



Sisters of St. John the Baptist

Provincial Residence

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SR. ALFONSINA MARY SILECCHIA, C.S.J.B.
December 21, 1914 – October 8, 2002

Sr. Alfonsina Mary Silecchia was born on December 21, 1914 in Brooklyn, New York to Gaspare Silecchia and Caterina Cimino and was baptized at Our Lady of Pompeii Church. She entered the Congregation of Sisters of St. John the Baptist on February 6, 1935 and on September 7, 1936 made her first profession of vows. On December 8, 1936, Sister was assigned to teach at St. Lucy School in Newark until October 1939 when she was sent to Most Precious Blood in Brooklyn to do parish work.

On April 21, 1940, Sr. Alfonsina was called to Rome to join two Italian Sisters who were being prepared to be missioned in Zambia, then Northern Rhodesia, Africa. The departure date was set for June 10, 1940. However, with the declaration of World War II, Sr. Alfonsina's trip to Zambia was cancelled and she was detained in Italy for a period of seven years. During her stay in Rome, Sister made her perpetual profession on September 7, 1941.

When the war finally came to an end, plans to travel to Africa were revived, and Sr. Alfonsina, together with two other American Sisters, arrived at St. Joseph Mission, then Northern Rhodesia, on October 24, 1947, where she ministered to the people through her nursing skills. In 1948 she was transferred to St. John Convent, Kitwe, and taught in the Nursery. She dedicated her afternoons teaching sewing to the women in the Townships. From 1950 to 1956 Sr. Alfonsina served as Superior of St. John Convent, after which time she was assigned to St. Francis Mission in Solwezi, where she opened a dispensary. With the help of God's grace, Sister responded to the voice of obedience when asked to return to St. John Convent School to once again take up the ministry of teaching, which she did most lovingly and generously, until her retirement in 1994.

Sr. Alfonsina reflected the person of Christ through her beautiful spirit of patience, understanding, simplicity, hospitality and a very special love for little children. She lived a life of sacrifice and self-denial and always encouraged young religious to pray fervently and live their religious commitment profoundly. Sister was always at home in Zambia and knew the Zambian culture well. This was most evident when Dr. Kenneth Kaunda, former President of Zambia, presented Sister with the Order of Distinguished Service Award.

On October 8, 2002, after many fruitful years of loving service to God, the Church and the Congregation, Sr. Alfonsina Mary Silecchia was called home to the Father to rest in His eternal peace, joy and love.

**“My daughters, follow Jesus in poverty, in obedience, in chastity,
and you will become saints.” Blessed Alphonsus Maria Fusco**