

ISTITUTO PIA SOCIETÀ
FIGLIE DI S. PAOLO
CASA GENERALIZIA
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Dearest Sisters,

At 9:30 a.m. today, the Lord visited our Carril del Conde community, Madrid, Spain, to call to the joy of his eternal love our sister:

GARCIA RODRIGUEZ MATILDE – SR. MARIA MERCEDES
born in Celada de los Calderones (Santander), Spain on 24 August 1932.

On 11 March 2019, Sr. Mercedes was taken to Ramon y Cayal Hospital, Madrid, because she was suffering from a lung infection, intestinal blockage and advanced dementia. Advised that her situation was terminal, the members of her community decided not to leave her at the hospital but to bring her back home so as to lavish on her all the affection and care possible in her last days.


Sr. Mercedes entered the Congregation in the community of Barcelona on 7 October 1947, just a year after the opening of this community, the cradle of our FSP presence in Spain. Sr. Mercedes always said that the thought of becoming a religious had made her rejoice because it would give her the chance to tell everyone about the infinite love of God. This love, which she concretized in the figure of the Good Shepherd, was the profound motivation of her life and guided every moment of it.

In 1948, after a period of initial formation, she helped our first FSP missionaries carry out their propaganda initiatives. The following year she was sent to Rome to make her novitiate, which concluded with her first profession on 19 March 1950. Sr. Mercedes then returned to Barcelona, where she spent her Juniorate working in the book center. Her innate goodness, kindness and refinement made her a person whom the book center clients sought out, knowing they could count on her reliability, competence and high esteem of culture.

In 1956, Sr. Mercedes was transferred to the newly-opened Madrid community, where she was assigned to the diffusion apostolate, especially the organization of Gospel and Marian Days. Following this, she spent about 2 years in our Albano, Italy community due to health issues. When she returned to Spain in 1959, she was asked to work in the St. Paul Film Agency. From 1974-2012, she was a much-loved member of the book center staffs of Valladolid, Barcelona and Valencia. Deeply struck by the words of Fr. Alberione, she joyfully affirmed that she always treated the books she disseminated with the same reverence reserved for the chalice used at Mass. "For me, the book center is a sacred place and because of this the books we offer are also sacred," she declared. In fact, it was precisely through her book center activities that she realized the Lord's immense love for every person, prompting her to write with great conviction: "A Christian is a person in love—a person seduced by the love of God. Love is the primary vocation of every human being."

In 2015, while Sr. Mercedes was in Madrid, it was discovered she was suffering from an aggressive form of Alzheimer's disease, but in spite of the advance of this malady she was able to participate from time to time in the life of the community. She felt her Pauline vocation profoundly and even when her illness prevented her from recalling her own name or the names of the other sisters, she was able to say with satisfaction: "I'm a Pauline and you're a Pauline!" Although she often did not recognize the sisters of her community, she always recognized pictures of Fr. Alberione and Maestra Thecla. And when she was not feeling well, the words of her favorite song: "Viva la montagna viva" immediately reinvigorated her.

Sr. Mercedes wrote: "The experience of the love of God fills me with great joy and immense gratitude...because that love was not purchased with gold or silver but with the precious blood of Jesus." It is wonderful to think that the life of this sister was a declaration of her love for her Lord and Master. And we are sure that it was in this climate of love that God the Father welcomed her to the eternally green pastures of heaven. Affectionately,


Sr. Anna Maria Parenzan
Superior General

Rome, 15 March 2019

Anniversary of the pontifical approval of the FSPs