

A.M.G.SS.C.J.

OUR GRATITUDE TO

*Madre Lina Colombini MSC*

2 August 1928 - 21 May 2024



# SISTER LINA COLOMBINI MSC

Sister Lina Colombini was born in Cornegliano Landense (Lodi) on 2/8/1928. She entered the Institute in 1950. She taught for four years in the elementary school in Codogno. Sent to the United States, she earned a Registered Medical Technologist's diploma. In 1958 she was sent to Australia for the opening of the new Cabrini Hospital in Melbourne where she served for over ten years. She was Superior at the Columbus in New York and at the Columbus Clinic in Milan. She was Provincial Councilor in the Provinces of New York, Milan and Rome. She attended the 1967-68 General Chapter (II session) as delegate of Australia and the 1972 Chapter as delegate of the Milan Province. She was Provincial of the Rome Province from 1972 to 1975 and from that date was in charge of the Columbus in Rome. She attended the 1978-1979 and 1984 General Chapters as delegate of the Rome Province. In the 1984 Chapter, she was elected General Assistant for Europe and was re-elected in 1990.

She was elected General Superior at the 1996 General Chapter. She carried out this office with a great sense of obedience and dedication, revealing even better organizational skills, her attention to the missionary, legal and administrative problems of the Institute and committed herself to regularizing those points of the Constitutions and orientations that gave rise to perplexity and confusion. To this end, she completed an in-depth study on "Poverty and Asset Administration" to clarify the spirit and management of the Institute's properties and assets.

In 2002, thanks to Mother Lina's earnest efforts the General Chapter was able to approve 59 more statutes on poverty and the various institutional resources, always emphasizing service to the poorest and solidarity among the Institute's various Provinces and Communities. (doc. For the History of the Institute)

"In December 1997, General Superior, Sr. Lina Colombini, and General Assistant, Sr. Raffaella Sharkey, went to Ethiopia where they were welcomed at the seminary in Addis Ababa by Msgr. Marinozzi and Father Tommaso Bellisi. The next day they visited the Apostolic Nuncio, Msgr. Silvano Tomasi, who was overjoyed not only to see them, but especially for the reason of their visit."



A year later, the first MSCs left for Ethiopia. "They departed the evening previous to January 27, 1999, from the Rome Fiumicino airport where General Mother, Sr. Lina Colombini, the General Councilors, Sr. M. Aparecida Corrêa de Castro and other Sisters of the Generalate saw them off.

Years have passed since the arrival of our first Sisters in Dubbo (Wolayta), Ethiopia due to the felicitous intuition of Sr. Raffaella Sharkey, the support of Sr. Lina, Mother General at the time, and the welcome in the mission for which the Capuchin Fathers had partially laid the groundwork." (From The Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Ethiopia - 10 years among the Wolayta)

"In 2002, Mother Lina Colombini expressed the desire that the mission of Novoaltaysk in Russia should also have its own house. Her wish was granted and in May 2003 construction began. The General Superior was accompanied by Sister Loredana and Sister Tatiana and visited the Novoaltaysk mission in July 2004, finding Sister Assunta, who had been assigned by the Province to the mission and had arrived there a few weeks earlier. On July 18, Bishop Joseph Werth celebrated the inaugural Mass for the new House. The joys of our stay on Russian soil were shared with the Orthodox brothers and sisters present." (From Russia - 10 Years of Mission in Siberia)

Under Mother Lina's leadership, in 2002, the Institute was able to assemble the five volumes of Mother Cabrini's letters including small biographies and archival news of the figures emerging from the letters.

Another of her interests as General Superior was the Codogno House, whose renovation, already begun under Sr. Maria Barbagallo, underwent various improvements. Among these of note are the restructured and totally renovated Cabrinian Museum, the new Chapel, the Courtyard, the rooms, the rebuilding of the Tabor facades, the stained glass windows in the Sacred Heart House Chapel (for the elderly Sisters) and the wing on Via M. Cabrini. In 2005, in just a small room adjacent to the gate on Via S. Cabrini, Mother Lina wished to implement Mother Cabrini's great desire - the daily Adoration. A Little Chapel was opened for the purpose where anyone could adore the Blessed Sacrament on display. The birth house in Sant'Angelo Lodigiano also underwent a phase of reorganization at the initiative of Mother Lina Colombini. Another important work project was the old school in Codogno, which has now been completely restructured and has become the Saint Frances Cabrini Residence for the Elderly. Mother Lina also established a collaboration with the Columbus Hospital in Rome, which runs it.



During her first term she completed the Document on the Ratio Formationis wanted by the Church for women's Religious Congregations. She followed all the drafting stages step by step to allow all the Sisters of the Provinces to participate in the drafting of its contents. The document, which is very important for the life of the Institute, was approved by the 2002 General Chapter.

Another approved document concerns Cabrinian Lay Missionaries. On this subject, too, there was a long period of gestation, the stages of which Mother Lina followed.

It is not possible, however, to report on everything that a General Superior does. We know that Mother Lina followed the most important works because of their complexity, making difficult decisions, safeguarding those that are deeply meaningful for the Institute such as the Shrines dedicated to Saint Frances Cabrini, and trying to set priorities for intervention in some missions and works.

In addition, Mother Lina Colombini received two important letters from the Holy Father, John Paul II and from the Holy See: one for the 150th anniversary of S.F.C.'s birth and the other on the occasion of the 2002 General Chapter. (doc. For the History of the Institute).

An important aspect during her tenure, however, was her concern for the poorest and most marginalized along with her apostolic zeal for evangelization. As already mentioned, in the Holy Year of 2000, in responding to the Church's proposals to make "reparation" with regard to the poorest countries, she opened a new Mission in Ethiopia with the aim of celebrating the Jubilee in a concrete way and involving the whole Institute in this work of solidarity. Thus she personally dedicated herself to the development of this Mission, visiting it often and giving it direct support. The mission, in fact, does not belong to any province but is directly dependent on the Generalate.

January 2003: "Last December, our Superior General, Sr. Lina Colombini, visited the Dubbo mission. She was greatly satisfied with the progress made in the 4 years of the Mission's life. The village of Dubbo has changed its appearance! Above all, the children, your adopted children, are better off and growing right before your eyes! Currently there are about 300 of them! This program has been a boon for many households that have seen their children assured of a) school attendance b) free access to medical care in the Mission hospital c) a monthly subsistence contribution d) basic clothing.



It must be added that the solution adopted whereby a family member is summoned every Monday morning to do some job for the Mission has added dignity to the project so that is no longer a question of pure welfarism but is, rather, a contribution made in return for just a small amount of work done. On behalf of these very sweet and sometimes terrible children, like all children all over the world, our warmest thanks. The Grandfathers and Grandmothers who are part of the same "Adoptions" project also thank you from the bottom of their hearts. (From the bulletin "Missionary Activities in Dubbo - Ethiopia" - Year 3 Number 1 April 2003)

Another important commitment of Mother Lina Colombini in these years concerned the reorganization of the General Archives and its computerization. The Archives had been given good impetus, as we know, with Mother Regina Casey and to some extent with Mother Maria Barbagallo who, however, as we have seen, prioritized Formation and other aspects. Mother Lina considered it important to continue the reorganization and this caused new information and new documents to emerge that were very useful and valuable for the publication of the complete Epistolary of the Letters of Saint Frances Cabrini. The Archives as well as the building, therefore, were restructured, and with the contribution of the secretaries, it is now possible to access the Archives in a more orderly fashion. In addition, important news has emerged for a possible History of the Institute. (doc. For the History of the Institute)

In the same year (2002) she received the Grotteria Award for the Institute's work on behalf of emigrants and later the Prima Donna Award for the work the Institute does to promote women in countries where women still do not have access to full rights.

She was re-elected for another six-year term in the 2002 Chapter and served as Superior General until 2008. (Chapter Sisters and Auditors - V. P. 1958)

Mother Lina Colombini was also made an honorary citizen of Codogno.



**Sr. Giovanna Auguardo writes about the expressions of gratitude for Sr. Lina Colombini (Codogno May 18, 2008):**

The Institute showed her its gratitude for her interest and concern in preserving our historical memory enshrined in the Motherhouse archives and for having promoted several courses on the history and charism of the Institute.

Then, with Mother Lina as General Superior came the restoration of the Cabrini Museum in Codogno and Mother Cabrini's birthplace, which spring from the Love of the Heart of Jesus. We feel accompanied, supported, helped and comforted by this living memory.

The Tabor Church was also renovated.

The most significant moments of her twelve years of service to the Institute as General Superior were marked by many international meetings, for Formation, for Extended Councils and for Institute Celebrations.

Sister Lina Colombini was also involved in so many significant moments such as the Path of Fidelity, for the Formation of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, the document of the Cabrini Lay Missionaries, the new statutes on asset administration, her commitment to a community project so that the Cabrini Missionary Community could be regenerated.

She then opened the International Novitiate in Rome, wanted to preserve and reactivate the Cabrini Shrine in Chicago. Her circular letters marked the stages of her mandate.

In her missionary commitment, she also cared for the Mission to the People with the missions in Ethiopia, Paraguay, and Russia.

Sister Lina also sought new avenues for evangelization. She especially wanted attention to be given to abandoned children, those sick with AIDS, and street children.

She supported the mission among migrants. With her support, large and small initiatives arose in Europe, the United States, Brazil, Guatemala, Paraguay and Argentina.

The former General Superior managed several hospitals following their evolution and fostering new openings and new relationships of solidarity, but also caring for the terminally ill in Milan, Australia, New York and Swaziland.

She did not forget the elderly, with new nursing homes in Codogno, Australia and in Dobbs Ferry, New York, with home care and other forms of day care.

For young people, Sr. Lina gave support to the schools, university residences, youth ministry, and Radnor University. The inserted communities had her backing, solidarity, and support. These communities gave birth to new ones, especially in Brazil. A Cabrini Lay Spirituality deepened with her, encouraging Volunteerism, Cabrini Lay Missionaries, the Co-Responsibles and Collaborators.

We also express our gratitude to Sr. Lina for her concern for Formation, for her attention to the International Novitiate and for all the efforts the Sisters made for the Pastoral Vocation Ministry, for the Latin American Novitiate, for the meetings of Formation Leaders, for the rich reflection on the Constitutions, which highlighted the importance of Continuing Formation and for the constant sharing with the Provincials and Regionals.

She also paid attention to goods administration. Her visits always brought help and comfort. (Codogno, May 18, 2008)





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