



ISTITUTO PIA SOCIETÀ
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Dearest Sisters,

We received the news that at 4:20 a.m. today, local time, the Lord visited our community of Mexico City to call to his eternal wedding feast our sister:

BERRA MERLO HERMINIA–SR. MARIA DE LOURDES
born in Chipilo (Puebla, Mexico) on 6 January 1935.

The birthplace of Sr. Maria de Lourdes immediately gives us an idea of the characteristics of this sister who, even as an adult, continued to speak the Venetian dialect and to feel enriched by the cultural traditions of that Italian region, the homeland of her ancestors. In fact, even today, the population of Chipilo is made up of the descendants of the Venetians who settled in Mexico the end of the 19th century.

Sr. Maria de Lourdes belonged to a family with deep Christian roots and as a child she participated in the Catholic Action initiatives in her town's Italian parish. She entered the Congregation on 17 July 1949, in the house in Mexico City, which had been opened a year earlier by Sr. Bernadetta Ferraris and two other sisters. Sr. Bernadetta was the novice mistress of the group of six young women who made their professions on 29 June 1954. Five years later, Sr. Maria de Lourdes made her perpetual vows in the Mexico City community. During her Juniorate, she carried out itinerant diffusion to families, factories and businesses in the dioceses of Monterrey, Mexico City and Guadalajara. In 1963, she was appointed the circumscription's vocation directress and accompanied with wisdom and love the young women the Lord sent to the Congregation. She continued to carry out the Pauline mission by organizing numerous book fairs in Monterrey, Tampico, and Monclova and also by working in the Puebla and Leon book centers. In 1984, she was transferred to Tijuana, on the border of the United States. In Tijuana, she competently accompanied the construction of the community's new house and had the joy of being present at the laying of its cornerstone. Later, in Monterrey, she worked as a driver, errand-runner and propagandist. In 1988, she had the chance to participate in a period of updating at the Generalate in Italy. For her, it was a time overflowing with graces, knowledge and new experiences. The members of the community enjoyed listening to her speak Italian with the Venetian accent she had inherited from her ancestors....

In 1989 Sr. Maria de Lourdes returned to Mexico. After a time in Monterrey and a period of absence from the Congregation for family reasons, she was appointed superior of the Amatista community of Mexico City. Afterward, she returned to Tijuana and in 1994 was made the superior of that community. While there, she made a valid contribution to the Diocesan Secretariat for Education and Culture by organizing book exhibits in colleges, universities and factories. She felt at home in Tijuana and was stationed there more than once until her health situation made it advisable for her to return to Mexico City. But before she did, we can't forget her contribution to the community of Monterrey as its local superior.

Sr. Maria de Lourdes was a sister whose heart throbbed for the Pauline mission. She loved celebrations and, Mexican to the core, she willingly took part in the culture's dances and music, including mariachis... Like all Mexicans, she had a tender devotion to the Virgin of Guadalupe, patroness and queen of the Spanish-speaking peoples of the Americas. And it was at the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe that she celebrated her 50th anniversary of religious profession. In 2016 she wrote to the Superior General, "I am very grateful to the Congregation for the chance to have lived so many beautiful apostolic experiences in which I encountered people who were great examples of life for me. And I am very grateful for the Pauline charism, which I have always felt to be my own."

Beginning in 2017, she was stationed in our Mexico City community, where she carried out various household duties. Last July, she fell while on vacation and during her medical check-up was diagnosed as suffering from a degenerative congenital disorder. At the end of November 2021, a serious health crisis caused her vital organs to malfunction and greatly debilitated her body. She had yearned to close her life with a "golden pin," and today the words of the prophet Isaiah speaking about the everlasting splendor, jubilation and joy awaiting us, are the *golden pin* on her life as an apostle and missionary of the Gospel.

Rome, 6 December 2021

Sr. Anna Maria Parenzan