

MANUELA MATTIOLI

On the 30th anniversary of her departure

“We will never forget her”

“We will never forget her” was the moving expression expressed by Sr. Emanuela De Nunzio, Minister General of the Secular Franciscan Order, (1990-2002), in the Church of the Immaculate Conception in Via Veneto (Rome) at the Holy Mass dedicated to the memory of Manuela on the first 30 days of her passing.

Thirty years after her death, this November 3th, 2022, we make our own the need we have, as Secular Franciscans, not to forget the one who, *inspired by Saint Francis, made her life a continuous and generous service, accepting, at the same time, various responsibilities with the best possible attitude. She was the first General Minister of the Secular Franciscan Order. Her dynamic leadership gave the entire Order a new philosophy and made it overcome the general crisis of ecclesial institutions, making it rejuvenate and opening a universal vision for the entire Order with new paths and new perspectives for the future.*¹

Through all these years, we verify the testimony of many who knew her and who keep very clearly in their memory. She was a woman who left a mark of fraternity in each and every one she met. She is remembered as someone who did not miss an opportunity to get closer to brother and sisters, without the existence of barriers of language, race or social status. She would care for each one of them, with kindness and tenderness, with the affection and closeness of those who become neighbor in an instant. Many today may still testify having felt her closeness when they were in pain or in moments of joy.

She fully lived the OFS Rule that she participated in writing with so much effort and courage. We can affirm that she practiced what we read in Rule 13 “As the Father sees in every person the features of his Son, the firstborn of many brothers and sisters, so the Secular Franciscans with a gentle and courteous spirit accept all people as a gift of the Lord and an image of Christ”.

*We can affirm that she was the providential woman who led, in such difficult times, the numerous secular movement of the Church. Today when we talk so much about the place that women have in the Church, we have in Manuela an example of service, of responsibility in high ecclesial bodies, remaining in her place and always maintaining her own kindness and simplicity of a Franciscan woman. Manuela taught us many things with her persuasive and charismatic word, but above all with her life testimony. in the course of her illness and her death.*²

This 30th anniversary of the departure to the Father's house of our sister Manuela Mattioli is a new opportunity for many of the brothers and sisters who did not know her, to recognize her

¹ Homily Fr. José Angúlo Quilis, TOR, Minister General, Rome, Holy Mass, Via Vittorio Veneto, Rome, December 3, 1992. (Published in Tertius Ordo magazine, Year LIII, 1992)

² Homily Fr. José Angúlo Quilis, TOR, Minister General, Rome, Holy Mass, Via Vittorio Veneto, Rome, December 3, 1992. (Published in Tertius Ordo magazine, Year LIII, 1992)

legacy on which the OFS of the last 44 years has been able to respond to the challenges of the Church of these centuries.

In one of her last articles published in the “Ideales Seraficos”³ Magazine, she narrated her experience in her visit to Mount Alvernia when she celebrated her 30 years of profession in the OFS. From that endearing mountain, she recounts the meaning of her profession, and she tells us: “I recently climbed Mount Alvernia. I wanted to remember there the thirty years of my tertiary life, confront my Franciscan following, immerse myself in the grace and joy of the vocation received”. There is no doubt that this grace was the force that accompanied her until she crossed, with great serenity, the threshold of the suffering the last two years of her short life (she died at 56 years of age). As one of her closest friends, María Pía Barontini (OFS-Italy and member of the first International Council together with Manuela), tells us what she repeatedly that she offered her suffering for all the brothers of the Order, and especially for the Presidency and for the Minister General.

We want to propose to all the brothers of our OFS, that, as our sister Emanuela De Nunzio said at the time, in her speech the first month after Manuela's death, *we cannot forget her, for what she has given to the Franciscan Family, to the Order, to each one of us. We will never forget her for her righteous life and her testimony. A tireless witness, of a life of faith: a just testimony in gratitude, throughout the suffering that at the end of her life she had to face...answer given beyond life, without reservations, with the YES in all its manifestations. Testimony of her commitment to the Order. Commitment, also lived without limitations, without reservations, until the sacrifice of oneself, until the last breath. This was Manuela for us, and this, she must continue with us.*⁴

Peace and good

Organizing Committee Commemoration 30th Anniversary, (+1992-2022)
Manuela Mattioli, OFS (First General Minister CIOFS).

³ “Ideales Seráficos” Year 28, 1991, No.257, p.84-85

⁴ Emanuela De Nunzio, OFS (General Minister 1990-2002), speech published in “Tertius Ordo”, Year LIII, 1992, N 2-3.