

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

At 9:45 a.m. today, in the Provincial House of Mumbai, India, one of our sisters, surrounded by the affection of all the members of her community, fell asleep in the Lord:

PEREZ FLORIA – SR. PAOLA
born in Casiguran, Philippines on 18 January 1922.

While still very young, Sr. Paola felt a call to the missions—a vocation she had the chance to fulfill when one day, in a market, she met by chance Sr. Melania, a great Pauline missionary. But in order to respond to the Lord's call, she had to run away from home because the aunt with whom she had lived since the age of ten (following the death of her mother) did not look favorably upon the Daughters of St. Paul.

Sr. Paola entered the Congregation in the community of Lipa on 28 March 1943. Given her maturity, she was sent to Staten Island while still a postulant to spend a few months carrying out capillary diffusion. This experience ignited in her a great zeal for the apostolate of visiting the families with a bag overflowing with books. Like the apostles, she felt truly sent out to bring the Good News to everyone.

She made her novitiate in Rome, concluding it with her first profession on 19 March 1948, after which she returned to Lipa. Her dream of becoming a missionary was realized on 30 October 1951 when she was asked to join the FSPs who had opened a community in India just two months earlier. Sr. Paola became "an Indian among the Indians," accompanying the birth and development of our Pauline presence in that country, offering every step she took on propaganda for vocations. In fact, Fr. Alberione had told her that it would be necessary to open at least 40 communities, if not more, in India since the country was as big as a continent. Recounting this story, she added: "Of course this means we have to pray much and live like good religious.... May the Lord have mercy on me!"

Sr. Paola visited the schools, families and institutes of Calcutta, Bangalore and above all New Delhi, where she was stationed for more than 25 years. She had a rare gift for establishing warm relations with all sorts of people, including police officers and military personnel, and would find ingenious ways to obtain permission to carry out the Pauline mission in unthinkable places. It was a great suffering for her when advancing age and poor health made it necessary for her to return to Mumbai. She was happy to spend a few years helping the sisters in Ahmedabad, where her presence gave the members of the community the opportunity to carry out the Pauline mission more intensively.

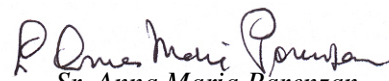
Sr. Paola was a happy person who "infected" others with the joy of living. It was wonderful to carry out the apostolate with her because her face, always illuminated by a smile, spread good humor everywhere. She diffused a spirit of serenity around her up until the last day of her life, warmly welcoming everyone who visited her, even though her physical condition continued to decline due to kidney blockage and other complications linked to advanced age. Her death contains an element of the "mysterious" in that yesterday she said to a Hindu friend who dropped by to visit her every day: "Pray for me because I have to go now. I have an appointment with the One I love."

A few years ago, she said to a young FSP on the brink of death: "You have to go so that the house [of Mumbai] can be torn down. I have to wait until the new house is built. Then it will be my turn to go...." Her words were prophetic. Yesterday, the sisters of our Mumbai community inaugurated their new house with the participation of a large group of people. From her bed, Sr. Paola rejoiced in the festivities. At that point she could exclaim: "Now, Lord, let your servant go in peace...."

A new stage had begun in the journey of her beloved Province and this morning, before her death, the solemn step was taken to place the guidance of the circumscription in the hands of the new provincial government—a "passage of rites" colored by joy and hope. With her customary discretion, Sr. Paola waited until this important event took place before closing her eyes here on earth to open them in heaven.

We entrust to Sr. Paola this fresh journey of our Indian Province, together with all the local young women whom the Lord is calling to the Pauline life. May he bless everyone with the missionary spirit and ardent zeal to proclaim the Gospel that are the heritage of this dear sister.

Affectionately,


Sr. Anna Maria Parenzan
Superior General

Rome, 20 March 2014