

ISTITUTO PIA SOCIETÀ
FIGLIE DI S. PAOLO
CASA GENERALIZIA
Via S. Giovanni Eudes, 25
00163 Roma
Tel. 06.661 3039 - Fax 06.661 57 208



Dearest Sisters,

On this day of great celebration to conclude the Centenary of the Pauline Family and our audience with Pope Francis, we received the news that the Lord of Life visited our Rawalpindi community in Pakistan to call to himself one of our sisters who died of a heart attack:

**MELIS ANTONINA MARIA – SR. MARIA LILIA
born in Morgongiori (Oristano), Italy on 26 May 1936.**

Sr. M. Lilia will be the first Daughter of St. Paul to be buried in Pakistan, like a seed that dies to give new life and apostolic and vocational fecundity to the nation in which she lived her missionary vocation with great enthusiasm during her youth and then in a spirit of complete self-offering during her years of maturity. In fact, Sr. M. Lilia was a Pauline apostle who offered herself to the Lord with great faith and courage day after day up until the last moment of her life.

She entered the Congregation in Rome on 18 February 1955 and spent her postulancy carrying out the Pauline mission with great love in Palermo. She returned to Rome to make her novitiate, concluding it with her first profession on 30 June 1958.

As a young professed, she carried out the diffusion apostolate in Verona and immediately after her perpetual profession was sent first to Agrigento and then to Como and Reggio Emilia. A new stage of her life began in 1967 when she accepted the Superior General's proposal to send her to Karachi, Pakistan as a missionary. From that time on up until her death, she dedicated herself to the Pauline mission in that country, offering our Pakistani sisters her affection, support and encouragement.

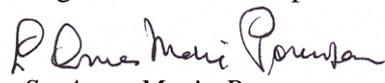
The community of Karachi had been opened just two years before Sr. Lilia's arrival and she promptly set to work to learn English and the local language, Urdu. When the community of Lahore was opened in 1968, she was transferred there to carry out capillary diffusion in the schools, parishes and institutes and to help form our first local vocations. Over the years, she served as superior of the Lahore community for three non-consecutive terms and as superior of the Karachi community for two terms. From 1989-1996, she also carried out the service of delegation superior.

Sr. M. Lilia loved the Pakistani people and did not allow herself to become unduly agitated by the country's difficult socio-political situation, which became even more trying with the rise of fundamentalism. She had dedicated her life to God without reserve and she worked hard, day after day, to make that offering always purer and pleasing to the Lord through the various apostolic services she carried out in this small delegation. Her activities ranged from book center work to biblical and liturgical animations and also to household services. Above all she loved the delegation's young candidates and wanted to transmit to them the flame of the Pauline charism as effectively as possible.

In 2006, the delegation opened a community in Rawalpindi, just a short distance from Islamabad, the capital, and Sr. M. Lilia was appointed its local superior. She shared with the sisters the difficult foundation period, throwing herself with the enthusiasm of a young person into the project of building a house suited to the life of the community. She never lost an opportunity to propose the Pauline vocation to young women, accompanying them in their vocational discernment and offering them her support in difficulties.

By this time Sr. M. Lilia had become a "Pakistani among the Pakistanis": her life was in this country, among the people she loved very much, and she had no thoughts about returning to Rome definitively. The needs of the people of Pakistan filled her heart and mind completely. Even while on vacation in Italy this past July, she was anxious to return to Pakistan because she felt she was needed there. The words of Pope Francis had penetrated her heart: "It is true that people today need words, but above all they need a witness to the Lord's compassion and tenderness, which warms hearts, reawakens hope and draw one to the good. The joy of bringing the consolation of God!"

Sr. M. Lilia will always remain in Pakistan as a sign of communion, peace and renewed hope.
Affectionately,


Sr. Anna Maria Parenzan
Superior General

Rome, 27 November 2014