



Dearest sisters,

We received the news that at 8:56 a.m. (local time) at the St. John of God Hospital in Pasay City, Philippines, the Father called to the splendor of eternal life our sister

BRANZUELA JUSTINA SR. M. BERNARDA
born in Sogod Cebu (Cebu, Philippines) on September 26, 1929

A happy and gentle Pauline, a tireless apostle, always dedicated and concerned for the true good of others, this was Sr. M. Bernarda. She was a sister who passed on to us a deep love for the Word and a great desire to make it *run* to reach the hearts of everyone.

She entered the congregation in the house of Lipa on June 19, 1953. Before entering, she earned a master's degree that would allow her to teach in schools, but she soon realized that as a Pauline, her classroom would have no boundaries. When she entered postulancy, marked in those years by the receiving of the religious habit, she wrote:

“I desire to be a Daughter of St. Paul to continue the mission of Jesus for the salvation of many, many souls who are waiting for us... this is the only congregation that can bring the words of Christ to the poor and the rich, the illiterate and the educated, the healthy and the sick, because even other congregations that have schools cannot meet everyone....”

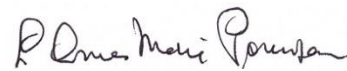
With a great desire to go *to all*, Sr. M Bernarda made her novitiate in Lipa, followed by her first profession on March 19, 1957. She immediately began the itinerant apostolate in the diocese of Davao. After her perpetual profession in 1962, she had the joy of being a missionary in Kota Kinabalu (Sabah, Malaysia), where the Pauline presence had been initiated a year earlier. She spread the Gospel and books on human and Christian formation together with the other sisters. They courageously overcame the many difficulties encountered, especially in the villages, due to local languages and the scarcity of transportation and means of communication. With bags full of books, they visited North Borneo: Sabah, Sarawak and Brunei. Periodically, they went to remote villages, visiting Christians and non-Christians alike.

A tireless apostle, she cultivated a yearning for an intensely contemplative life. Perhaps this was the inspiration she confided to Fr. Alberione, who wrote to her on August 5, 1964, “What is necessary is the cloister of the heart, detaching it from all earthly things and immersing it in God through prayer, with greater determination to engage one’s whole being. Our work should always be for souls. Do always the will of God.”

In 1971, Sr. M. Bernarda returned to the Philippines to continue her itinerant mission in the dioceses of Iloilo, Cagayan de Oro, Naga, Vigan, Cebu, Tacloban, Zamboanga, and Tuguegarao. Her smile touched people’s hearts. In the schools where she distributed the *Home Life* magazine, she left an indelible memory that was a vocational call for at least one sister. In 2009, she was assigned to the Pasay City community, where she helped in the bindery and mini-media departments as her health permitted. About ten years ago, her physical condition deteriorated. She always carried the mission in her heart and lived her later years in a spirit of surrender and thanksgiving.

Last September 20, Sr. M. Bernarda was hospitalized due to pneumonia. Further diagnostic tests immediately revealed a *massive cardioembolic stroke* that shortly led to her encounter with the Lord. We thank Sister M. Bernarda, for from her life, offered as a sacrifice of sweet aroma, the fragrance of the Gospel continues to spread today—a life poured out generously in an act of pure love.

With affection.


Sr. Anna Maria Parenzan

Rome, September 28, 2024