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Dearest Sisters,

We received the news that at 6 a.m. (local time), one of one of the members of our community of Seoul, Korea, gently fell asleep in the Lord:

D'OTO ELENA – SR. MARIA DOROTEA
born in Casalbore (Avellino), Italy, on 26 October 1931.

“There is only one thing I can say to the Lord at this point and that is *thank you!* For my life as a missionary in Korea and for my faith in the *Pact*, the ‘secret’ that sustained me: thank you! For the many joys I experienced and also for all the problems that were not lacking: thank you! Because I think it is pleasing to Jesus that I remain in Korea until the end of my life: thank you!” These words of our dear sister are a beautiful summary of her life, which she spent *shouting the name of Jesus to the world*. It is also the title of the biography about her published by our sisters of Korea to celebrate the Congregation’s centennial of foundation and as a thank you to Sr. Dorotea for her long and fervent missionary sojourn in their nation. Sr. Dorotea was truly happy to live, until the end of her life, in the country and among the people she loved so much and to whom she had dedicated her entire being.

In January 2021, the Ambassador of Italy in Seoul, on behalf of the President of the Italian Republic, had presented Sr. Dorotea with the honorary title of “Officer of the Star of Italy,” an award given to those who have distinguished themselves by promoting cooperative relations and bonds of friendship between Italy and other nations. Among the reasons for conferring this honor, the Ambassador cited our sister’s missionary life in Korea, which at the time of her arrival was one of the poorest countries in the world and in which she had spent her days spreading the teachings of the Catholic Faith in the most downtrodden areas of Seoul, as well in Daegu, Gwangju, etc. Her life was truly dedicated to proclaiming the Gospel in a country far from her own, but which became *her* land, to a people who became *her* people.

She entered the Congregation in the house in Naples on 27 April 1948, where she carried out the itinerant apostolate of the Institute in the diocese of Aquila. At the end of her novitiate, she made her first profession in Rome on 19 March 1951. Soon afterward, Sr. Dorotea was sent to Siena, a city that always remained in her heart and in which she carried out the Pauline mission for 15 years. There she found many benefactors and made many friends, who were attracted by her warm personality and ability to communicate with others. While in Siena, she felt the Lord calling her to the missionary life—a yearning she confided to Maestra Thecla during the spiritual exercises she made in preparation for her final vows on 19 March 1956. But she had to wait another 10 years before that dream became a reality.

Finally, on 20 August 1966, she left Venice for Korea on a large merchant ship, travelling with another missionary sister and a heavy load of Bibles destined for the Philippines. She and her companion spent the next two months in the company of about forty sailors!

At the outset, life in Korea was not easy, especially because of the language, but Sr. Dorotea was not discouraged...the *Pact* was always her anchor of salvation, by means of which she placed herself in the hands of God. And so, despite the fact that she still spoke Korean with difficulty, by 1969 she was already able to open the circumscription’s first branch house and book center in Jeonju, where she also served as superior. Three years later she was appointed superior in the centrally-located Myongdong community in Seoul and also councilor of the new delegation. Sr. Dorotea had an aptitude for studies and worked hard to understand the attitudes, culture, and sensibilities of the Korean people more profoundly. Through her gentle personality, she sought to alleviate in every way she could the poverty and sufferings of the people, especially those with whom she lived most closely.

In 1978 she was appointed Delegation Superior. Once again, she entrusted herself with all her strength to the Divine Master through the prayer of the *Pact*, aware of her many difficulties when it

came to the language, culture and mentality of the indigenous population. And it was at that very time that the Lord chose her as his instrument to recruit the first local vocation for the Congregation of the Good Shepherd Sisters (the *Pastorelles*) and thus help them launch their new Korean foundation.

At the end of her term of office, Sr. Dorotea's great desire came true: our Korean Delegation was legally constituted as a province and a Korean sister was asked to serve as provincial superior. Sr. Dorotea felt proud and honored to have served as a bridge in this important event, by means of which our local sisters were entrusted with the journey of their circumscription.

Over the years, she served as superior of the communities of Busan, Daegu and Wonju. In different periods in Seoul, she carried out the responsibilities of importing books, book center management and translation services. And in the midst of all her activity, we cannot forget the role Sr. Dorotea played in the birth of the Jesus the Priest Institute in Korea. She herself informed Fr. Renato Perino, then superior general of the SSP, that there were a number of local priests interested in joining this Institute, so he asked her to accompany them spiritually and transmit the Pauline spirituality to them. To this day, the priests of the Institute still consider her their *mother*.

In 1996 another challenge awaited Sr. M. Dorotea: the founding of a house in Yeonghil, China, with the principal aim of probing the possibilities of opening the door to spreading the Word of God in North Korea. It was a missionary dream that, due to various problems, soon had to be abandoned, but the needs of the people there remained forever in her heart.

After this, she was called to devote about fifteen years to the Gwangju community and book center. She said that she was happy to at least be able to relieve the sisters for lunch and wrote: "With joy and great peace in my heart, I continue my usual services in the community. The only thing I can say is *Deo gratias* and I do this at all times.... I am truly happy to continue my missionary life, which is God's great gift to me. I lend a hand in the kitchen and laundry, uniting myself to all the apostolates that the Pauline Family carries out. I feel that I am a Daughter of St. Paul in the fullest sense of the word, proclaiming the Gospel by all the means of communication, as St. Paul would do if he lived in this time."

One of her main concerns was to communicate the Pauline spirit to the sisters of her circumscription. And she never ceased thanking the Lord for choosing to send her as a missionary to Korea.

In 2015, at the age of 84, Sr. Dorotea was assigned to the Province's central house in Seoul. Quiet and prayerful, she gladly helped the community by carrying out various small services. Above all, she prayed for vocations and for the sanctification of all the sisters and members of the Pauline Family. She continued to participate wholeheartedly in the life of the Church and the world, and missed no opportunity to keep up to date by reading her favorite magazines or scrolling through Internet websites.

Her words and brief writings were a song of praise and thanksgiving to the Lord and to the Congregation, which had given her the opportunity to remain in Korea. At Easter, several years ago, she wrote: "Jesus, our Risen Master, gives me the tenderness and strength I need to donate myself joyfully to others. Everything is a result of his free gift of love to me. Thank you, Lord!"

In 2013, at the end of a month-long course of spiritual exercises, she had said to the sisters in the large refectory in Seoul: "Before we disband, I want to say only one thing: our God is *love*. If we truly immerse ourselves in the love of the Trinity, even our external appearance will become more beautiful!" This was a lifelong conviction of hers.

After breaking her thighbone in 2018, she had written, "I am serene and at peace with the will of God." And it was in serenity and peace that she passed from this world to the Father, offering her life "for the Congregation, for the Pauline Family and for the Congregation's mission in my beloved Korea."

Our Korean sisters today say with deep emotion: "We are saddened by Sr. Dorotea's sudden departure for heaven. She accompanied us throughout our entire history and we bid her farewell with love and gratitude, hoping to meet her again in heaven."

Affectionately,


Sr. Anna Maria Parenzan

Rome, 28 March 2023