

ISTITUTO PIA SOCIETÀ
FIGLIE DI S. PAOLO
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Dearest Sisters,

This morning, the Divine Master once again knocked on the door of our Brazilian Province to call to himself a sister hospitalized at Leforte Hospital, Sao Paulo:

VERDI CELESTINA – SR. BERENICE
born in Palmithinho (RS), Brazil on 6 October 1934.

Sr. Berenice entered the Congregation in Porto Alegre on 6 January 1952—a time in which the aspirants in this large formation community numbered about a hundred. In the busy technical apostolate, she quickly learned to prepare books for printing. Even at this early stage of her religious life, her superiors could see her generosity, quickness and love for the Pauline mission.

She made her novitiate in Sao Paulo, concluding it with her first profession on 30 June 1957. Immediately afterward, she began to carry out the diffusion apostolate in the dioceses of Sao Paulo and Lins. Gifted with an enterprising spirit, she fit in very well in the small Lins community, made up of courageous sisters who periodically extended their diffusion activities to the forests of the Mato Grosso so as to reach the people of that area.

Sr. Berenice made her perpetual profession on the Feast of St. Paul 1962. The words Sr. Agnese Sandri, her formator, wrote to her on that occasion are very significant today: “Let us thank the Lord for the sublime grace he gave you in calling you from among many others to be his spouse. In eternity, this will make you rejoice greatly.”

Sr. Berenice was sent to the Sao Paulo DM community to carry out the service of driver and in 1972 she was transferred to Curitiba to work in the book center. Returning to Porto Alegre, she resumed the itinerant diffusion apostolate, which she carried out very capably because of her many gifts. She afterward served as orientator of our various book centers in Sao Paulo, following which she was reassigned to Porto Alegre. For several years, Sr. Berenice working in the Curitiba shipping department, then returned to the book center apostolate in Belo Horizonte and Niteroi. Wanting to hone her skills in this area so as to improve her service to the people, she made the effort to become well acquainted with the book center stock so as to present the titles better and respond in a suitable way to all those seeking to quench their thirst for God in our Pauline centers. The words spoken by our Founder in 1954 had deeply penetrated her heart: “What a mission the Lord has given you!” Primo Maestro exclaimed. “It is a lofty and fabulous mission.... You work in the book center, which is a center of light. You welcome those who come in not as shoppers but as persons who need enlightenment, consolation.... On the one hand you must prepare yourselves, while on the other hand you must trust in God, who gives the right words to his evangelizers.... Our book centers must be renovated. Just as we try to make churches suitable places for prayer, so too we must see to it that our book centers are always better suited to preaching.”

After several years carrying out community services in Curitiba, Sr. Berenice returned to the Belo Horizonte book center in 2007, where she joyfully welcomed its visitors and offered them books suited to their needs. Her friendly nature enabled her to establish good relations with our Pauline collaborators as well as with many people in need of a word of comfort and hope.

During the last period of her life, Sr. Berenice’s health steadily worsened due to kidney problems that also affected other vital organs. She was placed on dialysis, but about a month ago it was necessary for her to be admitted to Leforte Hospital.

Today, the Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, the Divine Master entered this “Bethany” and we are sure that Sr. Berenice welcomed him wholeheartedly. Perhaps she recalled the words of her formator as she threw wide the doors of her heart to her Spouse, who offered her the gift of himself for all eternity—a gift no one will ever be able to take from her.

Affectionately,


Sr. Anna Maria Parenzan
Vicar General

Rome, 21 July 2013