



ISTITUTO PIA SOCIETÀ  
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Dearest Sisters,

At about 10:00 p.m. yesterday, one of our sisters who had been a guest for several weeks in our Albano community, Italy, suffered a heart attack and died:

**DE CARLI SR. MARIA**  
**born in Cadelbosco (Reggio Emilia), Italy on 16 June 1936.**

Sr. Maria was an intrepid and enthusiastic Pauline missionary who spent almost fifty years of her life in various African countries. When she celebrated her golden jubilee of religious profession, she wrote: “Among the Daughters of St. Paul, I found not only fulfillment in my life as a religious and apostle of Jesus Christ in the world of social communications, but I also found the world wide open before me as a missionary ‘ad gentes.’ The love and mercy of God immensely overcomes all my weakness....”

Entering the Congregation in the community of Alba on 8 September 1947 at the age of eleven, she spent her adolescence and teen years learning the art of book binding. On reaching maturity, she made her novitiate in Rome, concluding it with her first profession on 19 March 1955. Sr. Maria had the chance to deepen her religious education by taking various theological courses in the Congregation, making it possible for her to devote herself to teaching in Alba. Afterward, in Rome, she was assigned to the editorial office of *Ut Unum Sint* and then to that of the catechetical magazine, “Way, Truth and Life.” In 1965, the doors opened for her to carry out the Pauline mission in Portugal, where she served as a formator for several years.

In 1970, Sr. Maria was sent as a missionary to Beira, Mozambique to collaborate with the Pastoral Research Center for catechetical activity among the people in peripheral areas, and also to train catechists and prepare a radio program that offered commentaries on the Sunday Gospels in the local language. But due to the country’s complicated political situation, the police unexpectedly expelled her from Mozambique on 17 March 1974. After a short period of updating in Italy, she was able to re-enter the country to pour her energy into animation activities and capillary diffusion of the Word of God in the diocese of Nampula, where the FSPs did not yet have a community. That diocese remained forever in her heart... In 1978 she returned to Beira but in February 1979, due to the difficult socio-political situation, our Pauline bookshop was forcibly closed by the national police. After a prolonged discernment, our General Government decided to maintain a temporary FSP presence in that city, where the sisters above all witnessed to the Gospel, renouncing the apostolate of communication. In view of this, Sr. Maria, with availability and faith, became temporarily involved in a number of parish activities.

In 1983, she contributed to the opening of an FSP community in Maputo by collaborating with the diocesan social communications center. Four years later, she was called to Nairobi, Kenya, to work on the diocesan magazine, *Mwanachi*. Two years afterward, she was appointed superior of our East Africa Delegation. When she was reconfirmed in this office in 1993, she zealously collaborated with the launch of the Congregation’s Missionary Project, committing herself to the re-opening of an FSP community in Lagos, Nigeria and carrying in her heart the dream of an FSP foundation in Luanda, Angola.

And it was precisely in those years that she was called to make a new offering to the Lord—that of illness. She was diagnosed as suffering from breast cancer, for which she underwent painful therapy. In the secret of her heart, she had made a pact with the Lord and she sought to involve the Superior General in it. On 14 July 1996, she wrote to Sr. Giovannamaria Carrara: “Why don’t you and I make a vow? If the Lord allows me to live, let us proceed to make a foundation in Angola, where the people are in great need of the Gospel....” And the Lord gave her the gift of life and the health necessary to realize this dream. She herself was the first FSP to take up residence in Luanda on 6 January 1999, and she was quickly joined by others.

In 2001, she was appointed superior of the Maputo community (Mozambique) and after a few months of updating, she returned to Nairobi in 2005 to help out in the editorial department, in the production of audiovisuals, and in the accompaniment of the Juniors.

In 2011, Sr. Maria was appointed the first Superior of the newly-established Delegation of Southern Africa (Angola, South Africa and Mozambique). When her term of office ended, she dedicated herself primarily to the publishing apostolate, always attentive to preparing material and study aids for the poorest people at affordable prices. She wanted above all to provide the Word of God with catechetical and liturgical notes, to enrich the catechism with biblical notes, and to prepare prayer books and formative texts for young people, families, committed lay people and leaders of society. With fire in her heart, she took advantage of every opportunity to broaden collaboration with publishers in Brazil, Angola and Portugal. Her great dream was the production of a missal for the people and we are sure that she is now presenting this initiative to our heavenly Father with her usual insistence.

Sr. Maria was tenacious, almost stubborn, in pointing out to her superiors the need to open FSP communities in Beira and Nampula so as to extend pastoral work for vocations to other parts of Mozambique. She realized that her energy was diminishing, but she lovingly accepted the will of God, writing: "I am ready to obey even if it would cost me a lot to leave Africa if my health continues to support me a little.... I want to place my entire self in the hands of my superiors and in those of our heavenly Father, who knows everything and wants our good."

About a month ago, Sr. Maria accepted with docility the suggestion that she not return to Africa. She had planned to stop over in Lisbon, Portugal, to follow some publishing projects and then continue on to Mozambique in time for the Pope's visit there. But God the Father had other plans for her.... After a short period of hospitalization, she was transferred to the Albano community to regain her strength. In these days, she accompanied the opening of our General Chapter and the visit of the Pope to her beloved Mozambique with her prayers and self-offering. But last night, after assuring several sisters that she was feeling better, she was called to arise and set out on the journey to eternity.

To this dear sister—whom we remember as an ardent and competent Pauline apostle, as a collaborator with the Spirit in the work of salvation—we entrust our Chapter work and especially the intense days of the spiritual exercises that we are now living.

Affectionately,

  
*Sr. Anna Maria Parenzan*  
*Superior General*

Ariccia, 8 September 2019