

PRESS RELEASE

***SR. THECLA MERLO: COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR HEART.
THE DAUGHTERS OF SAINT PAUL: FROM REMEMBRANCE TO INNOVATION***

The Daughters of St. Paul, often known as the Pauline Sisters, celebrate the charism and genius of Sr. Thecla Merlo, who collaborated with Fr. James Alberione in the founding of their order. She was a unique person in the history of the universal Church, as well as in the world of communication and publishing. And this celebration takes place in a way that would be pleasing to Sr. Thecla: launching an innovative and up-to-date communication project.

Sr. Thecla, born Teresa Merlo (1894-1964), after having been a respected seamstress, dedicated all her energies to communication.

With a strong organizational sense, she contributed to the creation of numerous magazines such as *La Valsusa*, *il Giornalino*, *Via, Verità e Vita*, as well as that, which over the years has gained a prominent place among Italian weekly readers – for Catholics and non-Catholics - until it became the most read in the country: *Famiglia Cristiana*.

She promoted the publication of books, radio broadcasts and films, the production of short films and catechetical records. A generous, modern, and innovative Sister.

She had evangelization and the diffusion of the Word at heart and understood, over the years, how crucial the promotion of culture and information was to promote not only faith but also the integral development of the person, in both human and spiritual growth. She thirsted for peace and justice. At the time, there were few religious women so committed to such an apostolate, much less dedicated to the complex world of publishing and journalism. Hers was a life from another period of time which, however, also has a lot to say to us today. In this contemporary period, she would have not hesitated to address issues of faith and current events on Tik-Tok or to create stories on Instagram.

Her earthly existence, which ended on February 5, 1964, at the culmination of a full life spent to communicate the Gospel and spread knowledge and culture, left an indelible mark on the world. She would often repeat: "I would love to have a thousand lives to dedicate them all to this apostolate".

On 22 January 1991 Sr. Thecla Merlo was proclaimed Venerable by Saint John Paul II. Today the Daughters of Saint Paul number around 2000 members with 205 communities, present in 50 countries. The activities desired by Sr. Thecla continue to expand year after year and, faithful to the charism of "being communicators" like this modern woman and religious sister, the Daughters of Saint Paul are engaged throughout the world in the publication of books and newspapers; they produce music, videos, films, radio broadcasts; they manage publishing houses and bookstores; they manage websites and social media networks; they carry out professional New Media Education courses and online biblical courses.

Exactly 60 years after her death and on the threshold of the 110th anniversary of the foundation of the Congregation, the Daughters of Saint Paul wish to celebrate the figure of Sr. Thecla and their journey in this century of history, as underlined by the Superior General Sr Anna Caiazza. To do this, they have chosen an original way, in line with the communication style of the co-foundress:

SCROLLYTELLING, «an innovative tool that allows us to preserve together the safeguarding of our roots and to project towards the future of our mission in the world of communication».

«To tell the story of Sr. Thecla Merlo – explains Luca Olivieri, director and curator of the project created by the communications company Mediacor – *we built a scrollytelling* narrative. This term comes from the combination of two English words: "scroll" and "storytelling". This digital narrative technique allowed us to use texts, images, videos and graphics in a harmonious way, to tell the compelling story of Sr. Thecla. As the user scrolls down the page, the content progressively reveals itself, creating an engaging experience. By applying *scrollytelling* to the project on Sr. Thecla Merlo, we believe we have obtained a result that is not only informative, but also visually attractive and interactive, allowing users to completely immerse themselves in her story and in the impact that Sr. Thecla had on religious communication.»

The launching of this project and its presentation to the public and the press will take place in Rome, Sunday 16 June, at 5.30 pm, at the Auditorium of the Pauline Sisters, at Via Antonino Pio 75 (also streaming in Italian and English on the Youtube channel @FSPSicom).

Program:

- *Sr. Thecla Merlo, remembrance and innovation*: offered by the Superior General of the Daughters of St. Paul, Sr. Anna Caiazza;
- *The importance of digital innovation in ecclesial contexts*: talk by Dr Paolo Ruffini, Prefect of the Holy See Dicastery for Communication;
- Presentation of the Virtual Exhibition (scrollytelling) on Sister Thecla Merlo: by Paolo Pellegrini, Patrizia Morgante and Alberto Chiara representing Mediacor;
- Concert performed by the Choir of the Diocese of Rome directed by Fabio Massimillo, with lyrics by Sister Anna Maria Galliano, defined as the "Mogol" of liturgical music.

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