It was the 14th-century Persian poet, Hafiz, who wrote, “We are called to serve as vessels of Love.” Hafiz’ wisdom has given me a growing consciousness of our oneness with the international community of SSNDs and friends with whom I have had the privilege to personally know or live with in Rome or Gorizia in northern Italy. It has been a grace and a blessing to share and keep connected with so many sisters, friends and their families through my ministry of correspondence. I have come to appreciate and treasure the cultures of various countries, and the lessons I have learned are both enlightening and enriching.

One of the highlights for me was a request from Bishop José of Brazil who asked me to accompany him and two Brazilian sisters, to an appointment with the Holy Father John Paul II. What a friendly, delightful visit that was. Another, was the opportunity to visit the grave of Blessed Mother Teresa and to spend some time with our sisters in Bavaria and the welcoming community in Birkenstein in the Alps. I have a close friend in Slovenia with whom I had occasion to visit in Ljubljana and attend final vows of two of our sisters in Ilirska Bistrica. The sisters and their families were so welcoming, generous and hospitable.

Being with our Sisters in Gorizia was a time of learning and loving for me. By then I was quite fluent in Italian and it was a blessing for me to be with them. Many of the sisters there write frequently though several have passed away. I found the little children in kindergarten delightful and so loving. I wonder where they are now in their early twenties.
Gemma Golino was one of seven siblings born on January 22, 1924 in Hamilton, Ontario to Italian parents, Peter and Rosa Tuppin. She entered the congregation in 1946 in Waterdown, Ontario and professed first vows in July 1949. Sister Gemma taught and administered at parochial school throughout Ontario for nearly thirty years. She then held leadership positions at the motherhouse in Ontario, Rome and at the Instituto Nostra Signore in Gorizia, Italy, for more than a decade before returning to Waterloo where she ministered in community service and caregiver for a family member. She is a talented artist and many of her paintings adorn walls across the province. She earned her Bachelor of Arts in Mathematics in 1965 at the University of Toronto and a Master of Arts in Mathematics in 1971 from the University of Waterloo.