

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,

At 9:30 p.m. yesterday, the Risen Christ visited the infirmary of our Divine Providence community, Rome, to call one of our sisters to contemplate his glory forever:

CONCILIO MARIA – SR. MARIA BERNARDA
born in Caprecano (Salerno), Italy on 25 October 1936.

For the last several days, Sr. M. Bernarda had been in a comatose state for which it was difficult to define the cause, even though she had been suffering from Crohn's disease for many years. She was called to heaven relatively quickly to live in intimacy with the Master: something she had yearned for all her life. In fact, at the end of a course of spiritual exercises, she had written: "Jesus Master, Way, Truth and Life must always be at the center of my mind, will and heart if I am to grow and abound in fraternal love and humility."

From the time she entered the Congregation on 8 Dec. 1955, her formators noticed the new candidate's docility, fervor and desire to learn from everyone and everything. Above all, they perceived her strong desire to live in a spirit of recollection and deepen her interior life. She made her novitiate in Rome, concluding it with her first profession on 30 June 1959 in the Queen of Apostles Sanctuary. Afterward, she was assigned to the large sewing room in Via Antonino Pio and then was sent to Ascoli Piceno to carry out the itinerant apostolate. During that period, she wrote: "I am always more content to be in this beautiful Congregation, which offers me so many means to become a saint. I have great trust in the Blessed Mother and I am sure that with her help I will be able to meet the many small problems of life and live my vocation to the full."

Very soon, Sr. M. Bernarda was called to carry out the Pauline mission in the Far East. On 3 Sept. 1964, a few months after her perpetual profession, she and Sr. Angela Sotgiu, boarded a merchant ship bound for Seoul, Korea. After a long trip, they reached their destination on 20 November. Recalling that unforgettable moment, she wrote: "I knelt down to kiss the soil of that dear land, which I had longed to see ever since I was a child. I was ignorant about everything: the country's food, customs, language... But I was sure that I was in the hands of the One to whom I had offered my whole life and I knew he would never forsake me."

Sr. M. Bernarda's great faith in the *Pact* enabled her to successfully meet every challenge she faced, especially that of learning the Korean language, which she found very difficult. In Seoul, she was soon placed in charge of the bindery, carried out itinerant diffusion, and was also entrusted with the formation of the aspirants and postulants. In just a short time, the young women took her to their hearts, admiring in particular her witness of life. Her trust in the *Pact* made even hard things easy for her. In 1979, after 15 years of life in the missions, Sr. M. Bernarda returned to Italy for health reasons. Looking back on the wealth of those years of full insertion in the Korean reality, she wrote: "I felt very strongly that Someone had his hand on my head and was walking alongside me; indeed, that he was carrying me in his arms like a Father carries his child."

With great simplicity and love, Sr. M. Bernarda accepted an assignment to the Generalate and then to the Via Vivanti and Divine Master communities (all in Rome), where she carried out the deeply appreciated services of seamstress and sacristan for 35 consecutive years. As sacristan, she was very attentive to keeping the sacred linens and vestments in pristine order and above all to ensuring that the various moments of the Liturgy were lived with full participation. Continuing to feel herself a "Korean" at heart, she was very close to the sisters from that nation stationed in Rome and often telephoned them to ask for news and assure them of her willingness to help them in a thousand different ways. She also asked her community to prayerfully support various congregational events, posting on the community bulletin board programs and pictures of initiatives that were being carried out in every part of the Pauline world.

In 2015, Sr. M. Bernarda regretfully left the Italian provincial house for the Divine Providence community in Via Antonino Pio. At this stage of her life, her primary apostolate was that of prayer, which she lived with great intensity, focusing especially on the *Pact* and the *Consecration of Oneself to Mary* ("Receive me..."). She dwelt in the presence of God, entrusting to him in a particular way religious vocations throughout the world. Sr. M. Bernarda's heart burned with love so it is wonderful to think that on this Third Sunday of Easter the Divine Master opened her eyes, as he did the eyes of the disciples on the way to Emmaus, so that she could finally see and contemplate him fully for all eternity.

Affectionately,

Rome, 26 April 2020


Sr. Anna Maria Parenzan