

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

We received the news that at 5:38 p.m. today (local time), one of our sisters, who had been admitted to St. John of God Hospital, Pasay, Philippines, was called to new life in the kingdom of heaven:

**CADAWAS MARIA CARMEN – SR. MARIA BENIGNA
born in Paete Laguna (San Pablo), Philippines, on 21 January 1936.**

Sr. Benigna was “*Benign*” both in name and in deeds; in fact, she was kindness personified. A person always ready to emphasize the positive side of people and situations, she was a smiling, cordial, calm and caring sister, who was able to bring peace to many different situations. She was a truly pleasant person with whom to live.

As a child, in her catechism lessons in preparation for First Communion, she came to the conclusion that the simplest and most normal way to live love to the full and therefore become a saint was through the religious life. She had the opportunity to meet the Daughters of St. Paul one day while they were engaged in their mission of visiting the families in her village with their publications. She bought a book on holiness from them and sensed that among these sisters she would find the answer to her ardent yearning to attain sanctity.

She entered the Congregation in the Queen of Apostles community in Pasay City on 6 October 1956. After her initial formation and novitiate, she made her first profession in Lipa on 8 December 1961. In her letter asking to be admitted to perpetual profession in 1966, she expressed her sincere gratitude to the Lord, writing: “Nothing is lacking. At every moment I have all the graces I need to become holy. I am very happy and grateful for everything....”

As a young professed, Sr. Benigna carried out the apostolate of itinerant diffusion of the Word of God in the large diocese of Manila, and in 1964 she joyfully accepted the proposal to go as a missionary to Taipei, Taiwan. With great faith, she tackled the difficulties of learning the Chinese language while visiting the families, including non-Christian ones, with our publications, and she expanded this apostolic outreach to businesses, factories, and parishes. In her time in the missions, she lovingly performed the service of cook for a number of years, content to contribute in this way to the well-being and good morale of the sisters. She wrote, “I am the Lord’s cook and I’m very content with that.”

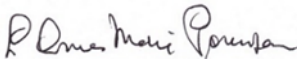
In 1981 she returned to the Philippines, where she dedicated herself with great generosity to the book center apostolate in Pasay, Olongapo, Legaspi, and Baguio. In the large Pasay community, she was once more assigned to service in the kitchen, which she willingly accepted. Then, taking into consideration her reliability and wisdom, she was called to assist the sister in charge of supervising the construction of large buildings in the FSP compound in Pasay.

For the past 10 years, due to a form of dementia and other serious illnesses, she was a member of the Thecla Merlo community, where the sick and elderly sisters of the circumscription lived. Her gentle expression, always illuminated by a smile, lent a special tone to the environment. She never complained and made every effort to avoid being a burden to her sisters and caregivers. Indeed, she did her best to do whatever they suggested so as not to give them additional worries. Her profound relationship with the Lord had matured into an attitude of unceasing prayer, and to him she entrusted the intentions closest to her heart, in particular: vocations and the young women in formation.

Sr. Benigna was lovingly looking forward to the arrival of her Bridegroom and he did not delay in coming. At around 5 p.m. today, she began to experience severe discomfort, and a drop in all her vital signs made it urgent to take her to St. John of God Hospital, which was nearby. Death came suddenly, only minutes after her arrival. As we pray for Sr. Benigna, now immersed in the radiant light of God, we entrust to her all the young women and men who are living a time of dreams and decision-making, asking that the Divine Master will show them his face and enable them to fall in love with him definitively.

Affectionately,

Rome, 11 July 2023


Sr. Anna Maria Parenzan