

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

Yesterday night, at 10:30 p.m. (local time), Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, the Blessed Mother visited our Capri community in Mexico City to lead to the kingdom of heaven our sister:

**SANCHEZ ESPINOSA RITA – SR. MARIA ELENA
born in Ciudad Guzman (Guadalajara), Mexico, on 19 March 1944.**

Everything happened very quickly. Sr. M. Elena worked in the book center located in the shadow of the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe and lived in our nearby Amatista community. A week ago, while zealously and generously carrying out the Pauline mission, which included welcoming crowds of pilgrims from all parts of the country and abroad, she had the feeling that she was coming down with what she thought was a simple cold. But on 10 December her physical condition suddenly worsened, revealing signs of covid-19. The treatments and therapies immediately administered in the province's central community of Capri, located in the same city, were of no avail because by now the Lord had judged our sister ready for heaven.

Sr. M. Elena was a person who gifted the FSP apostolate with the riches of her character, her profound Christian convictions and her great love for the Pauline vocation. She entered the Congregation in the Capri community, Mexico City, on 11 September 1965. She was soon admitted to the novitiate, at the end of which she made her first profession on 8 December 1968. Following this, she had the opportunity to deepen her cultural formation in order to dedicate herself with greater competence to the proclamation of the Gospel. As a young professed, she worked in the Ciudad Juarez book center and in the stock room of the circumscription's central house in Mexico City.

After her perpetual profession in 1974, Sr. M. Elena went on to receive a diploma in catechesis in Medellin, Colombia. When she returned to her own country, she inserted herself wholeheartedly in the life of the Province, taking on various responsibilities. With competence and love, she managed the book centers of Monterrey, Tijuana and Ciudad Juarez at various times and served as superior of the Monterrey community. In 1990 she spent a period of updating in the Via dei Lucchesi community in Rome.

Returning to Mexico, she was placed in charge of the stock room while at the same time accompanying the circumscription as a provincial councilor. From 2001-2009, she also managed the Guadalajara book center and served as superior of the community. Afterward, while stationed in Leon, she was obliged to request an extended leave of absence from the Congregation to take care of her mother, who was seriously ill. In 2015, after the death of her mother, Sr. M. Elena had the grace to participate in the International Course on the Charism organized to celebrate our Congregation's Centenary of Foundation. She later confided that this experience of immersion in the wealth of the Institute's charism was a gift that had greatly benefited her after her return to Mexico. The high quality of the input she received and the chance to make a pilgrimage to the sites of our beginnings at such a meaningful moment in our FSP history made her vibrate with joy.

The Amatista community, the last house in which Sr. M. Elena lived and in which the Lord was preparing her for her definitive encounter with him, gave our sister the opportunity to express her friendliness, her ability to welcome others and her enthusiasm for the Pauline mission. It is wonderful to think that when the supreme moment of her life arrived she was enfolded in the tender embrace of the Virgin Mary. As Pope Francis emphasized in 2013, the Blessed Mother's appearances at Guadalupe are a symbol of her embrace of all the inhabitants of the two vast American continents and thus of our dear Mexican sisters, who are grieving at the loss of their beloved companion. It also symbolizes her embrace of Sr. M. Elena herself, who was introduced to unending peace with Mary's arms around her.

Affectionately,


Sr. Anna Maria Parenzan

Rome, 13 December 2020