

*Saint Maria De Mattias
Foundress of the
Adorers of the Blood of Christ
Stories for the Young and Old*



*Sr. M. Vivian
Miller, ASC*

MARIA'S ALBUM



If Maria could share some of the history of our Community today, this is what she might say.



Sister M. Vivian Miller ASC



Maria Tullio

This is Maria Tullio, and as you know, she was my faithful companion from little on...more like a sister than a maid. I would never have thought of going to Acuto without her. She was so quick to see what had to be done and she was good at so many things.

After the Institute got started, I thought of sending her back to Vallecorsa. You see, I could not get her to understand that as a member of a community, she could not consider herself a maid. But I began to see that she desired intensely to serve the Lord, so after waiting almost 20 years, she received the Habit. She stayed at Acuto a long time, but she did have some mission experiences also at Rome and Civitavecchia.

She continued to be humble, and docile till the end of her life; and oh how she loved Jesus Crucified and Mary most holy. You can imagine my joy when we were reunited in Heaven in 1880. (She was 67 years old.)

Dear Sisters, I have been watching your growing interest in discovering our roots; and naturally this gives me much joy. You have really delved into our charisms, and you are tracing God's action in our history these 150 years.

However, there is something I'd like to ask you to do; and that is to get better acquainted with my early companions. They were so dear, and through the years became very united to God. Each one is unique. Each one portrays some aspect of the rich personality of Christ.

If I told you about each one, we would be here for a week, but let me tell you a tiny bit about some of them, especially those who entered before 1850. I have an album here, and I will rely on my memories. Incidentally, I have another album I will share with you at another time with greater international flavor. Now let's begin:



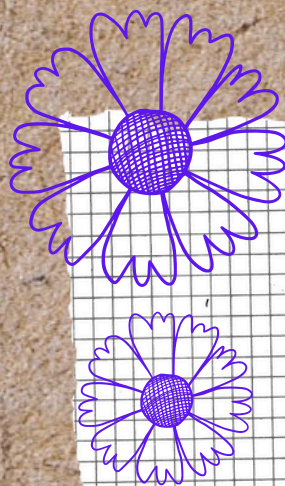
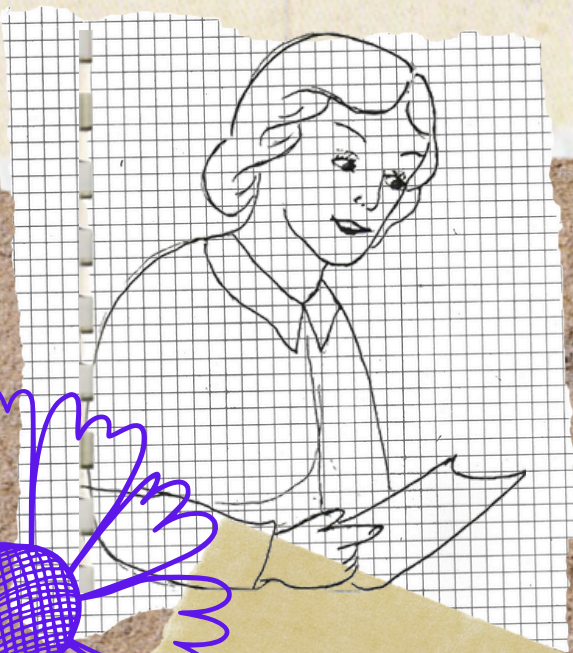
Anna Farrotti

This picture of is Anna Farrotti, a teacher who came from Albano. I was so grateful when she came to help me in 1835. I simply could not have carried on alone—the needs were so extensive in Acuto.

She was great in organizing our school, and it was good to have someone with whom to discuss my plans, my hopes and dreams concerning the Congregation.

But, poor dear, it soon became evident that she did not have a vocation. She was in and out of the Institution between 1835 and 1842.

Frankly, I was relieved when she definitely decided to return to Albano. I'm sure she continued to do much good in her school ministry.



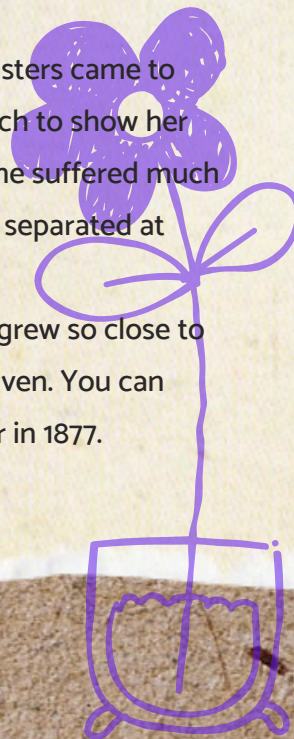
Carolina Longo

This is Carolina Longo, who came to us as a little boarder back in 1835. It was gratifying to see her mature and deepen. To help her grow, I sent her to the local communities of Morino and Pescasseroli. Later she become local superior at Carpineto and then in Civitavecchia, where she served for 12 years. She came to Rome when I died and became my successor as General Superior.

It is always a crucial time for a congregation when a Foundress dies, but it is all God's work, and He guided Carolina as she carried the ASCs forward those 11 years.

It was during her term that our sisters came to America. She tried to keep in touch to show her encouragement and concerns. She suffered much when the large portion of Sisters separated at O'Fallon.

As the years passed, Sr. Carolina grew so close to God—and then was ready for Heaven. You can imagine our joy in welcoming her in 1877.





Francesca Monti

This is my beloved Sr. Francesca Monti who also came to me in 1835 when she was 18 years old.

She broke a wedding engagement to come and that caused quite a stir for a time. But her fiancée had to admit that if he couldn't have her, he was glad she was dedicated to the Lord.

Sister tried to cooperate. I remember once when we had a retreat scheduled for the women of Acuto, and then I got sick. Of my 6 companions, it was Francesca who took over for me. I was very proud of her.

As years went on she developed epilepsy. It changed her personality: causing her to become sensitive and aggressive. Some accused her of being proud and hard on me; but I knew it was only a cover up.

I loved Francesca and missed her when she died in 1862, after having served the Congregation for 26 years. She was the first of the pioneers to go.

My Dear Sr. Celestine Barlese was older when she entered. She was my right arm, for I could depend on her. She opened many of our first houses including Vallecorsa, Morino, Carpineto, Cisterna and Rome.

As I grew older, the houses multiplied and I sometimes asked her to visit some of the Sisters in my stead and provide for their needs. In 1861 there were 48 local communities spread from the Mediterranean to the Adriatic Sea..up and down the Mountains of central Italy.

Yes, she was sometimes quick tempered, we all have our faults—but she was loyal. Frankly, I don't know what I would have done without her.

She came to Heaven in 1877.

Celestina Barlesi



Serafina Rossi

Sr. Serafina Rossi, was another adult vocation. She was older than I when she came to us in 1838. She spent all of her religious life in Acuto and Vallecorsa.

I naturally wanted our community in MY hometown to be the best, but there were many problems within the community and with the local people. Yet in spite of it all, Sr. Serafina loved Vallecorsa and ruffled every time I spoke to her of a change. However, in 1865, after 16 years there, I called her back to Acuto. She obeyed, but it was hard for her.

he was up in years now, but still managed to do odd jobs and she prayed a lot. She died in 1876

P.S. I don't know if you noticed this or not, but in the 2 volumes of letters that you published, the first and last written to the Sisters were addressed to Sr. Serafina. She is proud of this fact, and wanted me to mention it.

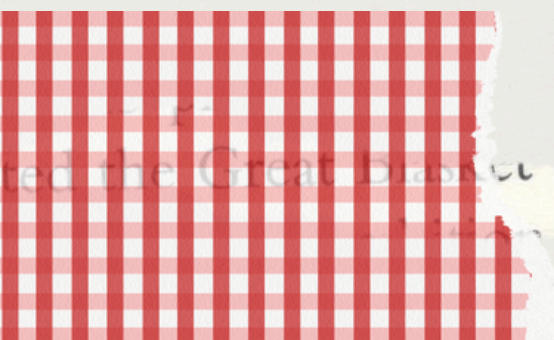
Sisters

Some of my first companions were sisters of the same family. The year I opened Vallecorsa, 1840, God sent me the DeSanctis sisters, Carolina and Teresa. What a blessing that was. Later Rose joined us too, and showed the same leadership qualities of her older sisters. They were good and I knew I could count on them.

When we sent Sisters to Rome, I knew I had to send my best, and I asked Sr. Caroline to be the superior. The princess was not easy to please, and sparks did fly at times. Rome was in a political turmoil at the time, too, and the Sisters were so scared. But they weathered the storm. Teresa spent many years in Pescasseroli and Sgurgola, but eventually came to Rome (in 1856, I believe) and stayed there. Sr. Rose was superior at the house on San Giovanni Street, and was so good to the Sisters. Thus all three of the De Sanctis sisters were in Rome and, until my death, seemed so loyal, so ready to serve.



Later when the question of the vows came up, they strongly opposed, and all three left the Institute. I was sorry for them, prayed for them and trusted God would care for them. Later Rose and Caroline returned. Now we are all together.



...ed the Great ... and fell in love with it.
... to rebuild the village as a holiday



Giovanna Vivaldi

Then there was Giovanna Vivaldi, who came in 1841, when she was 34 years old. What should I tell you about her? You've read my letters and you know how hard it was to find a community that could tolerate her temper and independence. She had a natural gift for upsetting people.

Still deep down, I knew Vivaldi was searching...longing for the Lord. She was convinced of her call, and was most zealous for saving "our dear neighbor." I'm sure she did her best and the Lord doesn't expect more than that. It's just that, "that best" was still irritating to others, and she was "the precious daily cross" for many of her companions.

Poor dear, she had problems with herself also, which accounts for her using the broom on me a story that everyone seems to know. She died in 1877 when she was 70 years old.

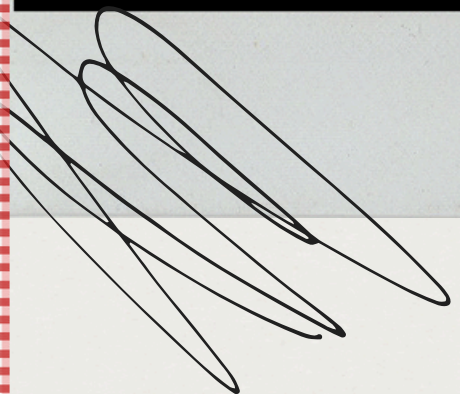
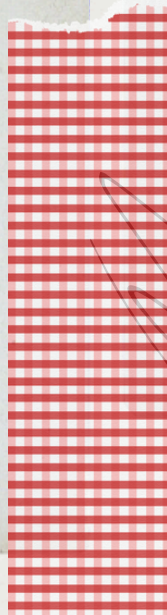
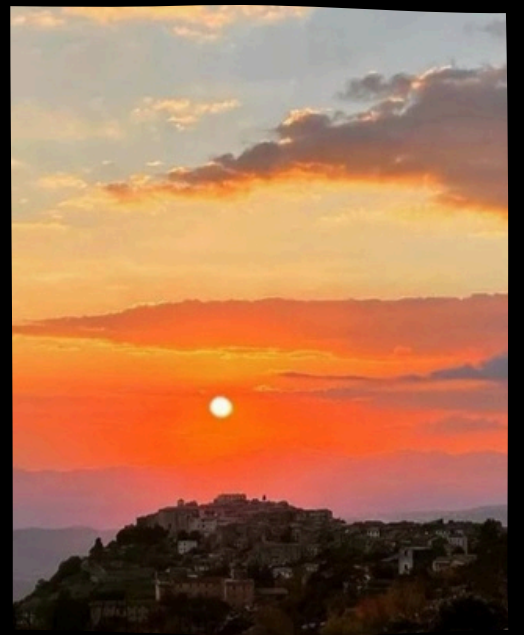
Marina Necci

It may amuse you to know I have some donkey stories to tell you about my dear Sr. Marina Necci. The year she entered, we opened Morino, so I took her along. That was the famous trip when we got lost and a mysterious little child led us. That was her first acquaintance with my donkey.

Some years later, we were in need of another donkey, but had no money. I asked the Sister to pray and Marina sort of resented the idea of praying for a donkey, but she just "happened" to answer the door when the gentleman knocked and handed her just the right amount for a donkey.

Maria was a good sister, responsible and hard working. She was a good teacher and won many young girls to the Lord. She served in Carbognano, S. Vito and several other places before her death in 1894.

I loved this sister and I am grateful for her collaboration. She was especially kind to me during my last illness, assisting, caring loving, anticipating my every need. It is good to be together for all eternity.





Berenice Fanfani



Two other sisters entered in 1844, the Spinetti's: Domenica and Olivia.

They were fine sisters, so full of life.

Knowing I could count on Olivia, I made her responsible in Porto Recanati, our most distant community on the Adriatic Coast. No matter whom I sent, Olivia manage to create community. Things were not easy either, because of revolutionary activity.

Once the Sisters were even evicted from their home and school for a short time. Sr. Olivia was determined to get them back. She took state board exams and received a teacher's certificate, according to the new educational laws, and that saved the day.

When I felt my end was nearing, I called Olivia to Acuto to head the community at the Motherhouse.

Domenica was quieter and older. She served at Cascia, Bassanello and Rome. When I died, she was very ill, and came to Heaven just four months after I did. Olivia also died young in 1871, when only 44 years old.

Sr. Berenice Fanfani was special, as you all know. She came as a little boarder in 1842 when she was only 12 years old, and then stayed. She was a cousin to Sr. Carolina Longo.

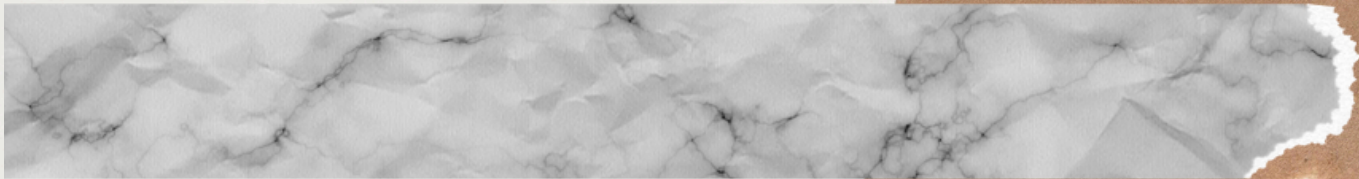
During the two hardest years of my life, when so many turned against me, Berenice was my faithful and staunch supporter.

She was timid and scrupulous by nature, still God helped her to guide local communities very well. She was at Civitella for 14 years. You may have noticed that in the collection of letters you have, 70 are copies of my letters to Sr. Berenice. When in 1882 M. Carolina Signoretti divided Italy into 2 regions, with central houses in Acuto and Rome, Sr. Berenice was the Superior of the Acuto region until her nervous breakdown in 1886. She had given all, more than her body could bear. She was given medical assistance in Rome and died in 1891.

I was happy to welcome my beloved Berenice into heaven.



Domenica and Oliva Spinetti



Angela Rosa Cerbara

On March 2, 1863, our Lord called to Himself our professed lay sister, Angela Rosa Cerbara. She was comforted by all the sacraments. Her death was beautiful because her life was virtuous. In her illness, she was patient and resigned to the will of God.

What more can I say? Sr. Angela Rosa was an inspiration to all of us. She found many ways of bringing peace and joy to her sisters, for she was filled with God's spirit. I would be happy to have dozens of sisters just like her. (Letter 768)

Maria Felice Bonamici

This is my Sr. Palma Felici Bonamici. She came to us in 1845. She seemed to have five thumbs, so to speak—clumsy, slow, a misfit sort of person. Consequently she was changed almost every year, as I sought persons who would understand her, accept her and help her to grow. She stuck in there, and offered the humiliations with love.

Up here in Heaven, things are viewed differently and the Lord was very pleased with this blundering little Adorer. She got a warm welcome when she joined us in 1908.

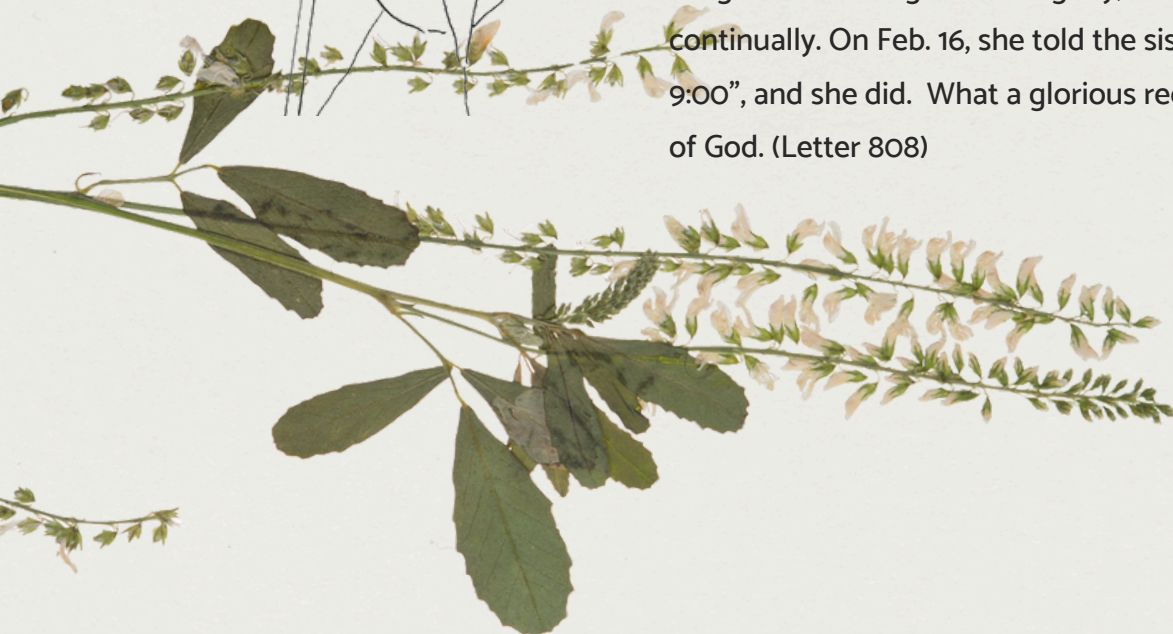


Filomena Ducci



This is Sr. Filomena Ducci. I am very proud of this sister. For many years, she suffered from a spinal defect which she bore with much patience. She never let pain deter her. Rather, united with Jesus in His Paschal Mystery, she was able to carry the responsibility of superior of Paliano and work in school.

In February 1864, she became bedfast. If in life, she was patient and filled with charity for the neighbor; on her deathbed, she gave even greater example of resignation. During her last agony, she wanted the Passion of Jesus to be read continually. On Feb. 16, she told the sisters: "Tomorrow evening I will die at 9:00", and she did. What a glorious reception she had into the Eternal Vision of God. (Letter 808)



Carolina Signoretti

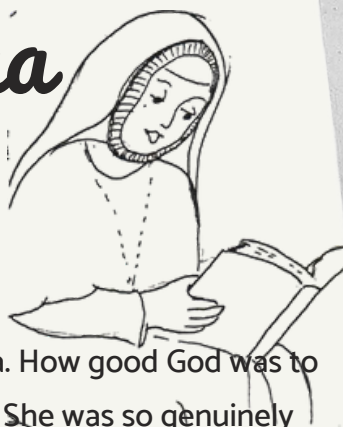
This is my dear St. Carolina Signoretti who came to us in 1845. She was serious by nature, and yes, sometimes impatient. But she was kind at heart and gave generously of herself. Few know how lovingly she cared for Sr. Francesca Monti during the first three years of her illness: sleeping with one eye open, so to speak. For her own good I called her first to Corchiano and then to Rome. The change was hard on her, but she did obey.

I'm sorry everyone knows about how she refused me entrance into S. Luigi that cold night. We all make mistakes that we later regret. After the death of Mother Carolina Longo, Sr. Carolina became the third General Superior. They were not easy years for her of the congregation. It was in 1884 that the Sacred Congregation insisted on the religious vows. She couldn't support the issue so she stepped down and Mother Catherine Pavoni took charge. This humbled her and made her more Christ like.

I was happy to welcome her into Heaven in 1903 when she was 78 years old.



Nazarena Branca



This is Sr. Nazarena Branca. How good God was to send her to us just in time. She was so genuinely good and grateful for her call; so appreciative of Christ's gift: the sign of love in His Blood. She inspired all about her with this love.

I appointed her directress of formation in Acuto between 1854 and 1859. During these five years she was God's instrument in forming 120 women. They were the years of plentiful vocations and the numbers grew until 1861. After that, there was a slack because of the new government and its new educational laws.

Even after Nazarena went to the little mountain towns, she continued to inspire and encourage young girls in their call. And she carried on Vocational Promotion until she received the supreme call into the Celestial Province in 1891.





Lucia and Rosamaria Possenti

Another set of sisters who joined us were Sisters Lucia and Rosamaria Possenti. The latter came in 1853, and her sister joined the following year. They were so happy but I wondered about the health of little Lucia. She looked so pale and frail.

Inevitably, she caught TB. So many sisters suffered from this illness in the early days. Our living quarters were crowded and damp. We did our best to save her, sending her to healthier towns, but God called her to himself in 1863 in Riofreddo.

I knew Rosamaria would suffer much so I wrote to her describing the beautiful death of her sister. I begged her to be courageous and to unite herself even closer to our Blessed Lord.

Rosamaria continued to love and serve God and souls in the Congregation until 1896 when she too joined us in this Heavenly Province. (Letter 761)



Serafina Pro

I love my Sister Serafina Pro. Who could guess the love she put into her service everywhere. She was exemplary in every respect and spent many hours in prayer before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

She was about 80 years old when she died in 1861. She was missed by everyone...young and old alike. She was so gentle, so humble, so loving. We continued to feel her presence among us though, even after she went to Heaven...a strengthening, peaceful presence. (Letter 698)



Domenica De Carolis

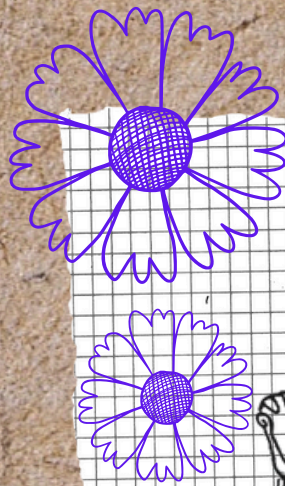
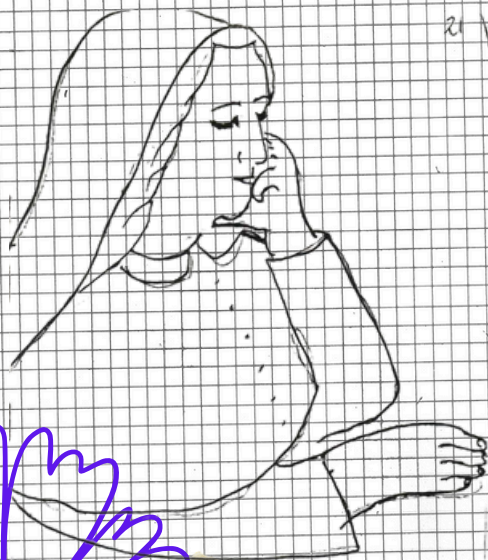
This is Sr. Domenica De Carolis who came to us when she was 47 years old—wishing only to live with the Sisters, cook and do humble services about the house. Sr. Domenica served the Institute about 15 years and was kindness in person. How she loved to pray. She seemed to be continually conscious of God's presence.

When she became ill, we discover another beautiful quality: patience in suffering. Before dying, she asked to receive the religious habit and make profession. Of course we granted her wish. She died on October 24, 1865 at the age of 62. (Letter 877)



Erminia Virgili

Since we are speaking of adult vocations let me tell you about Sr. Erminia Virgili. She was a little old lady when she come to us as a lodger in Civitavecchi. She was very dear. After enjoying the peace of our community for some time, she asked to receive the habit and make her profession. Then just 18 months later, she died peacefully. The sisters wrote me about her beautiful death. She and Sr. Domenica hurried to Heaven about the same time. (Letter 877)



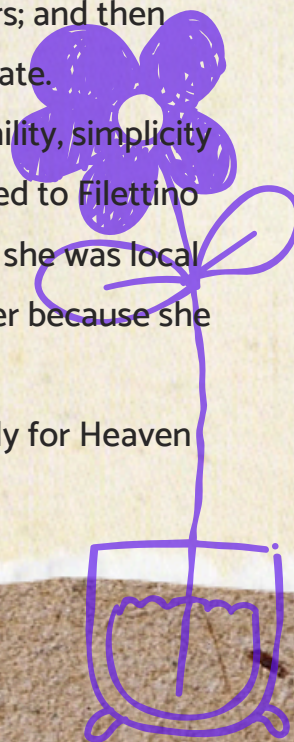
Margherita Bernardino

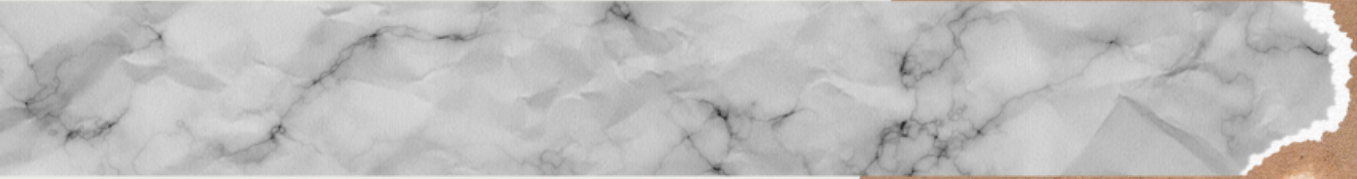
My Sister Margherita Bernardino was known by many as the "Flower of the Altar". She made frequent, prolonged visits to our Sacramental Jesus and learned from Him to give herself to all without consideration for self.

Margherita came to us the year we opened the school in Filettino in 1855. She began her training there with the Sisters; and then came to Acuto for her novitiate.

We all loved her for her humility, simplicity and prayer. Later she returned to Filettino and stayed until 1864. When she was local superior, the Sisters loved her because she was so patient.

Truly, my daughter was ready for Heaven when she died in 1907.





Paschal Jacovacci



It was hard to believe that Sr. Paschal Jacovacci died so quickly. She was well enough when I sent her to Paliano. Then after a few days of illness she went to heaven. She realized her condition was serious, accepted it with beautiful resignation, and received the Holy Sacraments with great fervor. Our sister had been a member of the congregation only four years. (Letter 793)

There were quite a few of my young sisters who almost seemed to be in a hurry to enter into the fullness of life. From 1860 to 1866 there were 26 sisters in their 20s who preceded me. Many had spent only 1, 2, 3, or 4 years in religious life. It hurt me to see them go, but I was happy for them.

Baptiste Haverti

Did you know that we had English and Irish Sisters in our Italian community even before sending Sisters to the British Isles in 1863? Sr. Baptista Haverty was an Irish girl who came to us in 1859. The first evening she joined us, she declared her desire to live and die among the Adorers of the Divine Blood. Little did any of us realize that this grace would be granted so soon? That same year she took sick. Her illness was a constant lesson for all of us of total abandonment into God's hands. Before completing the year, she was called to Heaven. (letter 626)



Clementine Flavi



Sr. Clementine Flavi entered in 1860. She was young, attractive, energetic. However she was not well and frequently suffered attacks of fever—some hereditary weakness. She never complained but accepted all as a manifestation of God's will, which she tenderly loved. Her winning ways and habitual cheerfulness won over both sisters and pupils. She lived in community only five years, most of them in Acuto. We miss her very much, but we are happy she is in heaven. (Letter 887)



Pierina Ralston

This is Sr. Pierina Ralston, a Scottish lady who asked to be admitted to our congregation in 1857. You may wonder how she became acquainted with our Italian group. It was through her friend, Princes Wolkonski . Pierina adapted quite well to our Italian ways and learned our language tolerably well. She worked with loyalty and energy to raise funds for our needy congregation, begging in Rome, Naples and then in Gaeta.

Through her friends Cardinal Wiseman and Msgr George Talbot, we were invited to send Adorer-Apostles to London. Naturally, I sent Pierina with three other Sisters. We did not stay there too many years, but God was pleased with the efforts of my missionary Sisters. Pierina died in 1891 and since her arrival in Heaven, has continued to show special interest in the English-speaking Sisters, and uses her influence with other English Saints in praying for them.



Catherine Sprega

This is my Sr. Catherine Sprega, my first Italian Adorer to die on foreign soil—England. She was young in age and in Religious life. During the 5 years, she lived in our congregation she excelled in all virtues, but especially in obedience and detachment.

She went to England on July 29, 1863, with the other three missionaries. Within the first month, she became very ill. During the next three months, her illness consumed her; but she was so loving and resigned.

Truly, she was an elect soul. I felt real pain when I received word of her death...so far away; but my sorrow turned to pride as I got the account of her beautiful death. (Letter 800)



Maria Ceccarelli

Maria Ceccarelli died on Sept. 9, 1865 after a long illness of eight years. She was only 31 years old.

She had such a beautiful devotion to Mary most holy. As a matter of fact, she wanted to die on Sept. 8, and was actually disappointed when the feastday passed and she lingered on.

I tried to console her by telling her it would be a privilege to die between Mary's Birthday and nameday. She smiled her consent and did just that. (Letter 876)



I suppose you all know that three of my nieces also came to join us. I must tell you about them.

My brother, Michael and Nina had seven children; two died in infancy; Albina and Maria became Adorers; Xavier became a priest; Pio and Virginia married.

Antonia married Carolina 2 months after our dad's death in 1839. They had eight children and his oldest daughter Rosa also became an Adorer. Naturally, I was very happy to have my nieces with me.

Little Sr. Maria was especially dear. She was shy and frail but so loving, prayerful and kind. Interesting enough she died the same year as I did, and that sometimes causes confusion seeing that two Sisters Maria De Mattias died in 1866; I in August and my niece in December. She was only 26 and had spent five years in the congregation.

Sr. Rose was 42 when she died in 1882 and Sr. Albina was 56 when she died in 1889. It is so good to be together now.



I could tell you about many more sisters. Each is very dear to me. Each is a unique creation manifesting some aspect of Christ's rich personality. But, that is enough for today.

By the way, in other albums, I have pictures and stories about other daughters of mine....Adorers who served in all three Americas, in Africa, India, Korea, and Australia. Daughters of Croatian, German, Australian, Swiss, Spanish and Polish background.

I hope some day I can share some pages of these albums with you. I am proud of all of them. It is a joy to spend eternity together.

We pray for you as we praise the Most Blessed Trinity, and eternally thank Him for his proofs of love; among which of course is
THE BLOOD OF JESUS.

