she thought for a moment and then said: 'It is better if they do not come together'... She wanted to give her full attention to each one.

She always remembered her former pupils from Fourvière, and during, perhaps, 60 and more years, they kept in contact with her and she loved them and was interested to know about them.

She loved chocolate and ice-cream, these could never be missing. Towards the end when she could no longer speak very much she would say, 'Give me something cold', we would ask, if she wanted water, milk, etc., she would say, 'no, something really cold that you eat with a spoon'... ice cream.



We are also very grateful to many of her nieces and grandnieces and grandnephews, to so many of her relatives who always kept in touch with her and whom she loved dearly and she worried when she did not receive news from them.



Thank you very much for loving her so much, your love made her very happy and always gave her new life. Thank you.

We can be sure that from Heaven she continues to love you and to pray for you.