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Dearest Sisters,

We just received the news we had been expecting for some time now: at noon today, one of the sisters of our Lahore, Pakistan community ended her earthly life and long experience as a Pauline missionary, carried out with great love:

**BARONCHELLI MARIA VALERIA – SR. MARIA DANIELA
born in Farfengo (Brescia), Italy on 23 February 1932.**

The life of Sr. M. Daniela was filled with surprises from God: a life that she offered him passionately, without reserve. She herself wrote:

“I was the first of seven children. When I left [for Alba], my mother was bedridden and in need of help. I also left behind me my fiancé and the town in which I was actively involved, sure that the Lord would send me to the missions, where the Pauline life would be more demanding but totally spent for him and for the people who became my profound attraction for a vibrant service of communication. He has been faithful, magnificent and has continued to call me constantly!”

Sr. Daniela entered the Congregation in the community of Alba on 23 April 1951. After two years of formation, she was sent to Lyon, France for a brief apostolic experience. She made her novitiate in Rome, concluding it with her first profession on 19 March 1955. Immediately afterward, under the attentive and solicitous gaze of Maestra Thecla, she was assigned to the vocation apostolate. Traveling to the various regions of Italy, she helped to guide Bible and Catechetical Weeks, during which she took advantage of every opportunity to meet young women and their families. For her, this was a very beautiful time, especially because she felt the closeness of M. Thecla, who encouraged her and supported her many vocation initiatives.

In 1964, Sr. Daniela was sent to Lagos, Nigeria along with three other sisters, to establish an FSP presence there and accompany the development of the small community, in which she served as superior. Here is what she wrote about the precious time she spent as a missionary in different African countries:

“The Lord accompanied me in the 15 years I spent in Nigeria, Tanzania and Kenya, where I fell deeply in love with the African people and rejoiced for the effectiveness of our social communications apostolate among the poor. Those fifteen years of service were marked by the war in Biafra and enormous poverty, but also by a landslide of graces in the form of the arrival of our first vocations and abundant dissemination of the Word of God through new initiatives that were looked upon very favorably by the Local Church. The Pauline life was wonderful! But after Vatican Council II and a time of personal discernment, some of the members of our community in Nigeria decided to leave Africa and also the Congregation. It became impossible for us to continue our mission in that country because the authorities would not issue new visas due to the war. We were forced to close our community there and transfer our aspirants to a local Congregation. Only God knows the pain, grief, humiliation, labors and tears involved in this....”

But God’s surprises did not end there. While Sr. Daniela was zealously carrying out the Pauline mission in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania and afterward in Nairobi, Kenya, she received an unexpected mandate from the Superior General to leave the African continent. After two years of updating at the *School of Faith* in Fribourg, Switzerland, she was sent to what she called “the unknown and difficult land of Pakistan—a country I had never dreamed of.” It was an experience of death in view of life.

She wrote: “The Lord, whom I continually begged to teach me the importance of detachment, slowly took away from me the ambition to spend my whole life in Africa and assigned me a new mission in Pakistan. I have lived in this land for many years and today I am more in love with Pakistan than with Africa—something that is difficult even for me to understand. Our difficult mission in this Islamic country gives great value to my Pauline life. I feel privileged to live among these dear persecuted Christians who evangelize me with their faith and testimony. As Paulines, we have a duty, role and significant apostolic mission here. We feel ourselves to be and we are recognized as Sisters of the Bible who work to reach the people with the Word of God. It is a

gift for our vocation, a commitment, a passion, a choice of the heart. The Lord has guided me in all these years, giving me his joy, his love and his grace. His spiritual tactic is unmistakable: he calls a person to mission through many sacrifices and he always asks for detachment.”

Sr. Daniela lived for 27 years in Lahore, where she carried out the services of delegation superior for various mandates, local superior, delegation councilor in charge of the apostolate, and book center work.

Afterward, she was transferred to Karachi, one of the most populous cities in the world, where she remained about 8 years. Here, in addition to serving as local superior and delegation councilor, she also managed the book center, which is located in Saddar—a very poor zone. She had truly become a Pakistana among the Pakistanis, even adopting a blue *shalwar kameez*—the local dress—and using a white veil to cover her head.

She herself said: “We disseminate Bibles and catechisms in Urdu and English, rosaries and audiovisuals, which could get us in big trouble with the religious authorities. When I return home in the evening, I thank God that I am still alive. I feel privileged to continue the dream and love of Maestra Thecla for the agitated masses of poverty-stricken people in Pakistan. M. Thecla and Fr. Alberione are showing us their protection and love, and the Lord is remaining faithful to the *Pact* by protecting us from the serious dangers we face every day.”

Sr. Daniela was happy to continue to reach a large number of people with the Word of God and to sow among flood victims prayer books, hymnals and crucifixes. “These are small things,” she said, “but the people preserve them like treasures—more precious than food because they are the vital lymph of Christian life and hope.”

In 2017 Sr. Daniela returned to Lahore, happy to spend the last stage of her life among our young Pakistani sisters, whom she loved very much and who loved her deeply in return. “After living for years in this country,” she said, “breathing its air, learning its language (Urdu), and accepting its contradictions, Pakistan gets into your blood. Now it’s my land, my people.”

In her last letter to the Superior General, she wrote: “I am serene, happier than ever to be a Pauline missionary. I feel our mission to be a real privilege and grace, and giving my life here in Pakistan, up to the end, makes me feel that Thecla is using me to help the growth of local vocations... I am happy to remain in Pakistan to help the Delegation as much as possible... I rejoice that I am still able to spend a few hours in the book center, which is a very healthy and important ‘medicine’ for me, and also to teach some formation classes for our candidates. Community and apostolic life among our young women give me life and energy.”

A few years ago, Sr. Daniela expressed a deep yearning: “I would like to die here,” she said, “and be buried among the Christian people I love: a strong people who suffer from enormous privations and who are very convinced about their ideas; a people that lives among another people—those who believes in the God of Mohammed and who, excluding the extremists, represent the noble face of Islam.”

The Lord granted Sr. Daniela’s plea: she will remain in Pakistan, where she will continue to be a small seed that dies so as to give life, and also a testimony to the love that conquers death. On one of the last evenings before her death, the sisters of Sr. Daniela’s community heard her repeat several times, with a smile on her face: “I am happy to go because I believe in the resurrection and because I love Jesus immensely. He is everything to me. He is my whole life!”

We want to thank our Pakistani sisters for their love for Sr. Daniela and for taking care of her with such great solicitude, especially in the last stage of her life. And to Sr. Daniela, who loved indigenous vocations, we want to entrust all our young women so that they will cultivate the same apostolic and missionary passion that filled her heart, along with her great love for the Divine Master, the Gospel and all the peoples of the world.

Affectionately,



Sr. Anna Maria Parenzan
Superior General

Rome, 22 March 2019