

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

At 11:20 a.m. today, one of the members of our Thecla Merlo community, Albano, Italy, was called to dwell forever in the presence of the Living God:

**MAIORANO CARMELA – Sr. MARIA BERNARDA  
born in Marano (Naples), Italy, on 24 June 1944.**

Sr. M. Bernarda was truly a person *enflamed with love for God*. From her native region of Naples, she had inherited a vivacious, jovial, generous, spontaneous and hospitable spirit that enabled her to establish sound friendships, affection and closeness to others. Very good-hearted by nature, she was always ready to spend herself totally for the benefit of the people she served, primarily the many FSPs whom she had assisted over the years during some of the most precious moments of their lives.

She entered our Congregation in the house in Rome on 7 September 1963. After a time of initial formation, followed by a period of apostolic experience in Palermo, she was sent to Rome for her novitiate, which concluded with the profession of her vows on 30 June 1968. She spent her Juniorate in Alba, Naples and Lecce, carrying out Bible missions, capillary outreach to families and communities, and completing her education by obtaining a diploma in teaching. Afterward, she returned to Rome to prepare for her perpetual profession, which she made on 30 June 1974, dedicating herself to God forever.

For the next few years, Sr. M. Bernarda worked in the very active St. Paul Film Agency in Rome while at the same time perfecting her training in communications by attending SPICS (the St. Paul International Institute for Social Communications). She was then transferred to Palermo, where for seven consecutive years she devoted herself to the cinema and book center apostolates. In 1989, she was appointed superior of the Campobasso community. At the end of her three-year term, she accepted the request of her provincial superior to dedicate herself to the care of sisters in need of medical assistance, earning a diploma as a registered nurse for this purpose.

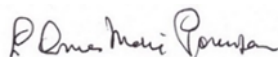
In 1997, Sr. M. Bernarda was assigned to the Thecla Merlo community of Albano, a very demanding reality that required special care of the sisters who lived there. With her fine intuition and abundant common sense, Sr. M. Bernarda did not spare herself in her efforts to help ease the sisters' health situations. She personally accompanied them to their medical appointments or hospitalizations and downplayed different situations that risked becoming overly dramatic with her gentleness, understanding and characteristic Neapolitan jokes. In the midst of all this, she never neglected the FSPs from other communities in Italy who spent longer or shorter periods of time in her own community while waiting for medical treatment or specialized care. Sr. M. Bernarda was animated by a sincere and concrete desire for holiness. She had yearned for this all her life, reinforced by the example of dozens and dozens of saints whose biographies and writings she read and reread with great passion. From their example, she drew the strength to focus wholeheartedly on God and on all the sisters she was called to serve.

She spent from 2002 to 2009 helping out in the James Alberione community of Albano and then returned to the Thecla Merlo community, where she continued to radiate goodness and joy to everyone in her roles as nurse, counselor and vice superior.

A few years ago, in the midst of the covid crisis, Sr. M. Bernarda broke her leg, and from that time on she was no longer self-sufficient. However, she continued to edify the sisters with her serenity, deep spirit of faith and prayer, and calm acceptance of her personal situation. Her call to heaven came unexpectedly. Two days ago, a sharp rise in her blood pressure provoked irregular and rapid heartbeats, followed by a chain of strokes that led to her death.

As we contemplate the immense multitude saints whom we hope to one day join in praising the Lord eternally, let us ask them to intercede for Sr. M. Bernarda and accompany her in her transition to the joy of endless life. Affectionately,

Rome, 8 January 2024

  
Sr. Anna Maria Parenzan