



THROUGH THE ROADS OF THE SPIRIT

Saint Paula Montal

Foundress of the Piarist Sisters

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I have written many pages about Mother Paula. I wrote all of them without much effort and with joy. Now, it is a little different. I hope that the joy will not abandon me and may I do improve my intention. Because it is necessary to go through the roads of the spirit, those of Mother Paula, I say. And I know very well that when we take on the road map of the saints, it brings surprises. In any corner, a mystery can appear, hidden or shining well, as a question of fire that needs an answer. Saul gave his answer through the road to Damascus. Augustin did it in the gardens of Milan. Teresa, in her room inside her convent of Avila. Ignatius at the fortress in Pamplona. Calasanz at Trastevere...

Will there be surprises while going through the roads of Mother Paula? Radical surprises, maybe not. Abrupt jumps maybe, but surprises... yes, there will be surprises.

May she herself lead us to find them. Let us start the walking.

Two anecdotes to start

It maybe strange, but I am going to start with two anecdotes.

It is said that a friend of Antonio Gaudy (A great architect. The famous Holy Family church in Barcelona was designed by him...) - "architect of God" according to his disciples, and before that a student in the Escolapios Fathers at Reus - had the hobby of writing down a list of famous men according to his opinion, regarding their virtues. But it happened that while he was knowing them better, he starting knowing their faults, too. So he started crossing out their names. At the end, only two names remained. As he was disappointed, he commented it with Gaudy.

Gaudy asked: Who are those two names?

The friend answered: You and the master Millet.

Gaudy firmly concluded: You can cross out these two names, too. Don't we sing in the Gloria of the Mass *Tu solus sanctus*? (You are the holy one)

The second anecdote is about Mother Paula.

To the girls of Olesa. Mother Paula proposes two models to imitate: Saint Teresa and Saint Joseph Calasanz. But the girls, who see Mother Paula as a true model, answer back:

You are a true saint, indeed... When you die, with only touching your clothes, many sick people are going to be cured. Many miracles are going to come out from you!

Frightened by this, Mother Paula answered:

Be silent, be silent, girls. I cannot perform miracles. The only thing I want to is that Jesus would make the miracle of admitting this poor creature in his company so that I may love Him forever.

The girls continue: You will become a saint!

Mother Paula ends: Yes, I want to become a saint, but not a saint of those altars...

The two were right, Gaudy and Mother Paula. The first, a living genius rejects the list and he gives a liturgical-theological reason: Only God is Holy, as the Church recognizes it and we sing during the Gloria. Mother Paula, mother and teacher, has a dialogue in a climate of humility. She wants to become a saint, yes, to continue loving. But not a saint of altars, because in the altars there are already the statues of Saint Joseph Calasanz and Saint Teresa.

Time went by... and Gaudy, who rejected the list of his friend, can see now his name with his two surnames in other more solemn list, the one written in the palace of the Bishop of Barcelona in order to introduce his canonization cause...

Time went by...and Mother Paula, who did not want to be a saint of the altars, sees her image carved in bronze, in marble, in precious wood, next to the statue of Saint Joseph Calasanz in the altars of all her schools and chapels.

Gaudy and Mother Paula answered as we had said, to the friend and to the girls. They would have said more, but they did not do it. They knew very well what the teacher had told his disciples: "Be perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect" (Mat. 5,48) And what Peter had written: "Imitate the one who called you. As He is holy so you, too, be holy in all your conduct, since Scripture says: Be holy for I am holy" (1 Peter 1,16) In reality, what Scripture had said, and Jesus and Peter copy and proclaim the word of God (Cf. Lev. 11,44 and 19, 2).

The Church in Spain during the XIX century

It could help the traveler to have a summary vision, with its shadows and lights, of the Spain Mother Paula lived in. Being a woman of that time, she suffered because of the many tragedies of Spain and the victories gave her joy. She prayed all the Stations of the Cross referring to the Spanish Church and she fed her spirit with the doctrine and the practices that were designed by the leaders of the same Church...

Since later on is written about what the XIX century was, here we are going to point out the lights and the shadows. Very simple.

Let us start with shadows... Napoleon, who takes the Pope as a prisoner and invades Spain, The "great robbery" of the disentailment. Of the 62 dioceses, 47 are without Pastors. Infringement of Holy Days and spreading of materialistic doctrines. Sacrilege robbery and Holy Images shooting. The September 1868 revolution. The Floor of the Courts of February 26, 1869, the so called "blasphemy session". Between 1873 and 1874, the first republican experience. Many Catholics talk already, about the "Spanish death".

But not the Church, not the people were death. They were confused yes, and very much confused. They were hurt in their best values, too. The Spanish Church walks without a leading compass and "with priests not so well formed, because the seminaries could not give a solid formation in such circumstances".

The 1851 Concord repaired in part the Dioceses problem, seminaries and Religious Institutes. It guaranteed the Religious teaching at schools and gave a certain protection to the ministers of the faith. The 1876 C institution, at last, guaranteed the fundamental rights of the Church.

And the lights...After the trial, the Church became purified, poorer, more humble, freer, and ready to rebuild her operative programs and to give impulse to the formation of the seminarians.

The Religious Institutes, too, had gone through the cleaning process. The secularization during the liberal triennium (1820-23) took more than 7000 religious and nearly 900 Sisters to go out of their suppressed convents, going to foreign lands, taking refuge in different families or to give pastoral services in Parishes. In this last case, their services were very much positive because they brought a very good formation.

When the storm became calm, they came together and they could broad their action inside and outside Spain, thanks to the great number of vocations, very well selected and very well formed, especially after the temporal profession of three years, was introduced. And then many foundations took place, "masculine and feminine, after the Sisters entered the active apostolic ministry".

This hard crossing of the desert through which the Church had to go, could arrive at the good port, because no persecution was able to put down the embers of faith, kept inside the Christian families. It is true that the convulsion hurt the family morale, but the good people kept close to their Parishes and they took part in the acts of cult. It was a pity that the spirituality was lacking true life. It as moralistic, it lacked liturgical meaning, with a weak biblical doctrine, romantic, poor in doctrine. Daily prayer of the Holy Rosary, scapulars, three Hail Mary, months dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, of Mary, first Fridays, Sundays of Mary, Tuesdays of St. Joseph and too much thinking about gaining indulgences and feeling extraordinary phenomena. In the preaching it came back the baroque way of times before.

There were exceptions. And there were good reactions. On the whole, more lights than shadows. Really the XIX century can be called the century of the saints.

Gift and seed

One of those saints who went through those roads with a firm step, hurt with by edges of this XIX century, was Paula Montal. The same day of her birth, she received the waters of baptism in the Parish Church of Saint. Mary de Arenys de Mar. She received three names: Paula, Vicenta, and Maria. The two first to honor the Godmother - Paula Fornes Pla - and the second to honor her mother - Vicenta Fornes Pla. The third one in honor of the Mother of God, who from the name altar presides the ceremony.

The girl, when she realizes the names she has, will know to imitate in her apostolic action the Apostle of Gentiles, will help her widow mother in the daily work, and above all, she will know how to go near the heart of Christ by the hand of the Holy Mary. Human beings choose and select the names of the just born, but God is the one who plays the cards, because He only knows the roads the creature will follow. In this case, the long and difficult roads of Paul and the intimate and silent paths of the "handmaid of the Lord"

With the names and with the water, the grace has penetrated in the soul of Paula. It makes her daughter of God and participant of His nature. It opens for her the doors of the great sacrament of Christ, the Church, and it impulses her towards sanctity. Msgr. Lose Maria Guix Ferreres has just written in the prologue for

the life of Angel Herrera: "The gift that each Christian receives in baptism is not ecstatic but dynamic. Besides that, it is an ideal, a vocation, a demand, an answer... It is like a seed, full of energy that needs to spread its inner vitality".

But in this baptism there is another circumstance we must remember. Paula was baptized in the same day 11th of October, a few hours after her birth. There was not distance between the house and the Parish. It was autumn. Why so much hurry? Don't look for arguments of convenience. There is not any other argument but the Christian decision of her parents. From the marriage Ramon Montal-Vicenta Fornes 5 children are born: Paula baptized the same day she was born. Benito, baptized the following day. Maria, the same day. Joaquin, the following day. Salvador, the following day.

We don't know the exact hour when the children were born, but we can suppose that if the child is born at night or early in the morning, they take him/her to the temple in the same day. If he/she is born when the temple is already closed, they wait for the temple to be opened the following day.

It was hard for that house to have a child with the soul unclean, with the original sin. Only that? On the other hand, it was a real value to kiss the forehead of a child redeemed by the grace of the sacrament. Just as simple as this and theologically well done. Paula did not realize herself when she was born, that 11th of October. But she was able to confirm it when she becomes 10 years old. She took part in the baptism of her brother Salvador the 25th of September 1809. One day later, only one day, she could read for the first time the violet signature of the death on the face of her father. This mixture of life and death, of joy and pain, goes already forging the fine and clean steel of her soul.

By this time, the sacramental grace has been added to the grace of baptism. The 4 of June 1803, the sacrament of Confirmation was administered to her. She did not realize, either... But we must remember too that nobody becomes a Christian because of remembrance or planning. It is the Paschal action of God in Christ, leading in a smooth way to think and to act, which makes Christians. This new sacrament of initiation deepens and makes stronger the mystery of Christ, and it prolongs, as a consequence, the grace of baptism. She did not realize... But the Spirit burst into her soul with the present of the seven gifts. They are given "according to the measure of Christ's donation". And here is the fountain of plurality in the unity of all forms of sanctity in the Church. Years will go by and from this fountain will sprout the vocation of humble service and the testimony for the Kingdom of Heaven in the soul of Paula Montal. "Nobody can say Jesus is Lord unless the Holy Spirit is with him" (1 Cor 12,3)

I would like to know when Mother Paula took part in the sacrament of penance, and the day when she received for the first time Jesus in the Eucharist. No doubt she was rather old. Only in 1905 Pius X authorized to receive the Holy Communion at the early age. At the beginning of the XIX century, children used to receive Holy Communion when they were about 12 years old, and the frequent Communion was limited to Sundays and Feast Days. Only for certain souls, once more during the week.

One thing is sure: Mother Paula, inspired by grace, will really fall in love. She was in love with the sacrament of penance. It was not because she had to find again the state of grace, broken by sin, but rather because in the sacrament she looked to strengthen the inner nucleus of her personality and the secure exercise of her fraternal love. Since the demands of the Gospel urge her daily, she needs leadership for her inner answer to the voice of the Spirit, and to be sure, without any mistake, in her apostolic action. In the confessional, Mother Paula learned how important and how beautiful the word obedience is.

She was in love with the sacrament of the Eucharist. Paula unites in this sacrament her faith with the faith of the Church. She peeps at the silent mystery of the hidden God. She contemplates His action in the history. She meditates and verifies the word of Jesus in the Gospel... The soul of Paula was a soul of the Eucharist. When time would pass away, we will see her in ecstasy before the Tabernacle. And she will worry so that for the Spouse will never lack a small lamp that would light his jail of love.

Everything started in Arenys.

The trail that signals the zero kilometers in her roads is planted in that small plaza, between the Parish and her home. Here - home and temple - she lives a climate of faith. But this faith, traditional and inherited, less intellectual than affective, grows, is strengthened and becomes conscious. Then, Paula, based upon God and on the mystery of the Church, accepts it as a gift. And upon the strong gift of the faith, she widens her love circle. It will be manifested in the dialogue with the word that comes from above and as an answer to the most urgent necessities of society around her and the forgotten ones that live in it.

At the age of 30, Paula is a happy woman, sociable and free. She is gifted with a serene clarity, a strong feeling of action and a total security in her decisions. In her personality, we cannot find out broken psychological aspects, crisis of splitting or emptiness. Life was in charge of strengthening her and of defining her character: kind, open, sincere and compromised as far as the last consequences. She already knows what she wants and what she can.

In this process of spiritual and human maturity, the human beings - parents, Parish priest, confessor, spiritual director - made their work and they made it well. But they were but simple instruments. The project belongs to God and He is the one who is roaming, without being seen, around the rooms of the house, around the naves of the temple and around the mansions of the soul of Paula. An act of the Providence? Of course, and in a Christian way. Christ, who identified himself "with the road", has already fixed upon the vital canvas of Paula, His roads. But she has to find them out, little by little, so to walk them without looking back. Roads, in the end, of following and service.

Our glorious Father.

She lives a normal life. She has friends. She is a catechist. She has given her names to two Marian Confraternities established in the Parish. She has confined her soul to a "doctor confessor". She is a *puntaire* "very good in blond lace". She has opened in a room of her house a small free school for girls.

She is looking for a referential point, a pattern. In the life of Saint Joseph Calasanz she found more than what she was looking for, a referent point, a model for her action and a Father. Without that encounter, the life of Mother Paula would have had another destiny. She needed the model and the blessing of the Father before starting the road of a definite apostolic action.

The exact moment when she found this encounter is a mystery hidden in the secret of her first love. But we can follow the elemental steps with enough data, because the closest historian of her life took care of them.

Antonia Rodriguez de Ureta, very well informed of the facts, affirms few years after Mother Paula's death: *Paula Montal, educated in a Christian way, from her youth aspired to the religious perfection, planning a rule of our Institute of the Pious Schools, dedicated to the teaching of poor girls. But she could not put into practice her work until 1829.*

Mother Dolores Vidal wrote some years later, narrating about the foundation of Sabadell: *Somebody says that Mother Paula knew already him (Saint Joseph Calasanz) through a holy picture that miraculously had arrived to her hands. And adds that she had made a novena on the occasion she was very much in trouble: it could be when she decided to leave for Figueras or now when it seemed the time as a prodigious moment of getting her desires, expanding her work through other parts.*

Mother Paz de Moraza, without any doubt the one who knew best the spirit of Mother Paula and the Calasanzian roots of the Institute, had the good idea of asking those who knew the Foundress and writing down the answers. This is what she found in Olesa, where Mother Paula lived 30 years and died there: *Olesa People say, basing these things on the conversations they had with Mother Paula, that our holy Mother, upon wanting to found for the good of the youth, she went to Saint Joseph Calasanz and she made a novena for his help or that he would illumine her to carry out her foundation. After she finished the novena, she found the Piarist Fathers; better, they presented themselves to her, offering everything.*

Going through these three quotations and comparing them, we can see how they complement one another. But we cut out later references to safeguard the truth. The alternative of Mother Dolores Vidal between Figueras and Sabadell does not have meaning at all. The idea of Mother Paula to found in Sabadell was prepared by the Piarist Fathers and it did not give any trouble to Mother Paula. The troubles, and many, she suffered in the foundation of Figueras. To carry out this foundation, yes, she needed the light and help of Calasanz. From him alone, because the presence of Fr. Antonio Masramon and his companion - both of them Escolapios - "who offered themselves for everything" - had taken place in Arenys in 1846, when Paula and her companions were working with girls in an Escolapian way.

Therefore, the clean wheat that remains, after the straw is taken away, is the following: Paula, from her youth, wants to consecrate herself to God. She is contemplating her charism towards the teaching of girls most in need. She aspires that the teaching would be similar to the one of the Pious Schools. At that moment, a holy picture of Saint Joseph Calasanz arrives to her hands. She makes a novena to the saint, asking for light. After she was illumined, she starts her road and "puts into practice her peculiar vocation". And this is in Figueras in 1829.

With more brevity reaches the same conclusion M. Paz de Moraza: *In the year 1829 the incarnation of the spirit of Saint Joseph Calasanz appears in our Mother Paula in the world*

This reference to the spirit of Saint Joseph Calasanz is essential in the thesis of the author. If at the beginning of her work she affirms it, at the end she gives all the documented proofs, to confirm two essential hints: it is the "religious" spirit of the Saint, and it is God who communicates it so that the one who has received it may be the head of the "new Institute". Her words: *Jesus... chooses for the head of this new Institute our Mother Paula, but communicating to her soul the same religious spirit of Saint Joseph Calasanz.*

The spirit of Saint Joseph Calasanz was working silently in the soul of Paula. Eight years later, around 1837, maybe before, she wishes that her personal experience may be extended to the small group of companions who are the base of the new Institute. Dreaming of the youth. Paula is not a lonely woman, nor selfish. She loves from the bottom of her heart her friends and she spreads with full hands the treasure received in the encounter. She wants that her spiritual father may be the father of all. She loves and shares the name and the doctrine. She confesses it, with a fortunate sentence, and with all simplicity in 1855, to Fr. Jenaro Fucile, General Superior of the Pious Schools: *It is more than 18 years that this your subject and sister has the big desire that we may be true Religious Escolapias.*

In the juridical order, it was made a reality, following the established canons of the Spanish Bishops and of the Pope. But before that came the spiritual identification, learned and put into practice without any reserve during 13 fertile years in Sabadell. Without this spiritual identification, would not have had meaning the institutional imitation.

Paula needed Piarist Teachers, and she found wise and generous ones. She thanks the Capuchin Fray Roque de San Julian and to the Vincentian Fr. Francisco Bosch who was living out of the Order; but neither the Franciscan road nor the Vincentian, were her roads. She needed only one, that of Saint Joseph Calasanz, because she had decided to be "true Escolapia". Frs. Agustin Casanovas and Fr. Jacinto Feliu understood it very well. And they did not find difficult the teaching ministry. That extraordinary student, 46 years old, goes close to them to learn and to practice.

She learnt in the books and she practiced it with the teachers that were taking her into smoothly. Teachers and books introduced her in the school of the new evangelical spirituality lines, with recommendations of crosses and answers of love towards the Beloved and to "her little ones": the children without knowledge, the families without peace, and the poor without bread.

In the new school, the first book she had in her hands was a small manual of prayers, leather binding, gift from Fr. Feliu: *I send you this small book where you can find the daily prayers that we the sons of Saint Joseph Calasanz practice. In case, you too, might wish to practice them and be in conformity with us.*

Inside the book, time-honored customs, according to the liturgical periods, Saint Joseph Calasanz used and formed, from that time, the spiritual patrimony of the Order: formulas to greet God when getting up in the morning, to give Him thanks at the last hour of Completes, to start and end the meditation, morning and night, to bless the table, for the examination of conscience at noon and before going to bed, to recite the Crown of the 5 psalms in honor of the Virgin Mary, for the penitence acts, for the chapter of faults, for the renovations of vows, to pray the Rosary, "to distribute saints" the last day of the month ... Prayers, letanies, antiphons and psalms, with introductions in Spanish and in Latin.

In this book, Mother Paula learned how can be put together the reading and the meditation of the great truths in the dining room. In the dining room there was the practice of reading important books on formation, religious and historical books, for instance *important men in sanctity of life in the Institute of the Pious Schools*, written by a Piarist from Aragon, Fr. Jose Jerico. After the blessing of the food by the Superior and all were seated, the lector tells them: *Let us try, Fathers and Brothers, to be attentive to the reading, because at the hour of death, we will be asked for a rigid account of the fruit we have not gotten.*

As the lector continues reading, he reminds them, "with prudent intervals" and with a clear voice, three times at noon and two at supper: *Remember, Fathers and Brothers, the gall and vinegar the Redeemer of the world tasted on the holy place of the cross.*

After finishing the reading and recited the thanksgiving prayers, a Brother, generally the cook or his co-worker, kneeling in the middle of the dining-room, with hands together before the chest, says in a slowly voice:

Remember, Fathers and Brothers, of meditating the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, because this is the true road to heaven.

Graphic lessons with biblical truths, that remind the Passion of the Lord and the true way, and that they are being engraving by slow fire in silence.

But maybe, the greatest treasure of this small book is the "*Meditations for the mental prayer in the morning and in the evening, distributed during the days of the week*". They are fourteen meditations, with style and doctrine of Fray Luis de Granada: in the morning they are centered on the paschal mystery, passion and resurrection of Jesus. In the evening, on the happenings at the time of death and after. Solid doctrine, according to the master, and Christ centered, in response to the Calasanzian ideal.

Fr. Feliu, whom she chooses as spiritual director, and he will continue until October 1855, introduced them, her and her Sisters, into the practice of these exercises with fixed rules, "*and they started practicing them, of course, using the Small Prayer Book of the Virgin, the small crown, examinations of conscience, mental prayer, etc., etc., in the way the Fathers of the Pious School exercise themselves*".

Fr. Agustin continued this formation work, "*our consolation and protection*", hearing the confessions of the Sisters and presiding "all the exercises of Community life, teaching them in practice the ceremonies of the Small Office of the Virgin Mary and the Small Crown, mental prayer and other prayers and all that was necessary to reach the high end to what they were called".

Permanent catechesis, with an elemental teaching during the first steps, slowly and always with patience. The learning of tone, pauses and gestures in the recitation of vocal prayer, more simple. The deepening of meditation and contemplation methods, using the three faculties of the soul, more slowly and with more details. In the soul of Paula were growing in unison the affective tension and the gratitude to her "*divine Spouse*". In Sabadell, with Escolapios teachers, learned to taste prayer. She will complete her learning, as Calasanz, reading the books of Saint Teresa. And she will end being a prayer teacher. It will be easy for her to tell, when teaches what she practices: "Prayer, a short time we have to talk with our Spouse". Not difficult at all. "To practice prayer, close the eyes of your body and open the eyes of your soul". And even in a graphic manner to the novices: "In the morning prayer we should try to fire the small brazier of the love of God, and keeping the embers during the whole day, in the evening prayer we should try to put away the ashes so that it may be in fire again".

She was a woman of prayer. The old principle of *giving out to others what you have contemplated* is made reality in her. Prayer makes her a servant of the Word.

She made it so well; she experienced and transmitted it so well that 25 years after her death the memory remained there. Dolores Vidal says: "*In reality, her fervor, her zeal, her eagerness for prayer, passed without feeling to her disciples. And it is wonderful how even today it remains in some, and in others we have known, the inner spirit that animated them. And they knew how to keep the presence of God among the daily occupations*".

Another book Paula used was just some pages more than the first one. It came from Madrid a year later and it was a gift from Fr. Feliu. With the gift, this letter: *Dear Mrs. Paula: I have sent to Fr. Rector of Barcelona a small box where we can find... some examples of the Constitutions Fr. Provincial of this Province (Castilla) has ordered to print in Spanish, a **literal** translation for Brothers and Clerics. The Constitutions are literally translated from the ones of our Holy Father. These are the ones you should follow, if you want to imitate the Founder of the Pious Schools.*

Fr. Feliu, named by Pius IX Apostolic Commissioner of the Pious Schools in Spain, resides already in Madrid. The Barcelona Rector is Narciso Tarter and the Provincial of Castilla, Fr. Julian Alexandre. In the letter of Fr. Feliu appears underlined the adverb *literally*, to stress before Mother Paula the total identity with the Constitutions written by Calasanz.

And it happens that Paula "*does not feel like writing a new Constitution for her Congregation*". She has asked and implored Fr. Feliu that he may supply "the same Constitutions of Saint Joseph Calasanz". It has passed a year since her arrival to Sabadell. She prays like an Escolapio, she has made an intensive novitiate; she has consecrated to the Lord her life with the Profession of the three evangelical counsels of Chastity, Poverty and Obedience, and a fourth specific one, according to the Calasanzian formula. She has chosen the Holy Founder to complete her surnames and she is called Paula Montal; of Saint Joseph Calasanz... Now she wants his Constitutions, the ones of the father of her soul and her signature, as a norm and project of life for her and her Institute. Fr. Feliu made her happy with a handwriting "summary", just a simple sweet to feel hungry. Now the summary example of the Constitutions, translated "literally" into Spanish and called it "Compendium"

The *Compendium* widens and fixes the contents of the prayer manual. It starts with a prologue, long and deep of theological doctrine about the consecrated life, its rules, its votes and some tricks and deceits that "oppose the sanctity of the cloisters". It was written in 1698 by the general of the Pious Schools Fr. Francisco Foci as a warning *-paraenesis* in the Latin original - to the Escolapios when he published his famous *Summary of the Constitutions of the Pious Schools*. To the central chapters, where there is the text of the Constitutions, made clear with annotations, follows the rules regarding the humble Tasks of the house, the penance canons, and two series of beautiful sentences: a ample series of 199 sentences, sentences of the Holy Scripture, referring to the chapters of the Constitutions and Offices and another series with the 60 sentences "of our Holy Father Joseph Calasanz, referring to the religious perfection". The book ends with the prayers for leaving and coming back home and the formula to renovate the vows.

The doctrinal and the practical things have been united in beautiful harmony. Paula knew how to assimilate and put them into practice. If the Prayer Manual helped her to be close to God, the *Compendium* helped her to grasp the free and mysterious gift of the religious life. It helped her to taste the whole wisdom of the Word of God and to identify her life with the history of the Pious Schools and the Founder.

But the *Summary* and the *Compendium* of the Calasanzian Constitutions were private goods and provisional. Mother Paula wants the whole Constitutions of Saint Joseph Calasanz and the ecclesiastical approval. She got it with feminine tenacity, uniting a deep love to the experimental text and to the author of the text. I don't stay in details. The definite text was prepared by Frs. Agustin Casanovas and Diego Codina, in continuous contact with Mother Paula. The bishops of Gerona, Vich, Barcelona and Tarragona approved it in their Dioceses where the Escolapias had communities and schools. In February 1853, the waiting volume is published. And the 27 of august, to celebrate in a special way the feast of Saint Joseph Calasanz, each Religious received an exemplar of the "small book of the Holy Rules".

The "small book" brings the same prologue of Fr. Francisco Foci, that of the *Compendium*". They gave a great important to its contents. But the strong food is the constitutional text, "faithful replica of the Rules and constitutions of the Holy Founder of the Pious Schools, the famous Spanish and doctor of children Saint Joseph Calasanz". This is what Fr. Agustin asserts. And he adds that all has been carried out "without changing the text of the Saint, since in it is surely shown the road of the religious perfection".

That was, precisely, the ideal looked for Mother Paula: to have in her hands the original text of her "glorious Father", and with him a secure road of religious perfection - the synonymous is evident -, total identification between the edited text and the one written by his hand, Saint Joseph Calasanz". That is why she says and stresses: "Our Rules, that are the Rules of Saint Joseph Calasanz", "those of our Father Calasanz". And if it was not enough, "the small book of our Constitutions and of our Saint Father Joseph Calasanz".

For Paula, the merit and glory of the Constitutions she has desired is in her total identification with Calasanz, "whose imitation is our joy, our hope, our console".

Paula watered her thirst of sanctity in the reading and constant meditation of the constitutions. And she was satiated. She fulfilled them even to the most hidden detail and in that way she could appear before her Sisters, like a silence and example of the "living Rule". But at profession, according to the formula of the Constitutions, adding a fourth vote, she enriched in a double way her spirituality and the spirituality of the Institute she had founded. Her spirituality, with the practice of the typical virtues of an Escolapia, the simple humility, the joyful obedience, the detached poverty, the silence patience, the love without limits for the little ones... The spirituality of the Institute, with the daily taking care of the girls and the evangelical projection of their apostolate in teaching... By her profession and the graphic writing of her name, she can call herself true daughter of Calasanz. By the works of her teachers and the formation in piety and learning of her girls, it can really be said that her Institute is already " a favorite son of Calasanz"

With the spirit before the holy feet of the Supreme Pontifex

But she aspired, at the same time, that her Institute would be declared "worthy son of the Church". It does not mean a warped level but a long road, which was opening and widening new horizons. And she was admiring them in an experimental way or as a testimony, sometimes, while she was walking the road. Because the global and theoretical horizons were learned when she memorized during her youth the questions and answers of catechism or when she recited the Creed: I believe in the Holy Catholic Church, which is one, holy, catholic... But there are differences in learning by heart a text , to say a prayer or walk during 90 years a road of going and coming back. There is a different, also, in believing in the Church and doing Church.

First was the Parish, a local Church, between the mountains and the ocean, with capacity for the living and for the dead. Everything in it was familiar and it went without any trouble through secure rails, with fixed dates, with holy obligations, with un-changed traditions. The Parish Priest was the reference point and the man elected to bless and to lead. He was dressed in black. And Paula was at his service and she went on doing Church, exercising the noble and delicate job of a catechist.

Years went by and she discovered the juridical and pastoral value of a Diocese. Church, too, but more extended and competent. It is led by a Bishop who is dressed in purple. She knew in person some of them and with all of them she was in good terms. They blessed her work, they approved her Constitutions... The most important, Don Jose Domingo Costa y Borrás, received her "with his characteristic amiability" the 27th of December 1850 and he blessed the group that was going to the foundation of Vendrell. The 2nd of September 1857, the same most illustrious Bishop gave her the biggest annoyance of her life: "he dismissed Fr. Agustin Casanovas as General Director... It was an unthinkable thing and it caused a great pain in all the houses of the Congregation". That of amiable and blessing, was written by Mother Paula in the chronicle of the Vendrell. That of dismissing and great pain, was written by an anonymous Sister in *Cuadernos de Apuntes* (Notebooks to write down notes).

Amiable and dismissing, it does not matter. She goes making Church with her schools in the Dioceses of Gerona, Barcelona, Vich, and Tarragona, opened with the permit of the "respective Ordinary". The Constitutions go further: she accepts that the Congregation "is subjected" to the Ordinary Prelates and the same are recommended "by them or by any person delegated by them, should visit every year the houses or schools of their Dioceses, and observe if the Holy Rules are observed. If everybody fulfills their obligations, if they instruct the girls with piety in the Christian doctrine..."

This submission to the Ordinary and his corresponding pastoral visits form a part of the juridical work of the diocesan power. In the soul of Paula, they are obedience and collaboration, more Christian ways of making Church.

That they were making Church, soon was seen and praised by the Bishops. In 1851, Don Florencio Lorente y Monton, Bishop of Gerona, writes:

We are certain of the advantages and notorious benefits that they promote in the Christian and domestic education, since we have been able to observe it during the time the said Daughters of Mary are working with enthusiasm in the towns of Figueras and Arenys de Mar of this our Dioceses. We can't but applaud with the whole will and to approve with most interest the said Institute and also their Constitutions and Rules... We are convinced of the good instruction they give to the girls by the said Daughters of Mary, educating them in the Evangelical maxims. And they give to the girls the proper knowledge corresponding to the capacity and conditions, according to their ranks... so that one day they may fulfill well the important task of educating in a Christian way and morally the families

Months later, the 11th of June 1852, the Archbishop of Tarragona Don Antonio Fernando de Echenove y Zaldivar says:

I desire and I would like that each one of the towns of my Archdiocese would have one of these teachers (Sisters) for girls. And I would protect, favor and honor as much as I could all that would be established in a formal and legitimate way.

But the best testimony was given in 1858 by the Bishops of Gerona, Barcelona and Vich, in the joint Circular they sent to the Escolapias Sisters:

In your Congregation we see an instrument the Divine Providence has put in our hands to make much good to the people.

This was already what Mother Paula was listening and she tells full of joy to the Fr. General of the Pious Schools:

Seven houses - there were really eight - we have seen flourishing during this short time and each one has received the admiration of the Prelates who have visited them and they have made them spill out tears of joy. This is worthwhile compensation to the troubles that embitter their zealous souls. In us is the future, the guards of Israel have said. We have to be worthy walls and strength against the iniquity that dashes to places, corrupting the beautiful flowers of the innocent and squeezing the beautiful illusions in the young hearts..."

The last section was lacking, already guessed in the "small book" of the Constitutions. In the last words, in fact. It talks about the indulgences granted to the Religious of the Pious Schools. And it adds: "these concessions will be extended to the Daughters of Mary, when the Supreme Pontifex may approve such Congregation and elevate it to the status of Religious Order: this grace will be asked from the Holy See".

They started asking, following the hierarchical steps and at the right time, after being printed and distributed the first volumes of the Constitutions. The road was long and in it intervened Bishops, friends of the Congregation, Escolapios and Escolapias. Naturally, escolapios and escolapias more than anybody else. And here enters fully Mother Paula, who writes between 1855 and 1857, while she is in Sabadell as Mistress of novices, four letters to Fr. General of the Pious Schools. Fr. Jenaro Fucile.

In these letters she defends her cause: that the Institute and the Constitutions might be approved by the Holy See. This is the thesis, but the intention and the spirit of Mother Paula goes beyond the thesis and permits in her letters. At other times, I talked about them in a scientific way. Now we have to stop trying to find out the reasons and intentions of her author. Mother Paula, Mistress of Novices in Sabadell, knows nothing or very little about thesis and antithesis, of pettifogger processes, of curial permits. But she knows enough: the last word is in Rome and that to reach the Roman Palaces you need a good lawyer. She looks for counsel before writing, but she writes and signs it with confidence, because she knows that those lines will be read by Fr. General of the Pious Schools, successor of Saint Joseph Calasanz. Here is the reason of her joy, warm and love of her expressions, of her direct expressions, of her goodbyes: "this humble subject, who before your feet asks the blessing of your Paternity", December 2, 1855. "May your paternity accept the hearty offerings of this humble daughter in Christ...", January 22, 1856. "... with my heart full of happiness, waiting your paternal blessing".

The 18 of June 1857, in her filial openness she goes further. She confesses that "during the night I am shouting to the Almighty ". The letters will follow their course, because the emissaries go slowly. The

Spirit, on the contrary, does not know barriers. He is fast as a dove. And in spirit she talks with God "day and night", flies to Rome and goes into the heart of the Church, represented in the person of the Pope. He will say the expected word, because her spiritual director has told her that "it is a God's word and He will fulfill my desires". The great confession appears immediately: "more than a thousand times I have met the Spirit before the feet of our Supreme Pontifex, opening my inner being and asking Him that he makes us a true daughters of our glorious Father Saint Joseph Calasanz"

Through these roads her spirit walks: prayer, made shouting before God who is in Heaven and can do everything, and she prays repeatedly "more than a thousand" to the Supreme Pontifex, who is in Rome and takes care as a Father upon the whole Church. These are interior arguments, secrets, that now are revealed and come from long ago. Upon them, as a firm foundation, one can continue adding proofs. But without them, the proofs would not have meaning. The following letter will continue adding them, not in a dialectic line but united to the communitarian prayer. She recognizes that they are obliged to work "for the dignity of the house of God" and that is the reason why they pray "diligently and with fervor to God and to His merciful Mother", so that Pius IX, blessing her, would give "his supreme approbation to our Institute". What she wants is, no more no less, that this Pious Institute "may be declared son of the Church". She founded it with this end. And now she asks that the Church will declare, in an explicit manner, the Vicar of Christ. In this declaration, also, "are interested the religion, the Church and the society..." For the Church, torn by some of her sons, this Pontifex declaration "would be a new consolation".

Mother Paula has faith in Pius IX, distinguished disciple of the Pious Schools and "hero of the great happenings". She adds, also, this mysterious declaration: "our God has revealed it to us".

This confidence can seem a little utopian one, judged from the modern historical perspective. But this type of inner illustrations gives security to the spirit and light to the roads. Mother Paula was on the right path, far away from any utopian. The facts are rude in their truths, and she relies only upon facts.

Pius IX, was a disciple of the Escolapios in Volterra (1803-1809) and he always kept his living love and gratitude towards his teachers, and in a special way to Saint Joseph Calasanz. It was a new motive of his identification. He has proclaimed the dogma of the Immaculate Conception on December 8, 1854, when she inculcates with her example the novices, a lovely devotion to the Virgin. In 1856, Pius IX has extended to the whole Church the feast of the Sacred Heart. And everybody knows that he is in favor of new congregations and Religious Institutes. Between 1850 and 1860, 42 were approved, and 74 more During the following three years: 1862-1865. In these numbers, first in the waiting list and later in the approved list is the Pious Institute.

There is another motive Mother Paula has not forgotten. Pious IX, a friend of the Pious Schools and a friend of Spain.

In Italy, the *Joven Italia* and the *Risorgimento* oppose the Catholic rebirth. The minds are pressed by the involvement of getting the Italian unity. Therefore the anemic division it many Catholics and of Religious, who do not know how to conjugate their fidelity to the Pope with the rules of a real patriotism, romantic and sometimes exaggerated. In Spain does not exit that duality and the fidelity is sincere and even heroic. In 1848, when the facts come fast, Austria, Spain, Napoles and France organize a military coalition together to help the Pope.

When Pius IX, threatened by the people run away to Gaeta, the 24th of November 1848, the government of Narvaez (Spain) according to what has been compromised, gives an amnesty and prepares an expedition with forces of land and sea, under the command of General Fernando Fernandez de Cordoba, marquis of Mendigorría. He was a man of excellent military and diplomatic talents. The 27th of May 1849, the small squadron reaches the coast of Gaeta. It was composed of three frigates *Cortes y Villa de Bilbao*, the vapors *Leon y Vulcano* and the packet boat *Vidasoa* with 4903 special soldiers. The 29 Pius IX revises the troops and blesses them. With this blessing, the troops penetrate the Pontifical States through Fondi and Terracina and they take up Velletri on the 5th of July, The general Zabala joins them and the soldiers are 9000. They continue their daring march through Sabina and take up Valmontone, Palestrina, Castel-Madama, Rieti... At the end of 1849, the troops receive orders of taking a boat and to return to Spain. The mission is accomplished. The 12th of April 1850, Pius IX goes back to Rome, after the republic that had led the triumvirate Mazzini, Saffi and Armellini had ended.

Let us go back to Mother Paula. Her ecclesiastical road seems to reach the top from where the future is guessed and one can penetrate, with humility and fear, the love mystery of the great sacrament. She wants that her Institute be declared by the Vicar of Christ "worthy son of the Church". She remains united to God in prayer and kneeling in spirit at the feet of the Pontifex. She feels the certain and humble illumination of an inner revelation... She does not know how long will it take to come that declaration, but she is sure that it will come. That is why she insists, and even more after Fr. Fucile, in a cordial answer, has blessed her "energy" and her intentions.

The Escolapias send to Rome the "book of the Constitutions of our Institute and of our Holy Father Joseph Calasanz". Mother General and her Congregation should send it. For Mother Paula, it only remains to pray and this is what she says to Fr. Fucile in a new letter: "I, on my part, will offer my poor prayers to the Almighty". And feeling as a mother of her daughters, she adds in plural: "For that purpose we pray with fervor to God and to our good Mother, the always Virgin Mary. So that our hopes might be fulfilled".

Fr. Fucile tells Mother Paula the 20th of August 1856 that he has visited Pius IX the last 13th and that the Pope offered him to "approve the Congregation" in the sense she wants to. Therefore, he assures her that "the Daughters of Mary will receive soon from the Holy See the desired approval..."

In what sense does she like the canonical approval? In the same sense as the rest of the Escolapias, the rest of the Spanish Escolapios, Fr. Fucile and even the same Pius IX: "to be led by one of the Fathers of the Pious Schools". It was not the essential, but it was the practical thing. For Mother Paula, we saw it already, the essential thing is that in the Pontifical declaration might be clear that the Institute is "*worthy son of the Church*". But as the circumstances social-political of Europe are, and in particular in Spain, with so many dioceses vacant and Bishops in exile, the survival and progress of the Institute would be surer under the direct direction of the Pious Schools.

This is what was thought and for this were fighting with Christian "energy" and ecclesiastical conscience, while in the rooms of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars are cooking another ideas and initiatives. They have entered by surprise. But they have good and powerful defenders. The leader is the energetic and competent cardinal J.A. Bizzarri. It is necessary to defend the central point of Rome and it is necessary to give power to the Bishops.

The final result appeared in the document, made public by the Holy Congregation of Bishops and Regulars in 1862, although it was written before. It has the title: *Method observed by the S. Congregation of Bishops and Regulars in the approval of new Institutes of simple vows*. It does not have the force of a law, but it serves as a norm and by the way separates until now common lines. In practice, it starts to elaborate a new law for the members of the Congregations and Religious Institutes.

Of this policy behind the scenes, Mother Paula does not know anything. For her, the important things are the words of Fr. Fucile after the audience with Pius IX. She answers immediately and she confesses that has cried with joy after seeing granted the grace from "so many years desired by your humble subject and also by the rest of the Sisters". From now on, she only has to pray for her benefactor: "I can't do any other thing but to pray to the Almighty, with my poor prayers, for your Paternity..." She prays with thanks and she wishes for him the gift of a good payer in life and after death: "God will give you the payment in heaven, enjoying his good company, and in this earth also because you worked for our Pious Congregation of Daughters of Mary".

The bureaucratic steps followed their course. Mother Paula closes her letters. She has confidence in the promise of Pius IX and in the cleverness of Fr. Fucile. She leaves the pen idle. She keeps the hope and although it was long, it bloomed during all springs and it gave its fruits.

It is a pity that the last letter Fr. Fucile wrote to Mother Paula, would not reach her hands. In it she had read, translated from Latin this golden paragraph:

Have courage... It is necessary patience in practicing good works. When the distance between the appearance of a desire and its realization is longer, the joy is fuller when the desire is satisfied. And the greatest joy will be for you, whom God called, together with other two Sisters, to put the first stone of the Institute. In this way, you will be able to foster continuously the holy humility, meditating what St. Paul tells us, and to you specially who are favored with his name: " I planted, Apollo watered it, but it was God who gave the increase"

The desire was fulfilled and the joy explored with it.

Briefly...

On the 9th of March 1860, after the interested bishops were consulted, from the Vatican Congregation for Bishops and Regulars, came out the *Decretum laudis*, decree with a force of an Apostolic Letters in a Brief form. With it, "His Holiness approves and confirms the said Institute of Sisters, called Daughters of Mary... waiting for a better time the approbation of the Constitutions" This is the first gift of Pius IX, his words fulfilled. The essential has been gotten. The Church, through his Pontifex "approves and confirms" the Institute, where the Sisters work "to save the souls of girls of the Christian people". These Sisters, besides the three classical vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, "add a fourth one of teaching the girls". The mission of the Institute is clear. In the same way. It is clear the consecration of the Sisters in the fulfillment of the evangelical counsels and in the fourth specific vow. Double motive for joy. And besides that, in the same Brief, the granting of several plenary indulgences on the days of receiving the habit and the religious profession, after 10 days of spiritual retreat, and in the feast of Saint. Joseph Calasanz and of the Name of the Virgin Mary.

The approval of the Constitution that are observed in fidelity and daily by the Sisters, can wait a little. The hour will come. Pius IX cannot fail in his word. Now is time to celebrate the generous content of the pontifical Brief that has arrived to the houses on the 22nd of June. Mother Paula has read it in the Olesa house, where the bases of the new school are been put. After they read and commented the Brief, she made a solemn function of thanksgiving.

Pius IX fulfilled his word. In 1867 announces the celebration of a new council. On 29th of June 1868, he signs the *Aeterni Patris* bulla for the meeting. It started the 8th of December 1867. The announcement and the convocation have relation with the Apostles. The Inauguration, with the Virgin Mary, after 15 year the Virgin Mary was declared Immaculate Conception.

The council tasks were having while the blockade of Rome was in course. They were discussing and praying inside the Cathedral, upon the tomb of St. Peter. The Spanish Bishops, firm in defending the faith and faithful to the person and thought of the Pope, received the name of "Council imperial guard". Discussions and prayers were performed far away from the Basilica, in Rome and outside Rome. In Olesa, they did not discuss anything, but they were praying. Will not follow Mother Paula "prostrated in spirit at the holy feet of our Holy Father, the Highest Pontifex"? The good result of the council is important. Inside the council it is important the approval of the Constitutions. It is already almost 10 years. And if the celebration of the council would be the most "appropriate time" as the brief was proposing?

During the fourth session of the council, the bishop of Gerona, Don. Constantino Bonet y Zanuy, had a talk with the Pope and he reminded him his promise and he got for the Daughters of Mary "the participation of the indulgences granted by the Supreme Pontifexes to the Order of the Pious schools" and the acceleration of the approval of the Constitutions. In fact, Pius IX, in his audience granted to the Secretary of the Sacred Congregation for Bishops and Regulars on 17 July 1870, "he approved and confirmed the Constitutions ad experimentum". The secretariat of the Congregation emitted a day later the corresponding decree.

The Troops of Garibaldi made a breach on the wall near the Porta Pia on the 20th of September 1870. The 20th of October, the I Vatican Council was closed.

Chance or providence? Pius IX, in the middle of the ecumenical celebration approves ad experimentum and according to the law, the Constitutions. Coincidence or providence? The signature of the Decree carries the same date - 17 of July 1870 - as the promulgation of the constitution *Pastor Aeternus*, the first constitution of *De Ecclesia*, voted by the Fathers with 533 votes from 535. In the meantime, a great thunderstorm lashes the Eternal City. It was as if the heaven would join to the voting and it would applaud on its own way the new dogma of the Infallibility of the Pope.

Not chance, not coincidence. Providence, yes. God, "who sees the hidden", listens the prayers of His children. And over there, far away, in a small town under the shadow of Monserrat, at Olesa, a daughter of God and of the Church, prays for the success of the Council and the approval of the Constitutions of her Institute. It seemed impossible.

But the many prayers of the Religious and the fervors ones offered to God by Mother Paula from her retirement of Olesa, got, at last, the great favor.

Mother Dolores Vidal (1862-1917), intelligent and learned Sister, assures it to us. She was secretary general during 12 years (1901-1913) and Catalan Provincial the last four years of her life. Although she did not know in person Mother Paula, she lived and talked greatly with those who had been her novices, her collaborators, her companions of community.

To go through the last part of the road, and it was not lacking of obstacles, there were necessary other 7 years. Pius IX was followed in the pontifical canopied throne by the cardinal Joaquin Vicente Pecci, good humanist and very much preoccupied by the social problems. He was elected the 20th of February 1878, Taking the name of Leo XIII

Mother Paula continues praying and waiting.

The 7th of January 1887, during the audience granted to the secretary of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, Leo XIII thought good the time given as ad experimentum. The following 28th of March, the decision for the corresponding decree was thought, signed by the prefect and the secretary of the said Congregation: "Our Holy Father Leo XIII...after receiving the recommendation letters of the bishops where the Sisters, called Daughters of Mary, are established....approved with gratitude and confirmed the said Constitutions, according to what is written in the exemplar that is kept in the archives of the said Congregation. According to the present Decree, the said Constitutions are approved and signed..."If in 1870 there was joy and a singing of *Te Deum* in the Communities and schools of the Pious Institute, even it was greater the joy and more solemn the *Te Deum* in 1887. And the same filial gratitude to the Church and to her Pontifex.

Now, too, Mother Vidal gives us a hand. In a brief text gathers the joy of Mother Paula, and she adds by her own a presage of beautification:

In a special way, Mother Paula was really completely happy after obtaining it. And really it is said that it is a favor rarely obtained by the Founders, and that it is given a great important in the cases of declaring blessed the servants of God.

What they "really say", was and is relative. The authentic is the joy, the gift given to so many prayers and desires, to so much effort and energies displayed to walk with success the long road that introduces her spirit and that of the Institute in the maternal blossom of the Church.

A True Mother of the Poor

Talking about the virtues of Mother Paula, we easily arrive to the conclusion that her three preferable virtues were: **humility, obedience and poverty.**

Humility gave sense and meaning to her whole life, giving her openness and sensibility to approach naturally the children and the poor. Thanks to that, she did not judge others; she could bear with a smile to be judged and to be put aside by the same Sisters. This humility impressed those who during her life were at her side, and after her death, Fr. Calasanz Rabaza, Sch.P. could write a book under the title: *Humble Soul*, Barcelona 1933.

About the obedience, she did not remain in merely formulations or external acknowledgement. She looked more forward and deeper. Her obedience starts from the "obedience of faith", according to the expression used by the Vatican II in the Constitution *Dei Verbum*. Paula "puts all her confidence in God". And since she sees in the Superior a representative of God, better, a prolongation of God, she also offers "complete submission of her intelligence and of her heart". Everything in a climate of confidence joy, because she knows that she goes through the road of truth.

Obedience and poverty are united directly with the evangelical counsels and they received a special consecration from the 2nd of February 1847, when in Sabadell she pronounced and signed her profession as Escolapia Sister. She dared to write that only with the practice of humility and obedience, and she called them holy, the heaven is always gained. Her words say that better and clear:

You know that to reach the apex of perfection we must practice holy humility and obedience; with these two virtues we will have the happiness of seeing, for all eternity, the beloved Spouse of our souls.

She practiced what she recommended, "a mystery of conscious humility ", as one of the consulted theologian said, and an obedience to all proof. It synthesized very well the end of her letter to Mother Felicia Clavel: "you may dispose of your subject sister". The humility and the obedience, "passive virtues"? They would be like that without the love that impels them to heroism. A "conscious mystery" in humility, free and almost daring in delicate moments of her life. A wonderful attainment the paradoxical juxtaposition of two substantives in the obedience. It surpasses the inspiration of a stylistic hit. Although talking in a stylistic way, the surprised, harmonic and sonorous formula has its merits. Frossard has correctly said: "This faculty of renewing words is a gift of poets, of great mystics and of course, of the apostles of Christ who are the trustees of the Word. People do not make mistakes. People, in these questions, have musical ears".

That was Mother Paula when she renewed that wonderful and juxtaposition: a poet, a mystic, an apostle and a woman of the people with a perfect "musical ear".

But she went even further. Because the other virtues were also holy and they were worthily of the same treatment. The theologians who have examined with a magnifying glass the spiritual treasure contributed by Mother Paula to the communion of the saints, have reached the conclusion that all these wonderful virtues: theological, moral, the humility that escapes all classification, the four votes she professed with its respective practical virtues, were made reality in her life reaching the "heroic grade" the Church asks as good to allow the Canonization Cause of the Servants of God.

I want to accompany her in our encounter with Christ the poor. This is a straight way, with two continuous branches: in the first one, she learns to live in poverty; in the second, she extends her hand to help the needed brother and in this case, she becomes "true Mother of the poor" as one graduated, Maria Casanovas, called Mother Paula.

As always, the zero kilometers are at Arenys.

The Montal family, where Paula was born and grew, is the family of a worker. It was a large family with only a weekly income. Leaving aside all the troubles the wars carry with them, enemies of prosperity, even that weekly income failed when on the 26 of November 1809, Ramon Montal, the father, the worker, died. Vicenta, the mother, remains a widow and with five children to rear. Even the house is not hers.

Paula, the eldest of the five, is just 10 years old. She has already put aside her dolls, if ever she had them, to sit down in front of her small world and to start producing meters and meters of embroidering. "Where there is no woman, the man in need cries", wrote Sirach (Ecc 36, 27). By good luck, in that small house of Bomba street, there were two women, mother and daughter, Vicenta and Paula, and both together were able to avoid the tears. Paula is a good "puntaire" (embroiderer) "in embroidering and lace she was really good", and the brothers grow up, learn a job and relieve the work of the women.

This way of living in poverty was attached to her life as a climbing plant to the trunk of an elm-tree. From the young "puntaire" of Arenys to the old Religious of Olesa, who always wears a clean habit and "very much mended", there is only a difference: in Arenys, the poverty is a necessity and in Olesa, is love. It comes well to cite Fray Luis de Granada: "Poverty is not a virtue, but the love for poverty".

Embarked towards the foundation of a new Pious School, she and her companions experiment all the rigidity of poverty. In Figueras, at the beginning, she had 40 "reales" (Ten pesetas of that time. One peseta about 0.36 pesos) to live in a pigeon-house to start the school. Seventeen years later, Sabadell. The "arrival was really poor", and it was the city of the industrial factories. And the house? "They settled in a jumbled house, opened to the cold of the night and with a un-useful door. In the morning, when they left the house for Mass, after leaving the house, with the hands, they locked the door from outside, through a hole in it" Then, Fr. Jacinto Feliu, Apostolic Commissary of the Pious Schools, arrives for a visit, and "since the other furniture ran parallel to the house, not having chairs to sit down, they had to use, the visitor and the ones who were visited, the clothes trunks where the Sisters had brought their clothes"

What happened in Vendrell, Mother Paula wrote it in detail in the School Chronicle. Here is her simple counting of utensils: Three stands, a Sister's bed, flasks, cups, fire-shovel and tongs, stand for fry-pans, glazed earthenware tubs, wooden spoons and forks...and the beans and oil to prepare them. More than poverty, they speak about supreme poverty.

In 1859, they send her to found in the "Purgatory" called Olesa de Monserrat. Forty continuous years of needs, of living poor among the poor. Three consecutive housing changes, to avoid danger times and humidity. And in the last place, "of two bodies or sites, with a bark square" at the Plateria Street. the room of Mother Paula "was very poor". But she "loved that house very much and she preferred to remain there because of its poverty, wanting to imitate the holy father St. Joseph Calasanz". And she confirmed that when she said that she "preferred the house of Olesa to all the others and she loved it with special predilection because of its poverty". This was the pure reason of her love: "because of its poverty".

If something was hurting her in her long pilgrimage was to see the poverty of the poor girls. It is good to remember, going back to the zero kilometers, that during her young years, was "thinking about the rule of a new Congregation of Pious Schools, consecrated to the teaching of poor girls".

Again the exact imitation of the way of her Holy Father. Her schools open to everybody, but the preferences, she could no avoid the poor, who were most of them and they received the teaching free. The "*precipue pauperes*"(especially the poor) of Calasanz. Fr. Jacinto Feliu reminds it in his letter of 22 of April 1848, urging them "to continue doing good to the youth, especially the poor, and God will bless your zealous and you work".

In case that any doubt would remain, the "little book" of the Constitutions tries to remind it with clear words: "Since in most cities the majority are poor..." And a little further: "The goal of our Institute is our sanctification and the good of the neighbor, whether with good example or with the teaching of the girls, *always preferring the poor to those who are well off or rich.*"

This preference of Mother Paula did not confine her to write them on the schoolbooks, when the number was limited and the quota was full, because in her school there was room for all, no matter how much the level had to be risen. In Olesa, for instance, there are 70 girls in 1860; in 1861, there are 102; in 1889, around 160. The teachers increase in the same proportion: 5 in 1861 and 10 in 1889. It is not a problem of numbers and registers. Not even a personal radical conversion. What is marvelous is her walking without any noise, her constant steps, always at the same rhythm. She follows her path, reading, interpreting, and solving necessities. First seeing, then serving, always loving. Conversion? Signs of the times? It is the ardent charity, which pulls and brings through the prophecy road to the foolishness of the cross. "Mother Paula was a mother," said one of her old students. And another one goes even farther: "For me, she was more than my own mother".

One day she discovers that the poorest of her students don't come to classes in the morning and only come in the afternoon. And others come early in the morning but without taking their breakfast. She investigates and she finds out the root of the problem. There are families so poor that they can have food but once a day. Then Mother Paula puts a remedy to the necessity with prudence and joy: she calls the ones who live like that "and happily she puts a piece of bread in their hands; in the meantime, the cook Sister prepares a *healthy* soup". A piece of bread, hundreds of pieces of bread; one cup of soup, hundreds of cups of soup in the cold mornings of Olesa. .

Many of those girls were daughters of workers, with more necessities than a piece of bread and a cup of soup. A rich companion among those poor girls tells us very well what Mother Paula did for them. I copy literally:

She was very anxious for the girls of the workers... She helped some with clothes and even sometimes with shoes. I remember that in some occasions, she put aside some of her food, folded it in small packages and handed them to those who did not have food, since their parents worked in the factory Puig de Llagostera, today Colonia Sedo. I have seen many times these actions.

The vision of Mother Paula went naturally from the girls to their parents, to the family, to the worker. She met workers in all her foundations. The best exploited were in Olesa. Adult workers, children workers in an indifferent society. Napoleon had said: "God wants it in this way. It is necessary rich people and poor people. Although in eternity the luck might be different". And the Church in Spain, with clerics more as functionaries than apostles, goes back behind in practicing the Gospel doctrine and the social obligation. How far, still, from "the Church of the poor!" "The Poor- a contemporary theologian has written- form the great oblivion of the Church in the second part of the XIX century". It has forgotten, without doubt, the noble Christian tradition calling the Vicar of Christ: "Vicar of the Poor Christ"

Mother Paula does not have armies as the great Corso, and she has not studied scholastic theology treaties. But she recalls the words of the Lord; "Come blessed of my Father... because I was hungry and you gave me food" (Matt 25,24-35). And the love commandment of the Lord: "The poor has been entrusted to you; you will be the helper of the orphan" (Psal. 9b,14). And in her silence meditation before the crucifix in

her room, a church sacrament. To the same conclusion reaches Fr. Lacordaire at Dijon, who even had the courage to quote in front of his audience the valiant humble expression of the Spanish king Saint Fernando: " More than an army I would rather fear the curse of a poor".

A mystery of compassion, a real sacrament. This is the poor, any of the married workers with graduates from Olesa School. And she adds to the Bible remembrances the inner remembrance of her familiar origin. Her father was also a worker, a specialist, yes, but a worker. And her mother, when he died, took his turns in the work because her children had remained orphans and they asked for bread.

And then Mother Paula invented the "vale", (promissory bond). A white paper with her signature: Paula Montal of Saint Joseph Calasanz. Small, humble, but precious...Because the small paper, the "vale" had enough credit at the bread-shop, at the meat-shop and at the milk-shop..."The poor and good lady" would talk to Mother Paula, she would expose her anguish, she would receive words of encouragement and hope and the "vale" with her signature. The problem would be solved for the whole month in the poor families. Mother Paula had great confidence in the Providence of the Lord of the lilies, of the birds, and her confidence was not frustrated. At the end of the month, enough money would arrive to take back the promissory bonds and make them circulate another month, and all the months of the year and during many years.

She cannot pull out all the roots of evil. Paula answers with her life and with her practical gestures to the necessities of life. She cannot curse the darkness that shadows the Olesa families. Paula goes lightning small white lights as signs of hope.

This conduct, silent and effective, felt deep down in the hearts of her students. They saw the model and they tried to imitate her. One of them said:

Mother Paula loved the poor and the rich; for all kept words of kindness. She had a big heart for God and for men... How well she taught us to be charitable! Every time I have an opportunity of practicing charity, I think with happiness: Mother Paula would have done it in this way...I taught my child to be charitable and I know he does plenty of charity. I have taught it because Mother Paula taught it to me in the same way.

And Carmen Duran says:

Many years ago were founded in this village (Olesa de Monserrat) the conferences of Saint Vincent of Paul; since their foundation, I have been the president. I have the love for the sick thanks to the instructions of Mother Paula

She had the right to rest at the end of her path. She did everything she could while her strength accompanied her. And when her pulse was trembling her to write her signature on the small white papers, she did not lose her smile. Other hands, young and generous, forged under the word and example of the teacher, would continue signing and bringing to the poor, the message of love of Christ. Almost without noticing it, she had been preparing, year after year, generations of compromised women in action and in social change.

Yes, she had the right to rest in peace and to smile...

A Daughter of Mary

We call her Paula. Only that. This is her name. But they put her three names in her baptism and all of them were written down on the parish baptism book. We have forgotten two of them, but she knew very well that her third baptismal name was Mary, the same as the name of her heavenly Mother, always Virgin Mary. She kept it in mind in her long journey of 90 years. With that name, she came into life at Arenys and invoking that name, she said goodbye to her life in Olesa.

On her ways, she will be gathering the melodious Marian spirituality of her world, more as a devotional one than as a theological virtue. But she will live it according to her way, trying to enrich it with new experiences and accepting with filial piety and with joy the teachings of the Church..

When she was 22 years old, the 18th of May 1822, she entered as a novice in the Confraternity of our Lady of Sorrows, established in Arenys in the year 1788. Chronologically speaking, it was the ninth and last confraternity established in the Parish. And although it was the last, it had more vitality than the other two Marian Confraternities, the Rosary (1586) and the Carmen (1606).

The Confraternity of Our Lady of Sorrows got a great unthinkable push all through Europe, and in a special way in Spain, when Catholics associated the sorrows of the Virgin in the Passion of her Son, to the sorrowful and humiliated calvary of Pius VI and Pius VII. On the 20th of February 1798, Pius VI was taken away from Rome by the soldiers of Napoleon and died at the age of 81 years, forgiving his enemies, in the exile of Valence (France) on the 28th of August, 1799. The luck of his successor in the cathedra of Saint Peter was not better. He was despised in a brutal way by the Emperor of France, even at the beginning of his reign in 1800. Pius VII was forcefully taken out of the Vatican the night between the 5 and 6 of July 1809, and taken prisoner to France. He was maltreated in the Fontainebleau castle and came back to Rome in May 1814. Even he had to abandon the Eternal City during the empire of the "one hundred days" (March. June 1815). His health was really deteriorated by his sufferings and the old Pope died in the Roman hill of the Quirinal, on the 20th of August 1823.

These long 25 years of abuses hurt really the sentiments of the Catholics. In the family meetings, used to be commented with sadness the humiliation situation of the Pope and the future of the Church without Pastor. The parish Priests explained from the pulpits to the faithful the promises of Jesus to Peter: "You are Peter and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell will not prevail upon it" (Mtt 16,18). And they asked for prayers, sacrifices and greater compromises. The time had arrived for uniting the active faith to the persecuted Church, of giving their names and some of their time to the pious associations that renewed the personal spirituality and put a remedy to the necessities of the poor.

The answer was generous. In this compassionate and prayerful climate was being forged the decision of Paula. Her entering into the Association of Our Lady of Sorrows was not without long thinking or in haste. It did not go well with her reflexive spirit and psychologically speaking it was a second cause. The constant contact with the Parish, the daily Rosary prayed in the family, an adequate spiritual formation give us the clues of this genesis and the development of Paula in her answer. It was the proper moment. Her spiritual director spoke and she answered "yes".

Exactly one year of novitiate, and on the 19 of 1823, she professed in the confraternity. This year marks an epoch. She grows interiorly and she makes consequences. Her cathechetical apostolate starts fiercely

until it becomes "the right hand of the Parish Priest". This is not the place to start making descriptions of didactic methods and of the apostolic strategies. But we have to say that the excursions with the groups of girls sometimes end at the chapel of the Holy Tomb, by the sea, and sometimes at the Pieta Chapel, up atop the town. It is not difficult to think that there was here when God put in the heart of Paula the seed of the future Escolapia Vocation.

Other consequence. This time a familiar one. Paula was the first of the Montals who gave her name to the Confraternity of Sorrows. Time goes on, the years go on, too, and the word and the example drag along. Between 1825 and 1829, three of her brothers give their names, her mother and the wife of her brother Benito. When the 5 children of her male brothers grow, they will follow the steps of their parents.

Between 1822 and 1829, Paula fulfilled with fidelity her obligations stated by the book with the title *Member and Perfect Servant of the Holy Virgin of Sorrows*. And not only during those years. For sure, during the two years of her forced exile (1830-1832), and with some coloring during the five years (1841-1846) she dedicated to the foundation of direction of Arenys School. The lessons were really deep in her blood, and they were delicious. The gospel evangelical virtues practiced as a member of the confraternity, she never were forgotten by her. When old and with white hair, the light of her eyes will become tenuous, but she will continue near the needed and praying with them the Crown to the Virgin of Sorrows. The witnesses that lived near to her - Religious and students - will tell us it at the proper time.

Paula even gave her name to another Confraternity of the Parish, to Our Lady of the Rosary. The goal of this Confraternity was double: to increase and to propagate the devotion to the Virgin, through the prayer of the Rosary, and to deep in the knowledge of Our Lord Jesus Christ, since through the Rosary, "the whole life of Jesus, our Savior, is meditated, distributed through the 15 mysteries". Vocal prayer and meditation, hand by hand. For the prayer of the community Rosary and practical ways were found: the confraternity brothers and sisters, should recite the whole rosary and by turns, all nights, before the altar the confraternity has in the Parish. It was the essential. Besides that, the confraternity members, after finishing the conventual Mass the first Sundays of the month, they would leave the Parish Church "carrying in their hands lighted candles" and singing in solemn procession the Rosary, through the streets near the Church.

This belonging of Paula to these confraternities of Arenys, brings to our memory the belonging and apostolate of Calasanz in the roman confraternities. Even in this not small detail, the daughter followed the steps of the father. And as he did years before, she also, through the confraternity work, prepared the hearts so that they would flourish with virtues. The encounter with the boys arrived at Tratevere in 1597 and with the girls at Figueras in 1829. God asked from them different kind of services for His Church. It was the new charism, knocking the door and it invaded their lives. It was necessary to keep away from the compromises they had acquired in the confraternities, not from the spirit.

Paula did not stop the walking. She allowed herself to be led by the voice of God. And this voice continued signaling her new paths. From a Franciscan direction, she moved to an Escolapia one. Or, as the sixth Relator has written in his vote, at this moment, in the life of Paula Montal, "a happy synthesis is produced from the *memory* franciscan-capuchin, that had informed her young years, to the dynamic evangelical of the Calasanzian pedagogy."

Once more, as Calasanz. The foundation of the Congregation of the Daughters of Mary in 1847 carries in itself a personal profession and it is equivalent to a definite inner consecration. And exteriorly, manifesting and patronizing that consecration, symbols and doctrine. The first symbol was the shield. The best doctrine, in the Constitutions.

Calasanz wanted to be called, when he felt the calling of the charism, Joseph of the Mother of God. And he gave as a shield to the Order of the Pious Schools, the anagram *Mary, Mother of God*.

Paula and her daughters cleave on their habit, blessed and received in Sabadell, the same shield, "in silver", with the same anagram. Arriving to this point, M. Paz de Moraza writes with historical accuracy: "Our Mothers hang in the chests not the anagram of the name of Mary, but the same shield of the Pious Schools, but in Spanish, so that everybody would understand it. And she adds with joy: "MARY, MOTHER OF GOD" will be the shield of my sons, Calasanz thought... And *Mary, Mother of God*, in Spanish, we carry in our chests: and *Mary, Mother of God*, was from the beginning, because it cannot be other, but the shield of our Institute".

Our Lady... of Sorrows, of the Rosary. Now is Mother of God, of the Institute and of the Escolapias, who define themselves as Daughter of Mary, "because of their tender devotion to the wonderful Mother".

This peripheral devotional line *change* to the deep biblical theological line is essential for a true knowledge in understanding the Marian spirituality of Paula Montal.

In her letters to Fr. Jenaro Fucile, she always invokes the Holy Virgin with the title of Mother. She tells him that when she conceived the Institute, "we resolved to erect it under the protection of the Mother of God". She tells him that they anxiously expect the supreme approbation of Pius IX, and to get that, they pray "assiduously and fervorly to God and to his merciful Mother". She tells him that they are waiting the anxious approbation, "and for that we fervently pray to God and to our good Mother, the always Virgin Mary". Mother of God, Mother always, merciful, kind...

When the time arrives to say the last word, it will come spontaneously and with fervor the word Mother.

In the Constitutions of the Pious Institute was crystallized the charism of Mother Paula. And through the text, it comes and goes naturally the figure of Mary. The page before the last, brings this recommendation:

Dear Sisters, be really devout of the Virgin Mary, as our Father Joseph Calasanz is telling us. She is really Mother of all Christian, yes, but she is in a special way of those souls who serve with fidelity and are really Daughters of Mary.

It is like the exhortation summary of all the doctrine said before. I cite, to prove it, some texts, not all, the most representative:

According to the Constitutions, the Escolapia Sister starts the day in the chapel with an hour of mental prayer, takes part in the Eucharist and prayer of "the Office of Hours in honor of the Virgin Mary". The vocal prayer, twice a day; in the first, she will recite "the Litanies of the Most Holy Mary of Loreto and the five accustomed Psalms in honor of the same name of the Most Holy Mary".

With special inner disposition she should prepare herself to honor the feasts of the Virgin. And it establishes that *"a rigid fast should be made, of only a serve (plate), to honor the seven festivities of the Most Holy Mary"*. These italic words appear in the text, without doubt to stress the importance of the offering. Later on, the Constitutions fixed in detail titles, dates and food of that only "serve". They say:

On the vigils of the seven festivities of the Most Holy Virgin, that is to say, the Purification, February 2, the Annunciation, March 25, the Visitation, July 2, the Assumption, August 15, the Nativity, September 8, the Presentation, November 21, the Immaculate Conception, December 8, when the Rule fixes the fast to only a serve, to oblige this divine Mother to take you under her protection and help, this only serve would consist of beans, green vegetables, rice or any other things similar to the ones during lent.

They say too "the shield should be of silver". And they relate it directly to the humility virtue, practiced by the Virgin "our Mother", and by "our Holy Father Saint Joseph Calasanz".

The shield of the name of Mary that you carry on your chests, should be for you a continuous alarm clock. It should incline you to be more humble, since this virtue of humility is the fountain or source from where are born and acquired the other virtues. That is why the Holy Fathers say that the Most Holy Virgin, our Mother, was the most humble person among creatures...Inside yourselves, think and consider yourselves as the most inferior creature, imitating the Most Holy Mary, as St. Bernard assures us, and our Holy Father Joseph Calasanz.

And immediately, the girls "should pray devoutly the holy Rosary"; the novices, "should be very devoted of the Most Holy Mary, so much recommends by our Holy Patriarch, not having even one day without praying the Rosary and trying to imitate his virtues"; teachers and students, "during the class hours, each time the clock would mark the hour, all standing, would honor the Virgin Mary".

The community organization signaled new rhythm and new exercises of piety, promoted in a special way by Mother Paula. They were gathered in *"Prayer manual, proper of the Congregation of Daughters of Mary, Escolapias Sisters (1877)*, in the volume of *"Prayers and exercises most common in the Congregation of the Daughter of Mary, Escolapias Sisters (1913)* and in *Private Regime of the Pious Institute of the Daughters of Mary, Escolapias Sisters, according to the spirit of the constitutions (1925)*. The contents, comparison and study, is already done by M. Maria Luisa Labarta.

I want to add that among the new Marian prayers, established by Mother Paula, there appears the *Crown of the Twelve Stars* that everybody should pray on Sundays and feasts of obligation. For me it is a logical consequence, after she accepted as her surname the name and surname of Saint Joseph Calasanz and for her Institute the shield and anagram of Mary, Mother of God.

Saint Joseph Calasanz composed the Crown of the Twelve Stars in 1628. The Saint got a Trinitarian Synthesis of the gifts bestowed upon his Daughter by the Father, by the Son to his Mother and by the Holy Spirit to his Spouse. Twelve gifts, twelve stars,

The ones St. John saw in his exile at Patmos upon the head of the Woman: "A great sign appeared in the heaven: a Woman, dressed with a sun, with the moon under her feet and with a crown of twelve stars upon her head". (Ap. 12,1) Calasanz gathers the vision, gives name to the Woman and transforms each star in a Trinitarian gift. But he does not forget, in writing it, the children of his schools. So, in the Crown of the Twelve Stars, manifests his devotion to Mary, his contemplative spirit and his charism of educator.

Calasanz confessed that he always got the required grace with the prayer of the Crown... And since he wanted the same for his children, he wrote down: "I wish that this devotion to the Most Holy Mary be practice every day by all our students, so that they might receive, for such a small sacrifice the immense favor of the protection of Mary during their whole life and at the moment of her death.

Mother Paula was enthusiastic about the Crown of the Twelve Stars as soon as she knew it. She was a daughter of Mary. And she also was a daughter of Calasanz. She prayed it; she made her daughters pray it and she divulged it among the students. I am inclined to think that from December 8, 1854, with more emphasis, when Piu IX proclaimed the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of Mary. The Pope, a student from the Escolapios, he knew very well the Crown because he had prayed it during his years of boarding student in our school of Volterra. And in the Crown - second gift of the Father to Mary - Calasanz had written: "*Praised be the divine Father for having preserved her from all sin in her conception*".

The general archive of the Pious Schools keeps a wonderful secret, without revealing it. There, in a double original document, the Pope Gregory XVI, by a decree of January 8, 1838, gave forever, "an indulgence of 100 days to those who would pray the Crown of the Twelve Stars to the Most Holy Virgin Mary, written by Saint Joseph Calasanz". The XIX century, century of the love for indulgences and for the souls in Purgatory. Fr. Jenaro Fucile took immediately the opportunity of the proclamation of the Immaculate and of his amity with Pius IX. He presented him an exemplar of the Crown and "to promote more and more this devotion to Mary", he asked His Holiness, "to increase from 100 to 300 days the indulgences; that he may give plenary indulgence, once a month, to all who recite it daily; and that this indulgence may be applied to the Souls in Purgatory".

The petition is written in Italian. The answer arrived in good Curia Latin from the Secretary of the Pope Decrees. In the audience of 27 March 1855, Pius IX granted what he was asked for. This is the answer:

Answering the petition, our Holiness Pius Pope IX, to all and each one of the faithful of both sexes who might pray devoutly and with a contrite heart the pray commonly called Crown of the Twelve Stars in honor of the Holy Virgin Mary, composed by Saint Joseph Calasanz, he gives 300 days of indulgences every time they recite it; besides that, to those who recite it every day during a whole month, he gives the possibility of gaining Plenary Indulgence once a month, the day chosen by them, supposing that as true penitents, they confess, receive Holy Communion and they visit the Parish Church or any other public Church, and there, during a certain time, pray to the Lord for the intentions of His Holiness. This document is valid and forever, for now and for the future; the indulgence is given, besides that such indulgence may be applied for the dead. Given in Rome, etc."

There could not be more fastness, or more generosity. The Pope answer was made public and it contributed, as it was desired, to strengthen the Marian devotion and to propagate the Crown of the Twelve Stars. It is a great gift, according to the spiritual mentality of those times, to be able to gain daily an indulgence of 300 days, Plenary Indulgence once a month and to be able to apply it for the benefit of the dead persons. A new argument added to her devotion to Saint Joseph Calasanz, so that Mother Paula might divulge the Crown among the girls.

They remember, many years after the death of Mother Paula, where and how they learned the Crown and the reason why they continue praying it. There are many testimonies. One is enough, very explicit, of Antonia Reverendo, boarding student in San Martin de Provencals, and she was an Escolapia some years later. She tells us:

Evoking the remembrance of our venerable Mother Foundress, it comes to my memory the question she asked to us, students, during my childhood in our school of S. Martin, when she used to make a visit: Do you pray the Crown of the Twelve Stars? And when we answered in an affirmative way, she used to explain herself praising the Most Holy Virgin and the Holy Founder".

Mother Paula divulges the prayer of the Crown, basing herself on the testimony, for her sacred, of the author, and from 1855 on the authority of the Pope. When she was rather old, Mother Antonia used to say that following the example of the Holy Mother, she had never stopped praying the Crown of the twelve Stars, so much recommended by our Holy Father.

And she was not only satisfied in recommending the Crown. The author of her necrology, one of her disciples and a companion of community during almost 30 years, affirms that Mother Paula "prayed with the girls the Crown of Saint Joseph Calasanz with the most fervor of her soul".

And this prayer together with her students, Mother Paula used to add another devotion in her classrooms. When the clock of the tower struck the hour, she added the short prayer in a loud voice: " Blessed and holy be hour when the Most Holy Mary came in her flesh to Zaragoza!" Vilata Ribas remembers it, student of our school in Olesa. And it is rather strange and emotive this reference to the Virgin of Pillar. Mother Vilata tells us that she had "much contact with Mother Paula" and that she "attended the schools of Escolapias since she was 3 until 20", that is to say, between 1873-1893. These dates coincide with the foundation of the school in Zaragoza in 1893. And it occurs to me that maybe Mother Paula started reciting this short prayer when her daughters started sending her news from Zaragoza, MM. Pilar Reig and Ines Trilla, specially, from the city of the Ebro river. This foundation in Zaragoza was a great one. It was the first School of the Institute dedicated to Saint Joseph Calasanz and the closeness to the Basilica where the Virgin has her Pillar.

To this short prayer, a little late in her life, we must add two constant and deep devotions: the trisagion in the morning and the rosary in the afternoon. The chronology of Mother Paula reminds that to us. But let the students tell us that, fulfilling the details.

Maria Vilata: "I remember that at eleven, we used to pray the trisagion. In the afternoon we always prayed the rosary, since she was very much devout of the Virgin Mary."

Teresa Bayona: "I remember that she used to come to our classrooms, the smallest ones, and she made us pray the rosary. I have never stopped praying the rosary since she taught me that. Sometimes we prayed the trisagion, too".

Magdalena Calceran: "The servant of God was a soul of deep faith. She used to inculcate in us short prayers and made us pray the trisagion and in the afternoon the holy rosary".

Dolores Duran: "She loved the Virgin Mary and she made us pray the rosary. She invited us to place flowers before her image...I never abandon the trisagion in the morning and the rosary in the afternoon, as the servant of God taught us".

Joaquina Valls: "The religious practices she inculcated to the girls were the trisagion in the morning and the holy rosary in the afternoon, ending it with a 'Hail Holy Queen and a short prayer to the Virgin of Monserrat'"

Consuelo Blanch: "Her favorite things were the prayer of the trisagion, the holy rosary and 'Hail Holy Queen' to the Virgin of Monserrat".

This innocent prayer of her girls, and she tried that all girls would do it at the same time and in all schools, filled her heart with joy. The same girls remember the scene, specially remembering the trisagion.

Raimunda Salvador: "When she was very old, she asked to be accompanied to the classes of the smallest girls, she asked to pray the trisagion and said: In all houses God is praised saying *Holy, Holy*, as I hope to sing it for all eternity in heaven".

Dolores Duran: " She entered the classrooms, made the girls pray the "Holy, Holy" and she used to add: So many girls and in so many places and schools! These acclamations are repeated to praise God!

The seed of these practices, sown in the hearts of the girls by Mother Paula, continued producing the best fruits after three-quarters of a century in many families of Olesa. The girls saw the Mother praying, they prayed with her, they formed Christian families and they continued praying. Only one testimony, Rosario Sole, who speaks for many others is enough. She declared in 1957: " Her prayer was a model. She imbued it to the girls in such a way that in Olesa, even today, in many families, the prayers taught by her are said".

As a good Catalan woman, she felt a special devotion to the Mother of God in Monserrat. Teresa Bayona says: "Her favorite prayer was to pray to the Holy Virgin, in a special way to the Moreneta (Brownish) of Monserrat". And Jaime Ribas, a boy who runs about on the corridors of the school in Olesa, and he goes near Mother Paula, said: "In the chapel, she made me pray the trisagion and the holy rosary. The same did in the classrooms, and the invocations to the Virgin of Monserrat, to whom she was really devout"

She needed to materialize this love for the Virgin of Monserrat. It was not enough to look up above and to find out her throne beyond the mountains. She wanted to build a special chapel inside the school, so that she would preside from her niche the prayers of the girls, of her community and her prayers, too. Years were running out. At last, in 1880, thanks to the last will of Sor Camen de Bou, she was able to buy a new house, bigger and healthier. The carpenters started building walls and the on 6th of October 1881, the chapel was inaugurated. The 16th of October was Sunday, one of the most beautiful and happiest Sunday in the life of Mother Paula.

And although it is too fast, let open the first vale. The companions of Community of Mother Paula who saw the facts, said years later on:

"Her love to the Virgin Mary was extraordinary. The niche of the Virgin of Monserrat in our chapel of Olesa, is a witness of the loved colloquies of Mother Paula with the Virgin Mary whom she called her mother, and to whom she always went with humility, love and confidence".

The Golden Sun in the Evening

If zero kilometers mark the starting point of Arenys road, the last kilometer is placed before the gate of the school at Olesa. And in all roads, two stages. An anonymous Escolapia put it very well: "The Servant of God, in the first stage of her life, worked and prayed. In the last stage, prayed and edified without ceasing".

During this "last period" of her life, the roads of the spirit of Mother Paula become quieter and they illumine with the golden sun of evening. She has grown in age, she has grown in experience and she has grown in inner silence. She is hiding her anxiety in the most profound mystic body. But she continues her external work with calm rhythm. Her habit seems transparent, "poorer and mended". The habit is a symbol. Dolores Duran says "she mended it even to the impossible" It was a symbol of a poverty lived to the utmost.

And as the habit, her room. The four essential things: the basket chair to sit down, the wooden portable wash-stand with its wash-bowl and one earthen pitcher, the small table for the books, the iron bed to sleep and to die...And for any decoration, an Immaculate image, remembrance of the dogmatic declaration in 1854. And two "very old" frame-pictures of Saint Joseph Calasanz and Saint Teresa.

Her strength is failing. Her sight is almost lost. She moves through the corridors "slowly, dragging her feet". Francisca Sastre, who was a student of Mother Paula and she admires her more than anyone else, tells us than she became "almost invalid".

You see her and she looks weak, "almost invalid", but you get near her, and you find in her a steel spirit. She can be bent but not broken.

It is the physical stripping. But still she has strength to talk to the girls "with much affection" so to bring them the Christian truth. And it is as taking them near Christ and near to His word. Still she keeps alive "the art of captivating the souls by her kindness and simplicity". From time to time, she can still go down to the garden where the young and strong palm tree she planted to remember the inauguration of the chapel to the Virgin is still growing. These visits to the garden were visits of happiness and praise. Time could not arise the impression neither forget the words; "When she would leave to the garden - her community Sisters say - she would stop at each tree, each flower, and she used to say to the one who accompanied her: *Tell me, tell me, who but God could create such beauty? Blessed and praised be the Lord who has created you!*

It is time to live the "Communion of Saints". Saint Joseph Calasanz and Saint Teresa are her preferred companions.

She herself discovered Calasanz when she was young. But she has been growing in dialogue and love, according to the deepening of her sanctity, in her educational task, in the beauty of the Crown of the Twelve Stars, in sound doctrine, normative and ascetic, of his Constitutions. She loves him, as a daughter loves her father. She tries to imitate him, as a disciple his teacher. And she wants to be a saint, as he is, without losing any detail of the model...

Teresa was founded in the life of Calasanz. Fr. Agustin Casanovas completed his image. And she became "devout" of the "mystic Doctor". While she was able to read, she did not remove from her hands the Constitutions of the "Saint Patrich" and the works of Saint Teresa. Did anybody tell her that Saint Joseph Calasanz carried near his heart, in a interior packet of his cassock, one handwritten copy of *Camino de Perfeccion?* (The way of perfection) And when she was not able to read, she asked favors to the girls. The Constitutions she knew by heart. But the *Moradas*, (Mansions) *el Camino*, (the way) *las Fundaciones* (The Foundations) and the *versos* (The verses) have another style. The girl reads a paragraph, a few lines. She listens in profound silence. It is enough to continue meditating and praying.

She is happy in Olesa. But she is not ignored the motives of her retirement and seclusion there. She does not pay much attention, but she knows it. Different criteria. She knows that in the direction of the Institute, the Calasanzian direction is being lost. Her same daughters, the ones she reared and formed and whom she loves with a motherly love, badly counseled and badly led, dream about another constitutions... As in

Rome, more than two centuries before. The son against the father, Esteban Cherubini and Joseph Calasanz.... She remembers, suffers, prays day and night, makes the girls pray...

And she knows, too, than the list of schools that is on the desk of the direction equip of the Institute, the school of Olesa is marked with a cross. Because it is in a small town, because it is small and poor. And she had to fight, turning down wrong ideas, so that people would not notice. In silence, avoiding alarms, with delicacy and religious prudence. They could ask her any sacrifice, but they should not even touch a minimum her poor girls. She never defended her own rights. Now are her poor girls, her families, and her poor. And her entire and firm character arose in defense of the justice. Of the justice for the present and for the future. They heard her in her loud voice: "Yes, I know it. I know it. Later on, when I had died, they will like to close this school. They would like to close it because it is small and poor. And what does it matter? This school should never be closed".

Different criteria, without any doubt. But about not essential things. The charism of the Institute, the sacred rights of the poor. A double added suffering. The moral stripping is always more painful than the physic stripping.

The Lord, as in other time with his people, is carrying her "as a man carries his son through the whole way" (Dt. 1,31) A long way through the desert. Physical stripping, moral stripping and when one thinks that the goal is near, the spiritual stripping that liberates the soul of human attachments and prepares it for the embrace of the cross.

Mother Paula rests her spirit in listening the word of her spiritual director. It is her style. Fray Roque de San Julian, Fr. Jacinto Feliu, Don Jose Regas, in Arenys, in Figueras, in Sabadell... She did not forget their names. She had all of them very well in order and inside the secret of her thankful prayer.

In Olesa, after many years, Don Francisco Trullas. And they take him away because of juridical reasons. Mother Paula felt herself alone and she was afraid. The state of her soul and the anguish of that moment are reflected in the solicitude the General Superior sent to Don Jaime Catala and Alboa, Bishop of Barcelona. It is a history page, worthy to write it down. Here goes the main part:

(Mother Paula) experiments a great difficulty in confessing herself with other different priest but her old confessor, the Reverend Don Francisco Trullas, who guided her for many years and now she suffers greatly in her spirit because she cannot be guided by the one who had acquired, by his long experience, the art of accommodating to her exceptional state

Don Francisco Trullas had guided her for many years and now, after remaining without any guidance, she suffers greatly in her spirit... That is the reality. We will soon see how that "exceptional state" stops being an euphemism and it means sanctity. They had pity in her suffering and the golden sun started to shine in the evening.

She had to overcome the last test. They who knew her say that she was "very devout of the Holy Eucharist"; even more, they say that she was "hungry of the Eucharist".

She found her main spiritual food in the Holy Mass. And she was lacking of it on Sundays and feast days. It was a result of the morning schedules and of a better planning of the Parish chapter. And of course, of

her old age. While the chaplain would celebrate the Mass in the school chapel, no problem. But to climb the narrow streets and to go up the stairs and sometimes with the winter cold in the morning was too much for Mother Paula. She became without Mass for the rest of her life. During Sundays and Feast Days. And they were no few during the second half of the XIX century. Did the Lord leave her alone? One has to go through that case to know the double edge of the spade between the soul and the spirit; there is no pain similar to this pain.

Mother Paula found the formula in a short time to put away her loneliness and to remain in a silence dialogue with her Spouse. In this matter, the witnesses are very important and they are like graphics because they were impressed by the fidelity of the Mother, old and sick, and even more by her prayerful figure. Her Sisters were to go the Parish Church. She, "when the clock struck the hour, would remain in the chapel choir". Time is not important. "She used to retire herself in her kneeler and she would remain like that like in ecstasy during the whole time the Mass would long, strange to anything else and in union with her Beloved". Her Sisters would come back and if somebody would ask her something, she would not answer, since as she said later: *"When one is talking with the Creator, one has not to talk with creatures"*

She has reached, in her long way, to taste the joy reserved for the mystics. A joy added to her charism of Escolapia Sister. The Sisters find her as an ecstatic when they come back from the Parish. In ecstasy has been during the whole time of Mass and even more. There is a double personality in her: "to go out of herself" to allow the Lord to illumine her, the Lord who comes near and is ready to communicate. The spirit of other Paula moves in a double level at the same time, the one which is apparent and the Sisters perceive in the face and glance, and the supernatural, hidden and sanctifying. Using Teresian terms, one can conclude that she lives in an "ecstatic moment" smooth and intellectual. Or, if you want to say, the paschal morning of her encounters with Christ.

Coming back to the daily reality, what is the meaning of the world and the opinion of the creatures?

But creatures can guess what is happening inside from the things they see outside. Maybe they do not understand the theological distinctions, nor the mystic levels. But they know how to separate the wheat from the darnel. The opinions are not of this time. They come from far away in time and space; but during these last days, they become stronger, here at Olesa.

The apostolic and writer missionary Fr. Jose March, S.J. has discovered in the Olesa community, in 1886, a "Holy Mother". In 1871, Mother Asuncion Ramon writes from Soller that in Olesa lives Mother Paula, "edifying all her Sisters with examples of sanctity". In 1887, the General Superior M. Francisca de Domingo tells to the General Vicar of the Bishopric of Barcelona that Mother Paula is "a Holy Religious". And in Olesa, what do people say? The workers "respect and talk very well about her". The people of the extreme left "venerate" her. The good people look at her "as a saint". When the end would arrive, a unanimous voice will be heard confessing that "a saint has disappeared". This is the voice of the people and the people do not easily commit errors. (These are some of the "opinions" among many).

They speak the truth. And the people of Olesa, might be of the left or of the right, it does not matter. They speak of what they see. They base their opinions in objective testimonies. They know that Mother Paula never asked them about the party they used to vote when their daughters were admitted at school or when she solved the necessities of their families with those miraculous white papers approved by her signature.

The missionary had said. The Sisters had said too. The people of Olesa were saying...

She was without noticing anything. Her ears are attentive to other words, to other messages. Her strength is becoming weak, but she uses the strength that remains in her body to get up when the community bell rings early in the morning to start the day together with other sisters, in the meditation established by the Rule. To meet the girls. To go down to the kitchen every morning and every afternoon to pray with the cooks the Trisagion and the Crown of Sorrows.

She was almost blind. From the chapel choir she cannot distinguish the sprinkle light that is before the Tabernacle, and there she says with a worried voice: "*O, my God, how do they leave you in darkness!*". Before going to rest, kneeling on the kneeler of the chapel would say as a goodbye: "*Look, my Beloved, I go to rest. In the Tabernacle I leave my heart. May it love you without ceasing... and when I come for it tomorrow, please give it back to me full of love... and may this love be only for You and for your Mother and my Mother, the Holy Virgin*"

Almost blind, one Sister reads for her everyday some lines of a book she herself has chosen. When she hears the name of Mary, she tells the reader: "*Silence, be still; do not go on...Mary! Mary! She is our Mother and the Mother of Jesus. Tell me, aren't you deeply touched by this thought? And to think that we are her daughters! Well, what a joy I experience thinking that very soon she will come to meet me and she will take me in her company!*"

We have these details and words, those written and those to be written, thanks to the Sisters of the Olesa community, who were hearing and writing down them so that nothing would be lost of our Foundress Mother. And we have to thank them, because besides the great gift, they tell us how the deep spirituality of Mother Paula is concentrating upon two fixed and essential points: Jesus in the Tabernacle and the Virgin Mother. They pull from her with invisible ties.

The three last weeks, they say, "was in intimate union with God and in a loving colloquium with her Beloved". The security of a near end, certified by the bed doctor, does not make her sad neither makes her feel fear. On the contrary, she sees that her path is becoming shorter and shorter and she exclaims in a loud voice: "*My time is at hand. It will be soon. How I love to give an embrace to our God and to the Virgin!* They again, the Beloved and the Mother. They are not abstract beings, neither they are far away. The nearness and their corporeality are evident. Paula "feels" their present. And since she is in love with them, she does not find a better encounter than giving them an embrace.

She received Holy Communion every day, but even at these moments she did not allow for herself any exception. She did not want to receive medicines "before receiving the Beloved". She wanted to do as He did who was without a glass of water when he was dying of thirsty on the Cross. And to fulfill to the end the prescriptions established by the Church, they bring Holy Communion at four in the morning, "since she was not able to wait without eating anything until the time of Community Mass".

Only a few days are left. She uses them very well, while two branches are growing in her soul: joy and hope. Some last counsels to her Sisters and to the girls, who enter her room to see how saints die. Beside those, just secret dialogues and love expressions: " Her words were darts of love to her beloved Jesus". And a special calling to the Mother: "*O, my Mother, come, yes, come*".

The 26th of February was Wednesday. It was an ordinary school day. They administered her all the sacraments of the Church. According to the author of her necrology "she received with extraordinary devotion and clarity of mind ". The Sister Asuncion Vayero, her infirmary, has left her alone for a few minutes to go to church and arrange the lamp before the Blessed Sacrament, "since she did not see her as dying yet". After coming back, she finds her looking up to heaven and talking in her mother tongue. These were her last words: "Mare, Mare meva" (Mother, my Mother). And "she died in my arms, Sister Asuncion would say later, if one can say that it was to die, because I think she left my arms to join the arms of the Virgin who had come to meet her".

It was not death, no, but the beginning of a new life. A transient moment, without perceiving it, when the signals that mark the distances come down as useless and the road are arisen on the walking map. One second without name, outside the time, when the roads of the spirit are united forever in a double and intimate embrace of. 1