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Dearest Sisters,

At the opening of this Christmas season, we received the news that yesterday, at 5:45 p.m. (local time), our Divine Master visited the Mederi de Barrios Unidos Hospital in Bogota, Colombia, to call to the kingdom of heaven our sister:

GONZÀLEZ MARGARITA – SR. MARIA LUCIA
born in Samaria (Caldas), Colombia, on 9 December 1933.

She was hospitalized on 20 December, following a fall in which she broke her leg. Four days later, she came down with a severe case of pneumonia, leading her to an unexpected meeting with the Word of Life, the Savior of the world.

Sr. Lucia was one of our first Colombian sisters. She entered the Congregation in the house of Manizales, on 4 January 1951, three years after its foundation. She soon set to work to spread the Gospel to families, schools and institutes. In 1955, she began her novitiate in Bogota, concluding this period of her formation with her first profession on 19 March 1956. As a young professed, she was sent to Caracas to collaborate in the opening of the first FSP community on Venezuelan soil. Upon her return to Colombia, she devoted herself to itinerant outreach in Barranquilla and Manizales.

In 1960, Sr. Lucia was asked to carry out the Pauline mission in Staten Island, United States, just a short distance from the great metropolis of New York. The following year, she made her perpetual profession in Bogota. In her letter requesting permission to take this step, she acknowledged her weaknesses and expressed her yearning to do good, writing: “I know I am very weak, but the grace of God is with me, and I have a sincere desire to correct my defects every day and always strive for perfection and holiness.”

After three years of intense apostolic activity in the United States, Sr. Lucia returned to Bogota, where she continued to spread the Word of God through her work in the book center and visits to families and businesses. She also had the opportunity to spend a few months in Panama, where the Daughters of St. Paul had been invited by the Archbishop to open an apostolic center. When she returned to Colombia after this interval, she wrote to the superior general that her profound desire was “to be able to say to Christ and those who represent him, ‘I place myself in your hands. Here I am. Do what you want with me.’” In her letter, she said she was sure that the Lord welcomed her firm resolve to renew her *yes* to him, trusting in his fidelity and grace.

During the 1980’s, Sr. Lucia was assigned at different times to the promotional, catechetical and shipping sectors of the Bogota community, and also accompanied the sisters in the capacity of local superior. Her apostolic zeal knew no bounds: she perceived the needs of God’s people and accompanied with prayer and self-offering the lives and vocations of many priests and bishops. Her big heart also reached out to embrace the needs of her own family, finding ways to support and encourage them especially in times of illness and suffering.

In 1987, Sr. Lucia was assigned to Barranquilla as book center manager and local superior. Afterward, she returned to the book center apostolate in Bogota, and then was transferred to Manizales where, for more than two decades, she was an active presence in vocation ministry, book promotion, and various services to the sisters. In 2018, due to increasingly frail health, she was transferred to the Thecla Merlo community in Bogota, where she lived the limitations of advancing age in a spirit of self-offering, taking every chance she could to support with great goodness and tenderness the other sisters in poor health.

Last night, Sr. Lucia was called to utter with the martyr St. Stephen the words: “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” Let us entrust our dear sister to the merciful love of God the Father, asking that he open the gates of heaven for her too so that she might contemplate the splendor of his glory for all eternity.

Affectionately,

Sr. Anna Maria Parenzan

Rome, 27 December 2022