

# Sister Agnès Emmanuel de Marie Adoratrice

Françoise Trottet

## “Through Him, with Him and in Him.”

- Born on April 16, 1926 in Annecy, France
- Postulancy on September 12, 1955 in Orléans, France
- Novitiate on April 5, 1956 in Orléans, France
- First Vows on April 5, 1958 in Orléans, France
- Final Vows on March 30, 1964 in Orléans, France
- Deceased on February 14, 2020 in Issoudun, France

Sr. Agnès Emmanuel, Françoise Trottet, was born on April 16, 1926 in Annecy, in a Christian family. She was the eldest of four siblings: two brothers and a sister who are still very marked by the loving attention she has given them since childhood.

Her father's work enabled her to discover many parts of France, our beautiful country, which undoubtedly gave her a thirst for research, discovery, knowledge, admiration, participation and creativity.

It was in Lyon, on rue de la Balme, in an institution run by Religious Women from a Congregation in Orléans, the Gardiennes Adoratrices de l'Eucharistie, known as the Sisters of St. Aignan<sup>1</sup>, that she studied. It was certainly there that she discovered her love for the Eucharist, which marked her whole life.

She also inherited from her mother strong notions of education, which she put into practice with her younger brother Pierre, then a little later with Jean-Louis and, much later, with her sister Anne-Marie. She spent her teenage years under the German occupation, with all the constraints, restrictions and fears of this long war. Here too, the optimism,

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<sup>1</sup> Saint Aignan, 1<sup>st</sup> Bishop of Orleans, France

inventiveness, energy and faith of her mother left a lasting impression on the young Françoise.

In 1955, Françoise understood God's call to devote her entire life to Him. She sought out a Congregation of contemplative and apostolic life. So, it was in Orléans, in the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Aignan, who had welcomed her as a pupil in Lyon, that she entered on September 12 of that same year.

The life of prayer, in particular the daily Mass, the Office and Eucharistic Adoration, corresponded well to the following of Christ to which she felt called. The service of educating young people, an apostolic part of the Sisters' lives, corresponded to an aspiration that was very much her own.

On April 5, 1958, during the Easter Vigil, she made her first Vows in the chapel of the Mother House in Orléans.

Then began a period of probation during which she discovered the history of the Congregation. At the same time, she studied to obtain the diploma to work in a kindergarten.

Sr. Geneviève, postulant at the time when Sr. Agnès was preparing for her first Vows, **recalls:** *"her apostolic commitment was, at that time, to ensure awakening to the Faith among the 'Little Ones' at the kindergarten. With warmth, passion, precision, she reported to us in Community, the reactions of the children and the repercussions in their lives!"*

The boarders of the Boarding School adjoining the Motherhouse, like the Youth of St. Mark's Patronage, benefited from her gifts for sessions on manual work, carried out with art and care in an atmosphere of joy.

At that time too, Sr. Agnès was preparing herself to obtain her diploma as the Head of the Summer Camps. She participated in the animation of several summer camps managed by the parish of St. Marc d'Orléans and will prove her attentiveness to the human and spiritual formation of young people coming to help the Sisters.

Here she was, happy and ready to commit herself definitively to the Congregation which she did on Easter Monday 1964, surrounded by her parents, brothers and sisters and many friends!

A first 'Obedience' made her cross the Pyrenees to join the Community of Pamplona in Spain where, until recently, the Sisters of St. Aignan opened a French Cultural Center: La Villa Maristella.

In 1965, the Second Vatican Council, concerned about the vitality of Religious Institutes, invited the Congregations with only a few Sisters to consider their future as well as possible. The Sisters of St. Aignan then looked for an Institute with which they could merge and knocked on the door of the Religious of the Assumption whose spirit and aim were very close.

In 1967, the hope of merging the Sisters of St. Aignan with the Congregation of the Religious of the Assumption was approved. Sr. Agnès strongly supported this project, finding in it openness and new strength to live out her consecration. She was called back to France, to Auteuil to be precise, where she took charge of the Sisters in the Novitiate. She taught Church History to the novices and juniors.

A few months later, in September of that same year she became, like many of us, an itinerant missionary throughout the Communities of the Province of France, which benefited from her enthusiasm, her open-mindedness, her joy, her organizational spirit and her multiple gifts! In Bordeaux, for example, she took on the responsibility for pastoral care and teaching in the primary school. Then in Saint-Dizier where she succeeded Sr. Claire Madeleine; Grenade sur Garonne where, with 4 other Sisters, she founded a Community to serve the parish. She was responsible for catechesis. Her warm welcome and the joy of her deep faith encouraged young people to meet Jesus and to make Him their Companion on the journey. She prepared them for the sacraments of initiation.

Sr. Jacqueline remembers: "*Grenade, I think that this town with a reduced universe suited her well. Nature was prodigal there: wasn't there the fig tree in the garden? Yum, yum! And then, the monastery of the DESERT – Cistercians – where she took her Sisters, every month, for a time of retreat!*"

The Community then included Sr. Christine, a young Sister whom Sr. Agnès accompanied in view of her perpetual Vows, at a time when the Church was somewhat in crisis.

*"As part of my preparation for the final commitment, I attended courses at the Catholic Institute of Toulouse. At this moment of crisis of religious life, I was often confused!"*

*Sr. Agnès took classes with me and, on the way back and forth, we had great theological, spiritual, human discussions. I had the grace to live this time of Juniorate with her; She helped me a lot on the way and I keep saying thank you!"*

Then begins a very long journey, about 20 years, in Forges, in the Seine-Marnaise countryside, in BRIE to be precise, where the Sisters looked after the progress of a College that welcomed students from the surrounding areas but also Interns from the region and Paris! Admittedly, it was a completely different kind of setting!

*"The College was experiencing a stormy period at that time and, following the departure of the director, it was up to Sr. Agnès to look for a new School Head, a tough task that weighed too heavily on her, accentuating her anxiety and at the same time, a certain fastidious side. But fortunately, she founded there, a workshop where her imagination, her nimble fingers linked her to excellent friends: parents of students, most of them. This workshop, "Careful, it's not 'DIY', no, it's a 'DIY creative' workshop" which lasts all year round, in a little corner of the attic 'Paradise' which, as the moment of the sales came along, became a real 'Cave of Ali Baba'!"*

In 2002, it is time to rest, especially as the pace of life in the world accelerates more and more! It was in Orleans that Sr. Agnès came to meet her elder Sisters nearby to whom she gave free lectures about the world events and articles of spirituality, an enrichment for herself and a joy to be able to talk about it in the Community.

*"She carefully prepared the Liturgy of the Hours, the Mass, for which she composed very prayerful and good Introductions and Intentions in connection with life. She continued making very detailed historical files, illuminated with photos – once again, one of her skills - on places where she lived: Annecy, Lourdes, Forges ... Or on people whose lives had marked her: Saint Francis de Sales, St. Maximilian Kolbe, St. Bernadette.*

For some time now, she had been painfully affected by a varicose ulcer, which could not be treated. Sr. Agnès had to have a "transplant", but she couldn't bring herself to do it. Her brothers and sisters, who had come to celebrate her Golden Jubilee with her, were the ones who convinced her, and with good results!

However, the buildings of the House of St. Marie, although renovated, could not be recognized as an 'Ehpad'. Another solution had to be found for the Sisters, who were already in need of care or were in the process of needing it.

In 2011, Sr. Anne Descour arrived in Orléans with the first task of supporting the Sisters to consider relocating to another Community. Sr. Agnès seized the opportunity and together they had many discussions on the subject.

The Little Sisters of the Assumption then offered two possibilities:

In Lyon, 'La Guille', a residence for non-handicapped Sisters. Three Sisters, including Sr. Agnès, agreed to have a wonderful experience there: "Inter-Community". Moreover, the fresh air of Lyon and the proximity to her family suited her well. Sr. Anne Bernard still remembers her: "Her kindly way of looking at things, her contagious optimism".

In Issoudun, the 'La Chaume' nursing home for 'in need or disabled' Sisters.

Sr. Joseph Myriam shares with us what she discovered in Sr. Agnès, both at La Guille and Issoudun: *"her prayerful being, her ability to share spiritually what was in her and to put into practice in her life what she had experienced in prayer".*

Sr. Agnès is now suffering from deafness, causing impatience and fits of anger that are difficult to reconcile with Community life! The Ehpad 'La Chaume' was suggested to her:

Sr. Joseph Myriam testifies:

"Sr. Agnès, who was quite independent and strong-willed, did not think that a nursing home was the right solution for her! Disabled? "Isn't she self-sufficient in her ordinary needs? She asked to see her doctor. Her doctor reassured her, showing her how she could fit in by helping others

who were more in need of care! Sr. Agnès thought about it, prayed about it and accepted it...., especially as she saw in this visit to Issoudun, the place of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart to whom, during the war, her Mother had dedicated her family, promising to make a pilgrimage in gratitude for having been saved. A promise that was not kept due to a lack of transport! Well, what a proposal! Providentially, she was the one who would go to the sanctuary. She, Sr. Agnès, will fulfil her mother's wish!

On June 26, 2015, Sr. Anne Descour came to pick up Sr. Agnès to accompany her to Issoudun.

*"First contact with a pile of luggage that we however managed to fit in the car... but it was tight! I was amazed at how tidy she was: she knew where everything was and had lists of everything in the boxes, bags and other things, because, of course, the majority of the bags were for DIY... and in fact this would become an important activity at La Chaume."*

*Sister Agnès-Emmanuel's enthusiasm was visible in her whole posture: turning towards the person who was visiting her, a face wide open, her blue and questioning eyes... I discovered something else during the journey from Lyon to Issoudun: Agnès-Emmanuel told me that she was happy to go through this journey by car, to have the time to say goodbye to Lyon, with the regrets and sadness that came with it, but also to enjoy the present moment, like stopping for lunch in a restaurant along the way, contemplating the beauty of nature, remembering, looking at the signs of places she loved, without projecting herself too quickly into the future... Indeed, at one point I wanted to introduce her to what she was about to discover, but she told me firmly that it was too soon and that I should let her make the most of this time in between, this transition. What wisdom!"*

Yes, Agnès-Emmanuel was a wise and thoughtful person beyond her impulsive and sometimes tempestuous nature, and every moment of her life, every event, touched her deeply and she was determined to explore it consciously, to extract all its benefits, all its meaning. And that's how she lived her life, with commitment and depth, right to the end.

Sr. Joseph Myriam and Sr. Geneviève, who lived with two PSA Sisters not far from the Ehpad, met the Sisters there for the times of prayer, meals and meetings. Every week, they shared on the Sunday Gospel:

Sr. Geneviève recalls: *"Sr. Agnès prepared these moments very well; she shared what she had read, remembered and appreciated, at the same time being careful to let each Sister express herself. She was also very organized, giving priority to her religious life: prayer and community life! After lunch, she had a siesta, read *La Croix* and spent a lot of time on 'correspondence', a real MISSION to all those she met along the way! And she wrote down in her diary - a gift she asked for and received every Christmas - the feasts, birthdays and anniversaries to look forward to, and the events of the Congregation to pray for..."*

Her bass violin d'Ingres never left her and, together with Noémie, the Nursery School's activity leader, she would take part in Nativity scene competitions, forming teams of contributors from among the residents, according to their talent: draughtsman, seamstress or, quite simply, 'supporter'!

At the same time, well aware and happy at her age, she was able to write to her Superior, "Growing old splendidly... in an EHPAD!"

*"For my 90<sup>th</sup> birthday, I received a beautiful book, beautiful because of its contents and the thoughts and desires it presents to me: At a certain age, the external senses decline: sight, hearing, hands; but it is in the same way that our inner senses grow: to see like Christ, to listen, to speak, to pray, to act like Him, to love like Him! And it's also a time to 'do less' in order to 'be more'!"*

*When I first arrived at *La Chaume*, the disabilities of some of the residents frightened me. One day, a woman named Evelyne held out her arms to me as I walked by, and I responded to her gesture. From that day on, I never looked at her the same way again. A feeling of sympathy was born, and also the grace of recognizing the Lord present in her and in others!"*

In 2017<sup>2</sup>, the year of the 'Bicentenaire', she created a dialogue between St. Marie Eugenie and Sr. Thérèse Emmanuel, based on '*La Ruche et la Barque*'<sup>3</sup>. This dialogue, performed with Sr. Françoise Bernadette on the

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<sup>2</sup> Bicentenary of the birth of Mother Marie Eugenie and Mother Therese Emmanuel

<sup>3</sup> Publication of the Congregation for the Bicentenary

15<sup>th</sup> of August's Recreation Day,' delighted our PSA Sisters who testified to her devotion to our Congregation.

A year later, she wrote the History of the Merger to celebrate its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

In April 2018, Sr. Agnès and four PSA Sisters celebrated the Jubilee of their Sixty Years of Religious Life. And at the end of that same year, at the age of 92, she was still able to make the trip from Issoudun to Lyon to celebrate her brother's ninetieth birthday.

Sr. Agnès remained very active and lively until the beginning of 2019, but her health began to deteriorate and she had several stays in hospital. In spring, she accepted using a wheelchair. Then came the heat wave and, despite the heat, she stubbornly refused to drink. This led to a lack of appetite and cognitive disturbances. At Christmas, it was clear that her health would not improve.

Sr. Annick and Sr. Geneviève testify:

*"At the beginning of February, the Head of the Infirmary warned us that it was the time for Sr. Agnès to go into palliative care. She received the Sacrament of the Sick in the presence of Sr. Illuminata and Sr. Jeanne, during an immersion in Issoudun that weekend. Sr. Agnès maintained a certain consciousness since she made the Sign of the Cross that the Celebrant helped her to do. Since we were not far from the Ehpad, we were lucky to be often with her and on this last evening when we saw her so abandoned, we begged the Lord to come and get her..."*

In the early morning of Friday, February 14, "The Lord passed by, leading her into His eternal Eucharist!

Her funeral Mass was celebrated in Issoudun, in the Chapel of La Chaume and she rests with the Sisters who preceded her in the St. Marc Cemetery in Orleans.

*"Living with Agnes leaves an indelible mark of memories and affection!"* That's the way she was described by the 'Fioretti', echoes of Sisters of her Province.

# Sister Maria Norberta of the Incarnation

Banchiero Maria Rosaria

## **“Tu solus Domine”**

- Born on June 13, 1931 in Cagliari
- Postulancy on June 27, 1950 in Rome
- Novitiate on May 10, 1951 in Rome
- First Vows on October 10, 1952 in Rome
- Final Vows on November 6, 1955 in Rome
- Deceased on February 15, 2020 in Quadraro, Rome

We have received-information about her family and her youth from a circular that her elder brother Franco wrote in 2002 on the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Sister Norberta's (Maria Rosaria) profession.

She was born in 1931, the third of a large "tribe" as her brother Franco recalls; in fact, there were eighteen children.

Small and frail, her life was in danger from the first months of her life. She had been given the name of a sister who passed away at the age of one and a half years and had been entrusted to Our Lady of the Rosary. A surprising healing marked the first years of her life.

From an early age, she helped with household chores and did her best to help the needy. Then she became a catechist which proclaimed her passion.

Then came the war, the family was forced to move to an unhealthy rural area full of swamps, facing misery, destruction and precariousness. She and her sister were severely affected by malaria. Malaria was endemic in many parts of Italy at the time. It was thanks to the help of a soldier that they managed to get quinine, the only way to fight the disease.

Even then, it was obvious that the Lord had prepared the path for her. Her mother tried, with great difficulty and sacrifice, to cope with the many mouths to feed, not shying away from any effort, while her husband, a overseas fisherman, stayed on in order to try and provide for his family.

At the end of the war, in Cagliari, the family returned to normal life and so did Maria Rosaria: the parish, Catholic Action, helping the ones in need.

However, something was missing within her. One day, she gathered up her courage and told her mother of her desire to become a cloistered religious.

At the end of December 1949, Maria Rosaria left for Rome with her aunt Genoveffa, her mother's sister (who would later become her Sister at the Assumption), to become a Carmelite nun and Genoveffa to become a Trappistine. In fact, both were invited to the Convent of the Assumption and it was there that they decided to dedicate their lives to the Lord in 1950.

She took the name of Sister Maria Norberta and professed her first Vows on October 12, 1952.

Rome, Genoa and Mirto were the places of her mission, lived with passion and dynamism.

Sister Scholastica says: "I lived with Sister Norberta in Genoa, in the parish of the Holy Family, where she was in charge of the small chapel of Montello that depended on the parish: liturgy and catechesis. She was a passionate woman, with the zeal of a missionary. Nothing stopped her".

She had in her heart the desire for Africa, which she had expressed many times, but which she had never realized. During the years she spent in Mirto in Calabria, she worked tirelessly in the school teaching religion, in the parish involved in catechesis and Catholic Action, animating the young people who saw in her a guide and for whom they had much affection and gratitude.

Finally, in 1989, she was allowed to go as a missionary, even though she wasn't any younger and had been experiencing health problems for some time. Benin and Côte d'Ivoire were the countries where she lived from 1989 to 2006.

Years lived with enthusiasm, in the gift of self: hyperactive, tireless, but humble, solid and upright. This is evidenced by the beautiful circular written by the West African Sisters who knew her.

Although it was not always easy to deal with her exuberance and her simplicity, the way she came into contact with people, the affection she showed, her cordiality, meant that the young people loved her very much and were enthused by her.

During the years she spent in Abidjan, she was involved in the Centre for the Human Promotion of Youth, in a tireless work.

Due to her health, Norberta returned to Italy in 2009 with great regret, but gradually allowing this new call from the Lord.

She spent several years in Genzano, trying, not without difficulty, to find a place of integration with the poor: at the psychiatric clinic near us and with the mentally handicapped at the Fatebenefratelli Center. There she always continued to proclaim the closeness of God by assisting the employed in the handicraft workshops and activities with the sick. She had a missionary heart with which she wanted to touch everyone.

A woman of faith and of prayer, she was not always easy in Community relations, particularly because of the way she behaved with the people in the house, a way that we did not always agree on. The zeal and tenacity she had shown in the past, were part of her personality, as was her obstinacy, tempered by her passion for the Gospel.

She spent the last years of her life, affected by the increasing difficulties of her health at the Quadraro infirmary, missing her simple and cordial relations with the sick at Genzano and always hoping that one day she would be able to return. Little by little, she found in Community prayer and Adoration her mission without boundaries.

She was delighted to be able to help the Sisters in the Infirmary to pray at mealtimes and during the rosary.

Norberta willingly took part in Community meetings, taking notes and adding her own comments.

She lived the last days of her life in peace and trust, even in the midst of her suffering, abandoning herself to the Lord Who came to take her with Him.

The Communities of Genzano and Rome-Quadraro

(Original in French)

# Sister Lourdes Victoria of the Heart of Jesus

Maria Victoria Montoya Urizar

## "Through Him, with Him, and in Him"

- Born on July 11, 1926 in Burgos
- Postulancy on September 26, 1953 in Mira Cruz
- Novitiate on December 7, 1953
- First Vows on February 11, 1955 in Mira Cruz
- Final Vows on August 27, 1960 in Gijon
- Deceased on February 21, 2020 in Collado Mediano

Lourdes arrived in Collado from the hospital 11 years ago when already very ill. She was assigned to Santa Isabel, the house she loved most in the Province and in which she was very happy. She accepted her new assignment in the infirmary, with resignation and without expressing any complaints, although we all knew how difficult it was for her to leave her beloved Santa Isabel, and, above all, the Lavapiés neighborhood that she frequented very often. She visited, brought Communion, and encouraged many elderly and poor people in the neighborhood.

Lourdes had lived in various Communities in the Province, and always as a Community and school nurse in Malaga, Leon, Gijon, Madrid, (Cuestablanca, Santa Isabel, Los Olivos) and a few other places for shorter periods of time. However, it was Santa Isabel which was closest to her heart, the place where she spent most of her time and on several occasions. It was her reference base. As well as being a nurse, she also had a great deal of experience in visiting families in need, especially elderly and lonely people. She knew the needs of the Lavapiés district very well, and she developed a discreet and much-needed service there. She was not only able to practice her profession, but more importantly her vocation, which was to serve the poorest people, and this was the most difficult mission for her to leave.

Whenever she was assigned elsewhere, she always made it known that Santa Isabel was her one and only place, and her desire was strong, yet as

a woman of obedience, she accepted her destiny with the conviction that God was asking her to make this sacrifice.

When she was in Collado, the people she had known remembered her, called her often, and some of them even came to see her. This was the best gift they could have given her, and she appreciated it very much. Afterwards, she would tell us a thousand times what she had told them, repeating the same things she had told us, especially the things she thought we should know.

In the Community of Olivos, Sisters from the Province were able to benefit from her nursing skills and many doctors appreciated her management of emergency situations. Many Sisters are very grateful to her and have always remembered her with great affection.

In Collado, while still in the infirmary, the people of the village didn't know her very well, but those who came to the Eucharist approached her asking for prayers. They knew she would do it without forgetting. She had a good memory and knew everyone's names, including those of the children and grandchildren.

Lourdes had a great devotion to the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and never forgot to go when it was here time to do so. Towards the end, when she was in a wheelchair, the nurses would faithfully accompany her knowing that it was an important moment for her.

Another important devotion was to the Sacred Heart and to the Virgin Mary, particularly to Our Lady of Lourdes, recalling that it was at the grotto in Lourdes that she discovered her vocation and that the Virgin helped her to define it.

The Eucharist and the Office to which she was always ready to go, almost to the very end of her life, were at the center of her life.

Although her health was frail, Lourdes did not stay away from the Community for long. She "left" in a week. God wanted to give her these 11 years at Collado to live a time of serenity, to serve Him and to have plenty of time to pray to Him, adore Him and thank Him for all He had given her, and she did so with deep conviction.

She often repeated that she was dying, but we understood that as a nurse, she had foreseen her end, and so she went to meet the Father...

Today in this encounter, she is already experiencing her Word "Through Him, with Him and in Him", and in the admiration that wells up in her heart, she rejoices in recognizing the face of her Lord and is grateful for the way He has accompanied her throughout her life and now for eternity.

"As your last Community, we remain grateful to God for having shared the last years of your life, in the certainty that you will continue to pray for us".

With affection,

The Community of Collado Mediano

## Sister Luz Eugenia of the Sacred Heart

Maria Luz Briales Shaw

### "I thirst!"

- Born on September 30, 1925 in Malaga
- Postulancy on February 11, 1944 in Malaga
- Novitiate on November 19, 1944 in San Sebastian
- First Vows on February 19, 1946 in San Sebastian
- Final Vows on April 20, 1954 in Malaga
- Deceased on February 26, 2020 in Collado Mediano

Luz came to Collado from Santa Cruz de Tenerife, leaving her beloved Barrio de La Alegría, where she had been very happy for 17 years. In fact, Luz was happy everywhere she went because she always found a way to serve others; and that was the reason for her happiness and the joy she passed on to others. First, "in the breach", as an intrepid missionary in Africa, then at La Alegria in her sewing workshop: many of the local women were sewing, keen to learn and, as they had all kinds of problems, they talked to Luz about everything, which was like therapy. Luz always found a moment to evangelize, which was a vocation for her, and she

knew how to do it with her grace, closeness and the know-how that always characterized her. People loved her and whatever Mother Luz said and did had a lot of "weight".

It's not easy to review Luz' 94 years of life, because we could highlight so many qualities that can only be mentioned about people who have already died, but she could well be defined by the following: a fragile body, small and bent by so much sewing, but a great soul, a restless and devoted spirit and always an immense joy.

Many people took part in her missionary workshops, not just women, but whole families, who helped as much as they could, especially at her well-known "small markets", where she devoted herself to raising money for the missions. In those days, young and old members of the family helped to sell as many things as possible and send the benefit to the missions. Many women couldn't take part in Luz' workshops, but the enthusiasm she transmitted was such that they set up small workshops where they were located, so as to bring everything they made to the small market.

ere in Collado, in her old age, she also set up a workshop with the working women of the village. They sewed, knitted, produced laces and many other things... What marvels they come up with alongside her! She never stopped, her body deteriorated more and more, her back arched, we thought it was from so much sewing, but she didn't get tired, her physical appearance was very fragile, but she had tremendous strength that she devoted to service and in total forgetfulness of herself. Whenever we saw her sewing at meetings and we told her to rest since she was already 93, she would reply with her usual grace: "93, I don't think I'm that old", and we would say to her: "So how old do you think you are? And she'd reply: "About fifty". We understood that if she felt like the youngest member of the Community, she could carry on working.

Many of our Sisters remember her in Africa on her bicycle, fearless and courageous, traversing the roads to serve the poorest and most remote people, then on her "moped", with a characteristic haste and determination to serve those she loved the most. How many must have welcomed her in heaven with the joy she gave them on so many occasions!

But Luz, although she had been a happy woman, much loved and appreciated in the places she had been, knew that we are not eternally here

on earth, that our eternity is with God, this God to whom she gave her life, this God who made her happy here and who will make her much happier with Him. And when she saw that she had no strength left, she surrendered. From time to time, she would say that she could also go to the workshop to help and organize the next 'sales'. Once we took her there in a wheelchair which she liked it, but she was very tired. She could already see the end of her life coming, but she never complained and was always grateful for everything others did.

Although she had been back in Spain for more than 20 years, her heart was still beating for Africa and her determination, right up to the end of her life, was to help the dispensary in Abomey and to involve many people in this dynamic of helping and doing something for others, which was a beautiful thing to see. Everyone was contaminated by her enthusiasm and tireless inventiveness to make things and sell as many as possible, having the gift of always transmitting joy and enthusiasm, not to mention her business sense ... When people asked her to lower her prices, she was quick to say: "People find everything here and if they can buy something, they do it with the pleasure of helping", and we all had to keep quiet.

She was a good Religious, devoted and joyful, loving community life and the Office, never tired of attending Vigils or meetings. 74 years of Consecrated Life is a long time, and even though she didn't seem that old, at the end she was already looking forward to meeting her Lord, because deep down she knew that He had something better for her, something that would reward her for all her dedication and all her love. This short period of illness and inactivity prepared her for this encounter.

Her mystery was the Sacred Heart and we believe that one of the aims of her life was to have a big heart, to love as much as Jesus did; we can say that she showed us, through her life, how important it was to love and forget oneself, and to give one's life day after day, this is the legacy she left us and many others.

er word, "I thirst", words at the end of Jesus' life in the Gospel, a thirst that led our dear Luz to be as she was, without worries, kind, devoted, joyful, always doing good, a thirst that will now be quenched by her Lord and will be a source of joy and happiness.

“Your Lord and Mary, to whom you were so devoted, will now rejoice with you; we will miss you and will often remember your cheerfulness and how you never felt old, which, in our Community, will be a source of encouragement.”

We'd like to go on speaking to you about Luz, as we never cease thanking her for the years we lived with her, but it would be repeating all the values that adorned her frail and worn body, worn down by her devotion.

With affection,

The Community of Collado Mediano (original in Spanish)

## Sister Marie Blandine of Jesus

Marion Fougerat

### "Mihi vivere Christus est!"

- Born on January 26, 1932 in Lyon
- Postulancy on February 11, 1956 in Val Notre Dame
- Novitiate on September 6, 1956 in Val Notre Dame
- First Vows on September 8, 1957 in Auteuil
- Final Vows, on September 8, 1962 in Bellevue, Lyon
- Deceased on March 18, 2020 in Montpellier

For some of us, the name Sister Marie Blandine may evoke encounters which were lively, funny and relaxing.

Who has forgotten the Guignol shows, with her Lyonnais accent of course, which she used to perform for us on important Community occasions or at International Meetings in Auteuil or elsewhere? Who can forget her discreet disappearances during some of these meetings, into the cellar, and reappearing dressed up to give us a most successful 'Castafiore' ('Tintin at the Château de Moulinsart')? It was an important facet of her personality, but not the only one.

The youngest of three children, she had two brothers; she was a former student at Lyon, where she graduated with a degree in English, music and singing.

A native of Lyon, she had a certain restraint, a way of being a bit cold yet warm at the same time; she could even be intimidating and her blue eyes said quite well what she was thinking. Although somewhat authoritarian and "*not very gentle, but rather direct - sometimes a little too much so*", according to her nephews and nieces, she had a temper, but she also knew how to be very fraternal and compassionate. Some of the homeless people in Montpellier remember talking to her and waiting for her to come back when they were begging at the station!

Sisters who lived with her testify to her ability to "*listen soothingly and encouragingly*". Another Sister added: "*We spent 2 years in Bondy in complete confidence... she helped me a lot, supported me, I could count on her... I'm very grateful to her*" and again "*I really appreciated the community life, the pedagogical research, the links with the teachers... she let me get used to the speed of the Holy Spirit*".

Behind an appearance of solidity, Blandine was fragile and at certain times in her life and in the "eventful" life of the Province of France, depression was never far away.

She very quickly took on responsibilities: Superior, Provincial Councilor, Provincial, Secretary General of Clare Teresa and Cristina. She experienced all this as a mission, a service to the Congregation that she loved very much. When people seemed impressed by this mission, she would reply with humor that "all she needed was to be Superior General".

In 2001, leaving Auteuil, the General Secretariat and Cristina was a great ordeal of detachment.

It was the beginning of another stage in her life. She left for Montpellier as Superior of the Community, where she was very happy. She stayed there for 9 years. In 2007, the canonization of Marie Eugénie propelled her, along with a small team of Sisters, into the heart of the preparations for this fabulous event, during which she led, with joy and emotion, the Mass at Saint Mary Major, leading our entire pilgrimage in praise and thanksgiving.

Then, in 2010, she left for Saint Gervais, a place she had known for some time, but at a different moment: no longer with a specific mission, no longer with responsibility. One Sister said: *"I got to know the joyful, spontaneous person, in a group, in a given environment, and equally the despondent woman, unhappy with herself and with no desire, suffering then getting back on her feet"* and she continued: *"One day, she went on a retreat at La Visitation at the school of St. François de Sales, which was a complete transformation: she came back serene, as if she had finally found her spiritual path for this time of her life"*.

In August 2015, she left for La Guille, in Lyon, where she found out that her "good health" was no longer so good... and she was diagnosed with Charcot's disease after a short stay in hospital.

At the same time, Blandine was preparing her 60<sup>th</sup> jubilee, and she wanted to make it a celebration that would touch the hearts of her family deeply: *"I would like them to understand the meaning of my consecrated life and my affection for them, and for everyone, family, Sisters and friends, to give thanks together"*. And it was a beautiful celebration, full of faith, affection and joy!

Shortly afterwards, in October, her niece and goddaughter accompanied her along with two other Sisters to Montpellier. She was leaving Lyon for the last stage of her life. The neurologist had told her she had three years to live, and that's exactly what happened. Blandine allowed her body to be taken over by the disease, her freedom of movement to be taken away, but not the freedom to offer herself totally to her Lord in total surrender.

Mood swings; a struggle, in her mind, to stay and decide for herself what she needed, to manage alone until the end... in discouragement, incomprehension but with great dignity. Her nephew and niece often went to be with her during the last months, to ease her anguish, to show her their affection, "she whom they considered to be their substitute mother".

"The Lord had taken in her the true path of the mountains, that of the Transfiguration, before and after Calvary... Her ascent to LIFE showed me the radical "yes" of God's friends when He takes everything into His own hands... "another will gird you". Having said this, Jesus said to him: "Follow me".

She let go on the morning of March 18, 2020 in a most unexpected way !

Free of your movements, you can run to Him!

Infinite peace, Blandine! And thank you!

The Community of Montpellier

(Original in French)

## Sister Elvira of Jesus Crucified

Elvira Ordiz Suárez

### "Through Him, with Him, and in Him"

- Born on May 4, 1933 in Casa Cima (Asturias)
- Postulancy on September 2, 1951, in San Sebastian
- Novitiate on September 29, 1952, in San Sebastian
- First Vows on November 27, 1953, in San Sebastian
- Final Vows on November 27, 1956, San Sebastian
- Deceased on March 19, 2020, at El Olivar (Malaga)

Elvira was born into a family in the Asturias coalfields, and she describes her childhood as happy, although not without its difficulties. Her father, a miner, died when she was a child and her mother remarried. They were only two Sisters.

She entered the Postulancy in San Sebastian and did all her formation there. She remained there helping in the Novitiate, until her final Vows.

Elvira was a very welcoming and helpful Sister. She had great qualities and loved practical work. Her first assignment was in Olivos, where she looked after the refectory, storeroom, laundry and kitchen with great skill and hard work.

In 1962, she returned to her native Asturias, where the Assumption founded a Community in Roces, on the outskirts of Gijon. Elvira was much appreciated by everyone in the neighborhood, in the parish where she taught catechism, in the school and in the nursery where she worked

in the kitchen. Her closeness and kindness attracted everyone who met her. She was very dynamic, helping out with whatever was needed with great dedication and good humor, which created an atmosphere in which people felt at ease. She stayed in Roces for 9 years, so when she returned to Gijon 30 years later, many people welcomed her with great joy.

In 1973, she was sent to the Granadilla Community, founded the previous year on the island of Tenerife (Canary Islands). The Community lived in the center of the village and had a great influence on its development and that of the region from a cultural, social and religious point of view. Elvira devoted herself fully to catechesis and to the many tasks of the house, always with her characteristic friendliness and closeness to the people.

She then moved to the Community of Tegueste, where she left a lasting impression, as the Palao family can testify: "Elvira was a Tegueste resident like any other - although she never lost her Asturian accent - because of her availability, her integration into the village, her constant awareness of the problems of her people, her closeness to everyone and her dedication to the Assumption Community.

She has left her knowledge with us, especially in the kitchen. She taught us all her recipes in her classes and her comments to us. She taught us that nothing is superfluous and that everything can be used, you just have to use your imagination. If you take a walk around the village today, you'll still be able to smell her biscuits in many of the houses. Elvira loved children and let herself be loved by them. This affection was such that, in our village, she stopped being just Elvira and became Auntie Elvira, and she still is today. Her friendship and affection continue to be present in our lives.

Elvira was much loved in Contruces, where she stayed nearly 10 years. Being Asturian, she was very close to the neighborhood where her mother lived, she knew the people very well and they loved her very much. She visited some of her mother's neighbors and then spent time with her mother.

Within the Community, she spent most of her time at home. As she loved to cook, she didn't want the Sisters, who went to school, to do the cooking, because she said that in this way she could contribute indirectly to the pastoral work. She would go to the **greengrocer's** and they would give

her fruits and she would use them to make delicious jams. She was happy to make the Sisters happy. She was a very simple woman, humble, with an impressive capacity for work, nothing was impossible for her; she was open to new things, with a great capacity for welcoming young people who appreciated her presence. She was a woman of prayer, capable of re-reading what she was experiencing and sharing it to the very end.

She was very easy to get along with, both inside and outside, interested in everything that was happening in the world and in the Congregation, but also eager for interior growth, for which she provided the appropriate means. She made community life easy and also the mission, because she was always available to replace a Sister and help out where she knew that she could.

Maria Jose, her current Superior, testifies: "For me, she was a great example of a simple and evangelical woman, with the Word of God and the Rule of Life in her hands, as well as the documents of the Congregation. She knew her limits, but she didn't complain about them. On the contrary, knowing them, she always made things easier, doing whatever she was able to do, in order for others to do things she couldn't do.

During her years of insertion at Contruces and Hortaleza, she left a deep impression on the Sisters of the Community: "Throughout our lives, we have been fortunate to meet Sisters who have been 'beacons' for Christ. Elvira was one of them!

Living with her in Contruces and Hortaleza, we were able to taste the flavor of the Gospel lived out in small everyday gestures. She was an elderly woman with a young heart, mind and spirit. She created the name 'Enredando'. Her life was an invitation to live in simplicity, fidelity and fraternity. A practical woman, always ready to help, but humble enough to let herself be helped. A woman full of fraternal care, joyful, not at all demanding of others.... She said that she had always wanted to be a missionary, and we are witnesses that she was... but in her own country.

One of the things that impressed us most about Elvira was her great fidelity and love for the Religious Life of the Assumption, her joy and ability to begin each day as if it was the first, remaining faithful to the means.

We were impressed and challenged to see her taking stock, each evening, of her daily life, giving thanks and asking for forgiveness, drawing up and reporting on her monthly retreat, her personal plan, which she faithfully renewed each year. Seeing her with her RL in her hands, all underlined, before the Lord in adoration, without rushing... We were impressed and moved.... to feel that she was living illuminated by the "Light that comes from within", clinging to the God who had called her one day.

Already in Hortaleza, her body was very worn out, her health and strength very weak... "THANK YOU, ELVIRA, continue to pray for each one of us, for the Province and for the Congregation before the only Lord of your life, as you did every day when you were with us" (Testimony of Lola Herrera and Loli Avalos).

Her last Community was El Olivar (Malaga). Maria Jesus, Superior of this Community for many years, knew her well and wrote: "She came from Hortaleza to a house for elderly and sick Sisters, and the passage was still costly, even at 82. She welcomed it with a religious spirit and a desire to continue to help in whatever way she could. She was soon involved in the simple tasks around the house: sewing, helping in the dining room, knitting... She made little snowmen, big and round at first. As her eyesight deteriorated, the snowmen got smaller and smaller. She knitted very well, and we remember her in her armchair at the door of the Community room with her walker in front of her. The seat of the walker served as a table for her wool, for her needles, for everything...

A sturdy Asturian, though increasingly bent over, she continued her walks, first on the porch and in the garden. Then in the corridors. A very early riser, she would get up at dawn and spend long hours in the chapel. She would have to be very ill to miss a service or a Community event. She reported on her rich spiritual life to her Superior with great punctuality and fidelity. And she constantly repeated that her joy was to be able to help and accompany the Sisters, especially the sick, for whom she easily became the protector.

Her heart began to fail her and her choking fits became more and more frequent, relieved by large doses of diuretics. This made her suffer, especially as it kept her away from the Community, even for a few days.

She was very fond of her sister, who came to see her every summer. And it was a celebration for her.

We don't really know what she died of, whether it was Covid 19 or a new episode of pulmonary obstruction that she couldn't overcome. We were all confined to our rooms when she left us in the early hours of March 19, without being able to surround her and say our goodbyes as we would have liked. Her funeral also took place in solitude, with only two of us able to attend, pray for her and entrust her to her Father. She lived for Him, with Him and in Him, as she had engraved in her ring. And the Lord will keep her very close to Him.

The Community of El Olivar

(Original in Spanish)

## Sister Carmen of the Crucified Christ

Carmen Bonelli García

### "Thy Kingdom Come!"

- Born on May 18, 1935, in Madrid
- Postulancy on January 7, 1956, in Santa Isabel
- Novitiate on September 5, 1956, in San Sebastian
- First Vows on September 30, 1957, in San Sebastian
- Final Vows on September 30, 1962, in Madrid - Los Olivos
- Deceased on March 26, 2020, in El Olivar (Malaga)

Carmen Bonelli García was born in Madrid on May 18, 1935. Her grandmother, Carmen García del Cid, a former student of the Assumption of Santa Isabel school, was married to D. Manuel García Morente, dean and brilliant professor of philosophy at the Central University of Madrid. He was one of the most important thinkers in the early twentieth-century in Spain. Exiled to Paris at the beginning of the Civil War, he experienced a conversion in 1937, to which he recounts in "El Hecho Extraordinario", in a letter written to his spiritual director, José María García de Lahiguera.

Widowed, he was ordained a priest in 1940 and became chaplain at our Velázquez school, where his daughter Almudena, Carmen's aunt and her mother's only sister, began her religious life at the Assumption. Carmen, who had lost her father at the age of three, was educated by her mother, a very cultured woman, and soon felt the call to religious life at the Assumption.

After completing her studies in philosophy at Madrid's Complutense University, she was sent to Leon and for several years ran the Assumption Normal School there. Many of the Sisters who were her students remember her with great esteem and affection.

We quote the testimony of Dolores Castro, the present Provincial of Mexico: "Our dear Carmen or Miamen, as I liked to call her, witnessed the life of a Religious of the Assumption from the first time I met her at the Leon School. She arrived very young and it was very precious for us students to get to know her as a teacher and as a Religious. We could easily approach her and receive stimulating words that helped us to grow.

Later, as a Junior Sister in the post-Conciliar period which had such a strong influence on our Province, she has always been a point of reference in my search for a vocation. Every time I met Miamen, I came back ready to overcome what was happening on the outside and to be faithful to Jesus' call. When the Lord Jesus sent me to Mexico, she continued to be a very important link with Spain and I asked her to remain my spiritual directress. The media helped us to keep in touch periodically. Every time I came back for sessions or holidays, we found a way of meeting up and renewing our accompaniment and friendship more closely. Her interest in each of her students never waned, and when names came up in conversation, they had been in contact with her. We knew that she was faithful to her friendships and that her prayers were with us. Miamen always kept abreast of world and Church news. She read a lot and good authors on different subjects.

She was for me an example of love for the Congregation in difficult times and of deep appreciation of the best moments of fidelity and serenity."

In 1968, she was appointed Superior of the Community of Vallecas, where she is remembered with great affection.

On August 14, 1972, she arrived in the Canary Islands to found a Community in Granadilla with four other Sisters. Here's what one of her students had to say: "At the age of 37, Carmen arrived ready to give everything she was and had to this land. She gave herself to this city with her great heart, her enthusiasm for life, her overflowing joy, her great intelligence, her open-mindedness, her philosophical formation and her motto: "My gaze is fixed on Jesus and on the extension of His Kingdom".

For 17 years, she worked tirelessly on two fronts: First, in pastoral work, going to all the scattered neighborhoods of the district, as well as other parts of the island such as San Miguel, Arico, Güímar, Santa Cruz, the Escuela Hogar, the Seminary, etc., where she managed, along with other Religious Sisters, the catechetical education of the boys and girls, also the adult education and liturgy formation. In all these areas, she was immensely appreciated and loved.

Secondly, her educational work as a philosophy teacher at Granadilla High School, inaugurated in October 1972, the first official high school in the southern zone. Both inside and outside the classroom, she became a unifying force for disparate wills. She also became a driving force for young people in a region with so many differences and in need of people who could bring order and harmony.

Her work as a teacher, which went beyond textbooks, included taking time out when there was no one to do social work in the region. It gave her immense joy to see her students awaken their knowledge to God, their love of the faith and, for some, their nascent vocation to the priesthood. They still remember with gratitude the support she provided to help them take the first steps in their consecration to God.

Carmen lifted the spirits of all Latin and Philosophy students. In her classes, they felt a sense of freedom, unusual at the time, and undoubtedly a harbinger of the new democratic times to come. Her philosophy of life was: open-mindedness, humility, respect and tolerance, values drawn from her philosophical roots. Yet she also learned and applied these values through her everyday experience. Her ideas were fundamental for the teenagers in the early 70s, who were particularly in need of an

ideology to bring order to their confused minds, and many are still grateful to her today.

A faithful heir of her grandfather, Carmen had a very clear intellect and a pedagogical formation which she demonstrated, not only in her classes in high school, but also in the diocese, lecturing on the Bible and on theological subjects to groups of Christians, and also at the Seminary. She passed on the love she had for God, for the Church and for the world with her natural enthusiasm, her abundant knowledge, and at the same time with a great simplicity that allowed everyone to understand her.

Seeing the needs of the population, together with the Community, they began to respond and set up a nursery, a center for the elderly, "Centro de Tercera Edad", formation for adults through "RADIO ECCA", as well as a center for the disabled.

As president of the CONFER (Confederation of Religious) of Tenerife, she encouraged the different Congregations to help religious men and women to continue to open their minds and discover the values of today's world, but in this mission she perhaps had a particular devotion to the cloistered convents, leaving an unforgettable remembrance.

She spared no effort with those dedicated to teaching, because by discovering the characteristics of young people, they could seek ways to rekindle in them the values of the Gospel.

She worked in Granadilla until September 1, 1989, when she was appointed Provincial Councilor and joined the Viña Community.

As a Councilor, she was responsible for monitoring the Communities in Madrid, and used her skills and training to animate the Province with Rosario Cubillo and her Council.

Over the next few years, Carmen held the following positions:

- Superior of Santa Isabel 1995-2004 - During this period, she taught at an institute in Parla, a suburb of Madrid. The testimonies of these years have the same tint as what she experienced in the Canary Islands: an absolute dedication to her pupils to form them in Christian values and awaken in them a thirst for the Gospel.

- Until 2007: Superior and Directress of the Olivos Residence.
- 2008-2013: Superior at Los Molinos
- 2013-2018: Superior at Tegueste
- 2018-2020: El Olivar

In the latter Communities, her ability to animate Community meetings and gatherings is particularly noteworthy. Carmen knew how to communicate; she read and shared with her Sisters and led conversations on interesting and profound subjects. She wanted to make her Sisters happy, and we believe that she succeeded in doing so in the Communities she visited.

She did not stay long at El Olivar, barely a year and a half. A peaceful woman, deeply religious, we saw her faculties diminish slowly but inexorably, which did not affect her liveliness or her ease of communication in the Community, nor did it prevent her from collaborating in the Parish Health Ministry and from going to the College to give a few lectures in the Baccalaureate and Cycle courses, which the students greatly appreciated.

In March 2020, she participated in the PPC. As usual, she had travelled to Madrid a few days earlier to carry on working with her family on a Foundation aimed at gathering and systematizing her grandfather's writings. A few days after her return, she felt so weak that she lost consciousness and fell, injuring her head. She was so unwell in the hospital that the decision was made to keep her there in order to get her back on her feet. This was in the early days of the pandemic, when we detected she had contracted Covid 19. Some improvement gave us hope, but the process was unstoppable. The whole Community had also contracted the virus, and it was impossible to visit her, or be together to pray for her and for the other Sisters who were sick too. Carmen died while in the hospital on March 26, alone like so many other Spaniards at that time, with only the presence of her Lord. Her funeral also took place in seclusion, attended only by the chaplain and two other people. She left a deep mark on the Community, which has yet to come to terms with her death and that of the other two Sisters.

We are deeply grateful to the Lord for giving us Carmen for the service of the Province, the Congregation and the Church which she loved so deeply.

In recent years, her unique focus became more and more evident: she sought the Lord Jesus and He alone filled her heart. So, swiftly, almost abruptly for us, but surely with mercy, the Lord took her with Him after a fruitful life lived to the end. We can only say thank you and entrust our Province to Carmen's intercession.

The Community of El Olivar  
(Original in Spanish)

## Sister Pilar Josefa of Nazareth

Maria Concepción García Hirschfeld

### "All for the Love of Our Lord Jesus Christ."

- Born on March 12, 1925, in Malaga
- Postulancy on February 11, 1944, in Malaga
- Novitiate on November 19, 1944, in San Sebastian
- First Vows on February 19, 1946, in San Sebastian
- Perpetual Vows on February 11, 1950, in Malaga
- Deceased on March 26, 2020, in El Olivar (Malaga)

Pilar was born in Malaga into a large, deeply Christian family. Of the nine siblings, 4 boys and 5 girls, four chose the Religious Life, Carlos joined the Society of Jesus and the three sisters joined the Assumption: Pilar Josefa, Josefina Inés and Maravillas. Pilar Josefa was the second sibling, "an amazing older sister, exceptionally good", as Maravillas recalls. In those post-war years, when almost everyone lacked basic necessities, they were lucky enough to be able to attend the School of the Assumption as boarders. As they were a large family, her mother relied on her a great deal, treating the little ones with great affection and patience. Pilar remembers her childhood as a happy time, first in the center of Malaga

and then in El Palo, on the outskirts, near the school. Family events were celebrated with joy and with the participation of everyone. For instance, we still remember the trip to Cordoba all together, where travelers were astonished to see the carriage fill up with the whole family, including the nanny. In those days, when there was no AVE (fast train), the journey took no less than seven hours. A happy and very generous family, Josefina Inés set off to Latin America: Nicaragua, El Salvador, Buenos Aires and Mexico. Her brothers and sisters were quick to say: "It made us all stronger".

Pilar remembers with emotion her time at school, at a difficult time for the Community. They had to take refuge in a large mansion, 'Villa Clara', following the fire in our convent in Barcenillas in 1931. At the age of 18, she decided to enter the Assumption, where she had been educated, along with her grandmother, her aunts and all her sisters. Her brothers missed her very much.

She was always available and visited many Communities in the Province of Spain, as well as in France, where she spent two years in Rennes and Montpellier. She kept a special affection from those stays. She has always lived in schools, except for her last years at El Olivar and a 10-year break as Superior of the Jesuit retirement home in Granada. These years were very gratifying for her due to the work done, the activity and the richness that the retirement home provided, along with the closeness of her brother Carlos, a Jesuit, who was the Director of the Home. Leaving this work was painful for Pilar, but she accepted it with her usual sense of obedience.

Ignacio, one of her nephews, then a student at the University of Granada, remembers the great help and closeness of his aunt: "I am not saying anything new or unknown when I say that Aunt Conchita was a fundamentally a good person, but she was much more than that: she was intelligent and cultured, she had character when she needed it too, she had a prodigious memory, she was a great teacher, and most importantly, she had an impressive faith in God that embraced her whole being and everything she did..... I will never have enough days in my life to thank her for the way she behaved with me during my university years in Granada, when she took care of me and protected me as if she was a mother and as mothers do, often without us deserving it.... She listened to

me, she consoled me, she let me unburden myself and that is priceless and, without trying to do so, she made me see God's goodness in all things and at all times, even if I was in a bad way. Without a doubt, I was fortunate and privileged to have such an aunt. Now all I have to do is give eternal thanks to God, as she always taught me."

A great educator, Pilar Josefa worked in many schools in the Province, always in management or tutorial positions (class teacher, as we have already mentioned). With her privileged memory, she would tell anecdotes about the houses she had spent time in: Gijon, Tenerife, Mira-Cruz, Velazquez, Santa Isabel, Malaga. Her facility with mathematics made her a good math teacher and a good bursar. Her students remember her with particular affection, as do her few remaining classmates.

This memory enabled her to remember the dates of feast days, birthdays, events in her family and the Sisters of the Community. She was always happy to remember dates. She had a special affection for each member of her large family. Especially her brothers. Carlos, the Jesuit, and the twins held a special place in her heart. That's why Maria Rosa's death last October was such a grief for her that she never recovered. She kept photos, letters and family documents, and for each one she had an affectionate gesture, a loving memory. She also enjoyed receiving correspondence from everyone. Second in the family, she had the pain of seeing almost all her brothers and sisters die. The long illness of Juan and Javier, as well as Pilar (Sr. Josefina Inés), in faraway Mexico, were very painful for her.

Pilar came to Olivar for a retreat with Carmen Escribano in 2007. She had come from Pedregalejo, where she was already having real difficulty getting around. This is where she stayed and where she spent the last years of her life. Always kind, always ready to give a helping hand, always affectionate with the Sisters, always reluctant to accept doctors, medicines or special care for herself. She never took more than one aspirin, as she had always done, and if she could, she even avoided it. She was a deeply religious woman, an educator by vocation, devoted to her Religious Life, a woman of prayer, a hard worker. When she had nothing else to do, she kept the door open and knitted beautifully for the tombola that our alumni organize at Christmas to support Nuevo Futuro's social work for homeless children.

Covid 19 confined us all to our rooms from March 14. The whole Community contracted the virus. Pilar too. The illness was complicated by pneumonia. Antibiotics were only able to prolong her life by a few days. A few days earlier, Sister Elvira had died. She died alone on March 26, just as we were alone in our rooms, she without the consolation of seeing us at her bedside, and we without the consolation of being able to surround her and pray with her in her last moments. Her funeral was also a solitary one, as was Carmen Bonelli's, attended only by Mercedes Piedrafita, Superior of El Palo, and a laywoman, Begoña Rivero, who was in the El Olivar Community that season.

She, so communitarian, will have found the whole Assumption Community close to the Father and forever. We entrust ourselves to her and we entrust her to your prayers.

With all our affection,

The Community of El Olivar  
(Original in Spanish)

## Sister Ana María of the Immaculate Conception

Ana María Oñate Prendergast

### "My Soul Proclaims the Greatness of the Lord."

- Born on June 13, 1925, in Sarria (Lugo)
- Postulancy on June 15, 1946, in San Sebastian
- Novitiate on February 2, 1947, in San Sebastian
- First Vows on June 8, 1948, in San Sebastian
- Final Vows on June 16, 1951, in Rennes (France)
- Deceased on March 30, 2020, in Collado Mediano

Ana María came to Collado in 2011, after spending a year in Los Molinos. She arrived with little, having spent more than 40 years in West Africa, which made her bring with her very little luggage. However, with a great weight of love, hope, work and dedication, which may weigh little, but

filled her heart, so much so that more than half of it was left behind in Africa, so that she could continue to serve here, in a different way, but with total dedication. Ana María was such a good person and such a good Religious that she lived with us as if she was really where she needed to be and where she wanted to be, even though we knew where most of her heart was.

Here, as an elderly person, she was always ready to help. She couldn't do much, but she always did a thousand things to make the Community feel at ease.

Above all, she was able to find things she could do to ease all those who were already doing so much. She did everything in silence, without giving it any importance, and we all loved what she did for others, without anyone asking her to. She was a Sister who loved community life, meetings, services and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. At the end of her life, she lost a lot of her ability to hear and it was difficult for her not to hear what was being said, but as she was very discreet, she didn't ask questions; we could see that it was difficult for her. She was not in the habit of complaining; she bore everything in silence and with a great deal of peace.

We know a great deal about her mission in Africa, not from her but from the Sisters who knew her there. This was reflected in the testimonies sent to us, but we can only say that her mission was entirely devoted to the formation of traditional midwives in Danané. With her simplicity, gentleness and respect for the people and their culture, she won the trust of the village midwives and was able to delve into their traditional and sacred world. A former Assumption student helped her, particularly with the language. Ana María succeeded in reducing infant mortality due to tetanus.

The midwives' formation was part of the parish pastoral care, a pastoral care planned and carried out in close collaboration between the "parents" and the Sisters. By 1982, the Center, set up to form midwives and women in general, now had 400 midwives from 110 villages. Ana María was the Center's directress. This work with women in the villages, where, there were no Christians, opened doors to evangelization. She also worked a lot with the disabled and the mentally ill,

Ana Maria had 14 siblings, of whom she was the youngest, and 48 nieces and nephews. When she came back from Africa, she was able to enjoy a lot, not from her brothers and sisters, but from her nephews and nieces who came to see her very often and she saw how these 48 nephews and nieces multiplied over the last few years, and was already something that was beyond her. She liked to know how many they were and whose children and grandchildren they were. She was very attached to her family, who always supported her, first in her mission in Africa, where many of them went to see her and got to know her first mission, and then here, with their frequent visits and updates on what her large family was going through. She was born in Sarria, Lugo, and loved this Galician land very much, she was grateful that her nephews took her to spend a few days in the summer, and remembered with great pleasure the years of her childhood and the friends she had left. Gone for many years, we know that she missed the life of her family very much, but the ones that the Lord gave her here, she was able to enjoy and make the most of it. God is no slouch when it comes to generosity. Ana Maria was very generous and devoted and God repaid her well.

Here she had plenty of time to pray, always with her rosary in her hand, without ceasing to say "Hail Marys".

How many rosaries she had lost! She always had one in her hand. Even though it was very difficult for her to leave Africa, little by little she was able to get used to it again. She knew how to invest her time in prayer for the world, for everyone, she was tireless in her prayer, as well as in her work, all this while living her Word: "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord" in the image of Mary, in simplicity, humility and the recognition that all others deserved her service, her dedication and her generosity.

"Ana, the infinite care you had for each Sister in the Community, your smile, the fact that you were always attentive to others, sometimes helping them, sometimes making us aware of the needs you perceived, enabling us to do the things you couldn't do... we miss all that too; we could agree more or less with your excessive zeal, but no one could deny that what you lived was this unconditional dedication to everyone and this forgetfulness of yourself that made you a person loved by all. You gave us a good example of generosity and devotion that we will always remember.

From heaven, we know that, although you have many relatives for whom you will intercede, you will also do so for the Congregation that you loved so much and to which you gave your life, for your beloved Africa, for vocations; and something will remain for us, this Community of Collado Mediano, which had the grace to live with you these last years of your life. Now that you are close to your Lord, to Mary and to Marie Eugenie, you will be eternally happy and you will continue to watch over all those whom you loved and who loved you.”

With affection,

The Community of Collado Mediano

(Original in Spanish)

## Sister María Estrella of the Child Jesus

María Estrella Álvarez García

### "He was subject to them."

- Born on February 1, 1926 in Asturias
- Postulancy on March 25, 1943, in Gijon
- Novitiate on May 21, 1944, in San Sebastian
- First Vows on June 8, 1945, in San Sebastian
- Final Vows on June 24, 1948, in Madrid-Velazquez
- Deceased on March 30, 2020, in Collado Mediano

Estrella went to the heavenly Father's home, in the same way that she lived; silently, without a word, without a moan, she fell asleep peacefully and abandoned herself. She had been ill for a few days, but without complaining, we didn't think that she would leave us so quickly. Her word, "He was subject to them", left a mark on her life and prevented her from losing that holy submission when she took the final step, the step of truth, on this journey towards meeting the Father.

When she arrived in our Community of Los Molinos, she had a good friend there, Sister Maria Sira. The change was therefore not so difficult for her and she immediately integrated into her new Community. She

helped Sira. Although they were more or less the same age, Sira was much sicker, and Estrella had been a care-giver in several Communities, so she offered to look after her friend with a very special dedication. They prayed endless rosaries until the sick Sister got tired and asked to continue the next day. Estrella found it hard to accept, and didn't understand until someone explained. So, she complied and continued to look after her Sister with the same affection and patience, but with less rosaries... she had found the right balance between praying and not tiring out the sick Sister.

Estrella entered the Congregation very young, at the age of 17, in Gijon, and it would have been this year that she would have celebrated her 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Vows, along with another of our Sisters who was able to celebrate them. Estrella, in her long, consecrated life, lived in many houses in the Province. In all of them, she left the memory of a good Religious, devoted and affectionate with the students. She was a precious help to the class teachers in the schools, because she knew how to take care of the pupils thanks to her closeness, joy and dedication, and the teachers could be sure that the pupils were in good hands. She has very fond memories of this long stage of her life in the schools, where she gave herself unconditionally and was very happy.

She also left her homeland and the environment in which she felt so happy, to go to Argentina, where she had a sick sister and thought her company and care would be very good for her. She was in the Gerli Community; Marta Elena tells us about her: "I had the joy of sharing Community life with Estrellita for the 5 years she lived with us. "She's a little saint", said the people who knocked on our door, because we always saw her cooperating and looking after us with great kindness". In reality, they didn't know her very well, because she didn't work at the school where the Sisters lived, which was a very large Community of parents and teachers.

On the other hand, those who did know her, and did so very well, were the neighbors from all over the neighborhood, especially the sick and elderly people she visited, as well as the inhabitants of the favelas. That's why, on the day of her return to Spain, more than three buses gathered to accompany her to the airport, all organized by the same people.

Every day, after doing her work at home, she would slowly go out to visit the sick people. The people themselves would say to her, "Sister, go this

way or go that way." And everyone was waiting for her with great affection.

I would accompany her on her visits to the favelas, and she would wander through its narrow, winding streets, smelling of litter as there are no sewers; she would visit those who called out to her and, on Saturdays, we would hold a meeting on the Word of God. Once, when I knocked on her door at break time, she got up to answer me, her rosary in her hand, and I thought to myself: "Yes, she's a saint".

Even without knowing it, she had the ability to adapt to all circumstances and simply give herself to the service of those who needed her. A few years earlier, she had already had a great experience in the missions and had gone to Ecuador, to Guayaquil, to Fe y Alegría, after spending a few years in Cuenca as a catechist. She remembered those years with great fondness and, as she grew older, it seemed incredible to have been so far away and to be so happy. Estrella was a good catechist, she transmitted very well what she wanted the children to understand, she wanted them to learn to love this Jesus Who loved them so much and she passed it on with such conviction that the children loved Sister Estrella's catechesis.

In the Province of Spain, she was also in various insertions: La Alegría, Vegas de Coria and Contruces, and in these she had no difficulty in relating to and having a good relationship with the women of the village and neighborhoods. She was happy to teach what she knew and to learn from all of them. What wonderful encounters she had with them! They spoke about divine and human things with such simplicity and conviction that what she passed on made the others feel that she was giving them the opportunity to communicate and to say what they would not have said in another place or context. She was happy, but she was getting older, and her biggest problem was her loss of hearing, which meant that even with hearing aids, she couldn't hear any better. This was very hard on her, because she was a very sociable woman, interested in everything, so she withdrew herself when she realized how much she was missing out on what was being said.

Her numerous brothers and sisters had died in old age. Only the youngest was still alive. She loved her family very much and was lucky enough to go to stay with one of her sisters and her nieces during the summer; she was very fond of them.

She was happy to be able to take part in community events, the service, the songs, the meetings, but in the end it became difficult because of her deafness. We were sorry to see her sad and helpless, but God knows very well what He does with His children. After a few years of suffering, the Lord to Whom she had given her life called her so that she could enjoy His presence and praise, now face to face, without any limits and forever.

“Estrella, we imagine you singing, as you loved to, in heaven and rejoicing without end. We also see you interceding for this Community of Collado where you spent the last years of your life.”

With all our love,

The Community of Collado Mediano

(Original in Spanish)

## Sister Carmen of Christ

Carmen Arozena González

### **"God is Love."**

- Born on December 11, 1937, in Santa Cruz de Tenerife
- Postulancy on October 25, 1960, in Madrid-Olivos
- Novitiate on September 18, 1961, in Valladolid
- First Vows on December 16, 1962, in Valladolid
- Final Vows on June 16, 1968, in Santa Cruz de Tenerife
- Deceased on April 6, 2020, in Riofrio

Carmen was born on December 14, 1937, in Santa Cruz de Tenerife. She was the first daughter of the couple, Jose and Carmen. She always spoke with admiration of her father, who was a great Christian, an intellectual, a university professor and a great reader. It was from him that Carmen inherited her passion for literature and reading. She already had a brother, Fernando, and when she was sixteen her little sister, Pilar, was born. She always maintained an affectionate relationship with her brother and sister. We quote a letter from Pilar in which she says: "She has always been a

very strong and lively person, both spiritually and physically, and I have never seen her ill. So, the news of her death shocked me, as it was so painful and unexpected. I always thought of my sister as a person of great energy and vitality, in addition to her astonishing intelligence and quick wit."

Carmen was passionate about education, which she saw as a means of transforming the individual and therefore society. She studied Roman philology and set herself the task of teaching literature and languages at A-level. She helped her students along the path to knowledge. She did it all with such enthusiasm and dedication that she fascinated her students. They always achieved excellent marks in their undergraduate exams.

As soon as she finished her studies, she was sent to different schools: Gijon, Cuestablanca... You could say that she attended every school in the Province. She always maintained very cordial relationships with teachers, parents and pupils. It's worth mentioning that her last home was the Real Colegio de Santa Isabel which has 32 nationalities among its students: Chinese, Ecuadorians, Romanians, Russians, and others. Since her retirement, she had devoted herself to bringing these students up to standard. Another of her tasks at Santa Isabel was to work in the library. It was here that she was able to communicate her love of reading.

With her characteristic attitude of service, she was always ready to help those who came to Spain to learn Spanish. The Provincial or the Sisters would ask her to help those who wanted to learn the language. She was so efficient and enthusiastic that they all learnt quickly and were able to communicate easily in our language. Everyone remembers her with great affection for having taught them to speak and write our language correctly.

From Santa Isabel, she went to Riofrio in July 2018. She herself asked to come and rest in an older Sisters' house because she was very tired. And there, Carmen continued to be admirable. She adapted to the needs of the house and always with the same spirit and attitudes that characterized her. We must salute the way she pushed the wheelchair-bound Sisters from one place to another and the patience with which she provided the services they needed. You could see her taking and accompanying the Sisters, always with the rosary in her hand.

True to her vocation as an educator, during her stay in this house she shared her knowledge and skills with the Sisters through recollection classes. You should have seen the dedication with which she prepared them. She always adapted to the liturgical times and feasts of the Congregation. She loved sharing. The Sisters testify of the interest that she had for them and the pleasure that they had in sharing everything with her.

She had a great gift for singing, a privileged ear and delighted us with the psalms and hymns of the liturgy. The liturgy was prepared with great dedication. She was very sensitive to spiritual questions and was always ready to give an insight into her life.

Carmen left us in a totally unexpected way. Due to the measures taken during the pandemic and the fact that this was a home with high-risk Sisters, we closed the house on March 11 and no one except the staff working in the house was allowed to enter. Very tired, Carmen began to feel unwell. We never thought she might have contracted the COVID virus.

On Thursday April 2, having found her with fever, we asked her to quarantine herself, which she did. On Saturday April 4, the nurse saw that she wasn't feeling well and called the hospital's emergency department. They picked her up. And on Monday, April 6, they called us to tell us that Carmen had gone to her heavenly Father's home. You can't imagine what that meant for the Community. How powerless and painful it was not to have been able to be with her at that time. As we couldn't go to the hospital because of the pandemic, the funeral undertakers came to get her and, with two Sisters and the priest who accompanied her, took her to the Navas de Riofrio cemetery. For all of us, this death was so painful that we are unable to express it.

The Community of Riofrio thanks God for having been able to share these two years of life with Carmen who, from heaven, will intercede for the Assumption of the earth to which she gave herself unconditionally.

The Community of Riofrio

(Original in Spanish)

# Sister María del Pilar of the Child Jesus

María del Pilar Ruiz Fernández

## "Lord, you are radiant!"

- Born on October 18, 1945, in Almanza (Leon)
- Postulancy on July 2, 1961, in Paris-Lübeck
- Novitiate on August 13, 1962, in Paris-Auteuil
- First Vows on December 8, 1963, in Paris-Auteuil
- Final Vows on December 22, 1968, in Leon
- Deceased on April 10, 2020, in Madrid

Maria del Pilar was born in Almanza (Leon) into a family of believers who from childhood instilled trust in God along with a love of austere work, the countryside and nature. She was the eldest of three sisters, to whom she was always very close. She often recalled the affection and good advice of her grandparents. She had a good capacity for study and when she entered the Escuela Apostolica of Leon, she was integrated with the non-boarders for the baccalaureate. She told many amusing stories about her time as a pre-postulant in Lübeck, always with great affection for Sister Marina and Miss Anita.

She did her Postulancy in Lübeck and began her Novitiate in Auteuil with Sr. Anne de M. Immaculée. However, after a few months, she had to interrupt her novitiate due to a lung disease.

She was then sent to the Saint Gervais Community, where she was very happy and for whom she will always be very grateful, especially remembering Sr. Anne Monique, the Superior, and Sr. Marta Marques. For health reasons, she was unable to fulfil her missionary vocation and, as soon as she professed her temporary Vows in Auteuil, she was sent to Spain to begin her Juniorate.

For those who knew her well, her personality is reflected in the following words of Mother Bautista, Formation Mistress of the Young Sisters, for whom Pilar always felt a great affection: "Sister Pilar Adela is an intelligent, profound, well-balanced Sister with a lot of common sense.

She is very tenacious, both in her intellectual work and in her spiritual life. Very conscious of her consecrated life. She sometimes shows a slightly abrupt character, because of her strong desire to seek a perfection that she finds neither in herself nor in others". This last character trait, often hid her great human and spiritual sensitivity, her fidelity in friendship and fraternity. She had a great temperamental contrast between an excess of realism and pessimism at times, and other times a gentle, amusing side that softened complicated situations. Pilar never hesitated to sacrifice herself to help others.

She spent the first 20 years of her religious life in Madrid. At the end of her Juniorate, she was assigned to Vallecas. She combined her work as a class teacher with French exams at the language school and her teaching, of which she used to say with great humor "I studied under a pine tree during the summers in Riofrío". Her students from that early period in Vallecas kept in touch with her throughout her life, and Pilar enjoyed meeting them in her later years. One of them, now involved in Assumption Together, says: "I met Pilar in Vallecas, where I started at the age of 9. In the 4<sup>th</sup> year of High School, she was our tutor. I must say I have two best friends from that year, and I still have a beautiful, deep friendship with them (another of the values Pilar instilled in us), which extends even to our husbands. I remember her anger when she looked over her glasses, when the class got restless or when we said something she didn't like, and I can't forget those meetings in the teachers' lounge with the piano, where we talked about man and God, and where there was so much affection.... Today I'm 65 and if I wanted to say how much Pilar has meant to me and my family, I couldn't describe it in a few words... I don't have any brothers or sisters, but this must be what it's like to have a sister. ... I would highlight her great devotion to the Lord as a Religious, the way she spoke of the Lord, hence her words "You are wonderful", the way she convinced you in the face of grey and cloudy days... and made the sun rise in your soul.

When the time came for me to become even more united to the Assumption, by committing myself to the Path of Life, she was my promoter. Who better, since she knew so much about my personal and spiritual life? She was my advisor once again, and without fear, but with great responsibility, I made my commitment and Mother Carmen

Escribano handed me the cross, Pilar being my godmother, as my spiritual advisor. What a great day, so moving, in front of my friends from the Vallecas Lay Group!

I'll never forget Pilar, she'll always be in my heart, because she was a GIFT in my life. It was one of the most beautiful gifts the Lord gave me of placing Pilar on my path, because she led me to Jesus Christ, the most wonderful gift of my life, to be a Christian, to be able to live my life with all its joys and sorrows, but by His hand" (Juani Rubio).

In 1971, when the movement for insertion in the outlying districts was born, Pilar, along with other Sisters from Cuestablanca, was sent to found the Community of San Sebastian de los Reyes, inserted in a district from which many students from Cuestablanca came. There, she combined her role as primary school teacher and headmistress with her close relationship with the local students and families. Pilar has devoted herself passionately and enthusiastically to the mission in the neighborhood and parish, through leisure activities for teenagers and young people, running holiday camps and summer camps for disadvantaged children, and working with Caritas in the school for part-time instructors, where many young people from the neighborhood and the school's most socially aware students have been formed.

Pilar left a deep impact as an educator in all the schools where she worked: San Sebastian, Leon, Ponferrada, Santa Isabel. As a teacher, Pilar was versatile and could be relied upon to teach religion, math and science (her specialty), as well as French, technology and drama. She was very creative and good at crafts. She knew how to give meaning and convey a spiritual message in the Christmas plays held every year in Ponferrada. She helped her pupils to discover their qualities, overcome their shyness and boost their self-esteem by giving them a leading role and keeping a close eye on each pupil and their families.

For many years, she was the skilled and responsible Headmistress of the University Residence in Leon, but had to take time off to look after her parents for 7 years. During that time, she missed Community life very much and always followed events in the Province closely, taking advantage of her city's proximity to Leon to visit the Community frequently and correspond with the Sisters and some of her former

Superiors. Whenever she could, she participated in and helped with parish activities. Pilar was always a great support to her parents and family, especially to her nephew Javier, who suffered from mental illness. When she visited the family, she would spend long hours on activities and walks with him, relieving her parents and allowing them to rest.

When she returned to the Community of Santa Isabel after the death of her parents, her great fear was that she would have difficulty adapting to the rhythm of Community life and returning to teaching and tutoring at school. Her fears were soon allayed, however, as she demonstrated a great ability to adapt to Community life and a fast-learning ability to use new technologies in her lessons. At the age of 64, she was about to retire, but for another 10 years she continued to devote herself enthusiastically and generously to her mission of education and proclamation of the Gospel right up to the end. She was a member of the Tetuan Community, where she celebrated her golden jubilee in 2013. Every day, she went to the Santa Isabel school. In recent years, she had reduced the number of hours she taught, which gave her a lot of time to devote to the Shared Mission Coordination Team in the Province and in the school. Most of all, she gave her unconditional support to the pastoral team by providing ideas, painting murals and adding many details "in the background" - she used to say - to make the work of the teachers and coordinators easier. Together with the Province's Formation Team, she enthusiastically prepared the summer course for the Sisters every year.

Despite the few hours she spent with the pupils, she was asked to continue giving support lessons to pupils starting secondary school, given her talent for monitoring pupils and their families, and she was also entrusted with the task of accompanying some new teachers.

The Coronavirus pandemic caught Pilar by surprise in the middle of preparations and celebrations for the feast of Saint Marie Eugenie at the school. No doubt she didn't realize the risk involved in her daily journey by underground railway from her Community, from Tetuan to the Santa Isabel school, where she returned to help gather materials for the celebration.

She was one of the first Sisters to be infected, along with two others from her Community. During the first days of her illness, there was confusion

and worry because there was no medical attention (the phones in Madrid were blocked) and no guidance on the exact medical treatment needed. Marisol was keeping a close eye on her. Pilar frequently communicated her situation with Cecilia Manrique by phone and WhatsApp. On March 15, she wrote: "I'm asking God for patience to put up with this situation for 14 days. I'm already exhausted, I've never had fever! Finally, the means are in place. However, resources are very poor. As for the rest... God will tell. I hope there won't be any further complications." These last words reveal the extent to which she was aware of her fragility and the danger she was in. On an initial visit to the hospital, the doctors probably didn't realize the seriousness of her condition and sent her home until March 21, when she was admitted to the intensive care unit, conscious and able to communicate by phone.

After a fortnight of intubation, on Palm Sunday, the doctors who tried to save her life told us of the great joy of her recovery, allowing her to breathe with an oxygen mask, but it was short-lived. On Good Friday, early in the afternoon, they told us that she had surrendered her life, going to enjoy the "radiant" face (her words) of the Lord who had seduced her and to whom she had been faithful. In the circumstances of the pandemic, only two Sisters were allowed to accompany a priest to pray by her coffin, before taking her to Burgos for cremation (due to lack of space in Madrid). When the urn containing her ashes was returned, two other Sisters were able to have her buried in the Madrid cemetery.

Her death was very moving for the Sisters, as well as for the management team, teachers and students from the different Communities who knew her. There are many testimonies on social networks and in the letters sent to us.

For all of us who shared her life and mission, Pilar has left a profound mark as a great Religious of the Assumption, a great educator and a great witness of faith, love and dedication.

Sr. Cecilia and the Community of Tetuan  
(Original in Spanish)

# Sister María del Carmen of the Blessed Sacrament

María del Carmen Bonmatí Berenguer

**"I did not come to be served, but to serve."**

- Born on October 23, 1933, in Barcelona
- Postulancy on June 5, 1954, in San Sebastian
- Novitiate on December 5, 1954, in San Sebastian
- First Vows on December 19, 1955, in San Sebastian
- Final Vows on January 12, 1961, in Malaga
- Deceased on April 20, 2020, in Barcelona

Our Sister María del Carmen came from a large and strongly Christian family, with very deep Catalan roots. She was one of the youngest of her thirteen siblings. Like all her sisters, she spent her early years at the Jesús María College, until the arrival of the Assumption in Barcelona (Pedralbes), where she spent her last years of study.

When she arrived at the college, she was received by Mother Sacramento, for whom she had always had a special affection and who, in some way, marked her first steps in Religious Life, since she was her Mistress of Novices and, later on, her Superior at Pedralbes.

Apart from a few years spent in Valladolid, Cuestablanca and Collado Mediano, she spent most of her life working for the Kingdom in Malaga and Barcelona. She worked successfully as a bursar, class teacher, nurse and, above all, in the material organization of the school. However, it was in manual work where she most developed her skills. She had gifted hands for all kinds of creative activities such as painting, sewing, flower arrangement, cooking... skills that she passed on with enthusiasm and joy to the groups of ladies she brought together in the workshops. One of the aims of these workshops was to organize sales to raise funds for the missions, to help the parish, the Assumption Centre for adults and to meet the needs of the neighborhood.

Another of María del Carmen's great qualities was her ability to discover the qualities of those around her and use them to help others. She was also

known for her great ability to organize parties and celebrations, which she loved.

During her years in Barcelona, she devoted herself wholeheartedly to the pastoral care of the Parish of San Cristóbal: Adult Promotion Center, catechesis, youth work, pastoral care of the sick, assistance to the needy... All this in close collaboration with the Marianist Community responsible for the parish.

Maria del Carmen loved her Catalan land, its customs and traditions, without ceasing to feel fully Spanish. In recent years, with the conflict over independence, she has suffered a great deal and has often prayed for the unity of the country.

She established close ties with her former students, both in Malaga and in Barcelona, who, when they found out about her illness, kept calling her to enquire about her state of health, first directly to her and then to the Community.

Right up to the end, she took an active part in the life of the Community and always sought to please the Sisters with fraternal attention.

As a Community, we got through the first phase of the pandemic feeling close to and in solidarity with our neighbors. Maria del Carmen was deeply affected by the death of one of her brothers, who had lost his wife a few weeks earlier. It was a hard blow for her and her family.

On March 27, after feeling unwell for several days, she had to be admitted to the hospital.

At first, we hoped that she would return home soon, but little by little we saw that her illness was getting worse and that she would no longer be able to return to the neighborhood where she was so well known. We would never have thought that the Lord was waiting for her so soon!

She remained very lucid right to the end and we were able to talk to her every day. She wanted to say goodbye to everyone by videoconference and we could see how she was preparing spiritually for the meeting with the Lord that finally came on April 20. The nurses who were with her were struck by the serenity she maintained right up to the end, and we

were filled with hope by her great fortitude and surrender into God's hands as she said goodbye, all the way to heaven!

We know that she and all the other Sisters who have left us over these months are our intercessors with the Father

The Community of Barcelona

(Original in Spanish)

## Sister Marie Claire of Mary Mother of Mercy

Marie Claire Adeline Rasabotsy Lalao

**"Yes, Father, you willed it so in your goodness."**

- Born on May 9, 1969, in Befeta
- Postulancy on September 18, 1997
- Novitiate on September 29, 1998
- First Vows on September 23, 2000
- Final Vows on August 28, 2005
- Deceased on April 14, 2020

Sister Marie Claire Adeline of Mary Mother of Mercy was born on May 9, 1969. Daughter of Ralaizanaka Stanislas and Ravao Marie Louise. Both have already passed away. Our Sister was the 7<sup>th</sup> child of the family.

Baptized on July 15, 1969 in Ambodimanodila, Beseta Missionary District, our Sister received the Sacraments of the Eucharist and Confirmation in Anjoma-Fanjakana on July 20, 1981.

Having been raised in a deeply Christian family, Sister Marie-Claire had a remarkable Marian devotion like many families in our diocese. We are very grateful for what her parents and families passed on to her, a deep faith.

She attended the monthly sessions for young girls in the Ambohimahasoa deanery to prepare for their future, and when she met the Augustinian Religious, she began to express her desire to devote herself to the Lord in

that religious family. Following a short period of time with the Sisters, she was admitted to begin her religious formation as a postulant on September 18, 1997, her novitiate on September 29, 1998, and pronounced her First Vows on September 23, 2000.

During her probation, Sister Marie Claire provided formation to farmers in Antsenavolo, a missionary district where there still are a few Christians. Our Sister was very easy to get along with and succeeded in improving the development of the rural population by changing their mentality and ways of doing things in the missionary district. Many of the young people converted to the Christian religion.

To enable her to go further in improving the lives of vulnerable farmers and families, the Congregation asked her to continue her studies, first to obtain her A-levels, and then, three years later, those in charge suggested that she undertake studies in sociology to become an animator.

After three years of study, Sister Marie Claire began working again with vulnerable families, this time in the town of Fianarantsoa.

While continuing this mission, our Sister was entrusted with the responsibility of being a Postulant Mistress for seven years.

She knew how to share her experience of Social Communication at the inter-Postulancy during the sessions organized in the diocese during her seven years as Postulant Mistress.

Sister Marie Claire had a special affection for the poor and she fulfilled this beautiful mission well in the parish of Tanambao.

She knew how to guide families to fight poverty by using what they had in their hands without being assisted.

She passed on this knowledge to young people in Catholic Action movements such as the Young Rural Christians and the Eucharistic Youth Movement.

Sister Marie Claire was a woman of faith, full of hope and animated by charity in everything she was entrusted with. Her simplicity and radiant joy during her time of activity facilitated the responsibility of the team that worked with her. Sister Marie Claire had a special affection for the

poor and she accomplished this beautiful mission well in the Parish of Tanambao.

Her generosity, her apostolic zeal and her concern for the good of those to whom she was sent were striking throughout her 20 years of religious life.

We are sure that Sister Marie Claire will continue her mission in heaven after this earthly one.

Our Sister left us rather suddenly, but she prepared well for it.

We are sure that she will continue her mission wherever the Lord welcomes her.

Thank you, Sister Marie Claire, for your testimony and your fidelity up to the end.

Your Sisters of the Province of Madagascar

(Original in French)

## Sister Charlotte Mary of the Blessed Sacrament

Charlotte Mary Close

### *"Fiat Voluntas Tua."*

- Born on July 4, 1932, in Philadelphia, PA
- Postulancy on September 8, 1951, in Ravenhill, Philadelphia
- Novitiate on July 27, 1952, in Ravenhill
- Final Vows on July 28, 1953, in Ravenhill
- Perpetual Vows on September 24, 1957, in Ravenhill
- Deceased on April 26, 2020, in Lansdale, PA

Sr. Charlotte Mary Close of the Blessed Sacrament, R.A. went home to God on Sunday, April 26, 2020 at Lansdale Hospital after contracting Covid-19. She was in the 87<sup>th</sup> year of her life and in the 67<sup>th</sup> year of her Vowed life as a Religious of the Assumption.

Born in Philadelphia on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, 1932 to Constance Schell Close and L. Paul Close, Sr. Charlotte was the original Yankee Doodle Dandy of both her Close family and her Assumption family, taking tremendous delight in the fireworks, barbecues and parades that marked her birthday each year. “It’s nice they do that for me,” she would say. Was she jesting or in earnest? She never told.

Charlotte was also the original American *Assumptionista* – baptized and confirmed three weeks after her birth in the chapel of Ravenhill, the first (and at that time only) foundation of the Assumption in the United States. Her baptism highlighted another Assumption connection, since she was named after a member of the Ravenhill Community: Mother Charlotte Fraser, a close friend of Charlotte’s mother, Constance.

In September 1951, at the age of 19, Charlotte Close entered the Assumption at Ravenhill, took the habit ten months later, on July 27, 1952, and made her first Vows a year and a day later, on July 28, 1953. She asked for and received the mystery of the Blessed Sacrament, something that marked her throughout her religious life. Four years after that, on September 24, 1957, Sr. Charlotte Mary pronounced her perpetual Vows at Ravenhill. At that time, she took the words of Jesus -- "*Fiat Voluntas Tua*"— as her word.

After her Vows, she studied at Villanova University while teaching math at Ravenhill at the same time, eventually receiving a B.A. in Liberal Arts. Later, while teaching at the Assumption Academy in Miami, Bay Haven, she took the opportunity to earn an M.A. in American Studies and Art at the University of Miami. These experiences of following a course of studies and attending to full time teaching duties left her with the ability to juggle things – and also not to take life too seriously!

Following her sojourn in Miami, she lived for many years at the then- Provincial House in Lower Merion, just west of the Philadelphia city limits. She regularly boarded the #44 bus to head down into the city to serve as the treasurer of Genesis II, a Montessori school in Powelton Village. Genesis II had been founded a few years earlier by Sr. Anne Joseph and Sr. Dominique with the collaboration of concerned parents of that inner-city neighborhood. The children came primarily from African-American families who hoped that a Montessori education could improve

their lives and opportunities for success. Charlotte's work of keeping the books straight during those years, making payroll, paying taxes, seeing to tuition gathering, and so on, was a significant contribution to that mission and dream.

In the late '90s, the Province was exploring the possibility of collaborating with Mexico to make a new foundation in the Southwest of the United States. Charlotte was interested in seeing what she could do, and asked to study Spanish. As a result, she received a mini-sabbatical to study Spanish in Mexico. In Mexico, thanks to the kindness and generosity of the Sisters, Sr. Charlotte Mary, that "real live nephew [niece] of her Uncle Sam," as the song goes, became *la Hermana Carlota*, an identity that pleased her very much. On the *fiche* concerning the languages she spoke, she listed only "English," but we remember how she enjoyed sprinkling Spanish words into her conversation for many years after she returned. As an aside, it should be noted that while English was officially her "*langue maternelle*," her real language was pure "Philly," with an accent that marked her as a native born and bred in the City of Brotherly Love:

Q: "Would you like anything to drink, Sr. Charlotte?"

A: "Yes, please. Wudja bring me a glay-ass of wooder when ya can? Thanks, doll."

After the reconfiguration of the Province in 2000, when we closed the suburban Bowman house in favor of opening the house on the border in Chaparral, New Mexico, Sr. Charlotte became a member of the Assumption Community in very urban West Philadelphia, a new experience for her. She quickly settled into life in the big old house on 47<sup>th</sup> Street. For most of the next seventeen or eighteen years, Sr. Charlotte served as the local treasurer of the Community, and was also responsible for handling questions of health insurance for the entire Province. She took her turn cooking until she could no longer manage this task; the Sisters had to reconcile themselves to the loss of Saturday night hot dogs and beans when Charlotte laid down her pots and pans.

According to the Chinese Zodiac, Charlotte was born in the "Year of the Monkey," and the Monkey's mischievous style was very much a part of her personality. She was a joker in many ways! But that lighthearted way of living didn't hinder her from contributing to the contemplative life of

the Community. Her faithfulness to her time of Adoration and her playing of the organ in the convent chapel were much appreciated by the Community. Her powerful soprano voice helped to carry many a psalm, canticle and hymn in the little chapel of 47<sup>th</sup> Street. She loved to sing in Latin, another vestige of her Ravenhill roots, never missing an opportunity to belt out “*Assumpta est Maria in coelum*,” for example, while the songs of Fr. Lucien Deiss, like “*Sion, Sing*,” or “*Joy to You, O Virgin Mary*,” were big favorites in her English repertoire.

As handy with a crochet hook and knitting needles as she was with the keyboard, Charlotte was a key member of the crafts group that met regularly at the convent. Working alongside other women from the neighborhood, she made innumerable socks and caps for babies, always maintaining a lively line of conversation as she did so.

Late in her life, Sr. Charlotte took on the job of maintaining the copy center at West Catholic High School, and was much appreciated in that position. She came to love “West,” often referring to it as “my school.” Throughout her life, she had a keen appreciation of sports; in addition to rooting for the West Catholic Burrs, she was deeply loyal to the Phillies and the “*Iggles*” (the local pronunciation of Eagles, the Philadelphia football team) as well as to St. Joseph University and Villanova basketball. In February 2018, she was overjoyed by the Eagles’ win over the New England Patriots in Super Bowl LII and never missed an opportunity thereafter to rub it in to the Patriots’ fans of the Community of Worcester, Massachusetts.

In her last years at home in the Community of West Philadelphia, she was also a member of LIFE, a nationally recognized Program of All-inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE) Providing comprehensive medical, health, recreational and social services designed specifically for each person in an effort to promote independence at home. She enjoyed being picked up by the SEPTA CCT-Connect bus and spending the day at the LIFE center at 45<sup>th</sup> and Chestnut, where she could look out on her dear West Catholic while munching on one of the “excellent tuna sandwiches” that she would be given for lunch each day. LIFE did more than give her a good lunch, however, because it was there that Charlotte the math person, Charlotte the joker, discovered Charlotte the poet, who surprised many of us – and

may have surprised herself as well. This untitled poem speaks of an unexpected visitor:

*Out of nowhere, like a moment of godliness from God himself saying  
“Here I am! Please let me in, I’ve come to refresh you, no questions asked,  
only a joyful acceptance of things to come,  
of future visits and moments of wonder.*

*I am the breath of fresh air that blows  
North to South or West to East  
constantly changing  
directions but bringing good things  
from each blow & change of direction.”*

“No questions asked” . . . “bringing good things” -- what a lovely way to see God!

Eventually, Charlotte was no longer able to stay at home in the Community, and so she moved to St. Mary’s Manor in Lansdale, PA, so close to the Assumption Community in Lansdale that we can see the building and its large chapel from our kitchen. There she found her way in her own style even as her memory and strength began to fail her.

The Monkey side and the sporting side were still there, though. On what turned out to be the last visit to Charlotte in early March 2020, Sr. Loretto and Sr. Cecilia found her playing a circle game with other residents. Charlotte was deeply engaged in keeping a balloon in the air, batting it to another person in the circle. As the Sisters watched and waited for her attention, suddenly they heard her say: “I see you there, but I’m busy right now. See you the next time!” Dismissed, they headed back home, laughing at another “classic Char” remark. The next day, all nursing homes in the state were closed to visitors.

One month later, the Lansdale Sisters received a phone call saying that Charlotte had Covid-19 and had been moved to another wing of the nursing home, but that she was “chipper and making life hard for the staff – all good signs!” That was a Thursday. On Sunday afternoon, April 26<sup>th</sup>, we watched from our kitchen window as an ambulance entered the

grounds of St. Mary's Manor and then left soon after, carrying Charlotte to the Emergency Department of Lansdale Hospital, where she was placed immediately on a ventilator. By Sunday evening, thanks to a "Face Time" call from the E.D., with the phone held up to her ear by a masked and gowned nurse at her side, we prayed with and for our unconscious Sister, thanked her for her life with us, and said goodbye. A few minutes after our call ended, she returned to God.

Eighteen months later, we are still grateful to the kind and heroic men and women of the Emergency Department at Lansdale Hospital. At a moment when, at the risk to their own lives, they were treating so many very ill people, they showed real care for our Sister Charlotte and for us in the last hours of her life. We still pray for them and all first responders as they continue to battle this terrible disease.

Her funeral was held at the local parish, St. Stanislaus. As the virus was raging out of control at that point, Charlotte's family decided they would not come to the Mass. By law, only ten people – six from West Philly and four from Lansdale -- were allowed to attend the liturgy at St. Stan's, but an eleventh person, a local friend of the Assumption, sneaked in to be with us anyway. Char would have loved that!

When we finally buried her ashes in August 2021, two of her nieces were able to be with us. We had waited until then, praying that after being apart for 20 months, all of us Sisters could be together for our Summer Chapter in Lansdale. God heard our plea: we were there, together again, though lacking that big soprano voice. So, on that hot August morning at Calvary Cemetery, we didn't attempt "*Assumpta est Maria.*" Instead, we sang "*Salve Regina*" – singing with gusto and gratitude for Charlotte's big and generous life among us. May she rest in peace.

Sr. Nuala and the Lansdale Community for the U.S. Province  
(Original in English)

# Sister María Dolores of the Immaculate Conception

María Dolores Sarasola Sarasola

## **"Ecce ancilla Domini."**

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- Born on September 12, 1920, in Isasondo (Spain)
- Postulant on October 3, 1949, in Mira-Cruz, San Sebastian
- Novitiate on December 17, 1950, in Mira-Cruz, San Sebastian
- First Vows on March 28, 1952, in Mira-Cruz, San Sebastian
- Final Vows on May 3, 1955 in Santa Cruz de Tenerife
- Deceased on May 2, 2020, in Segovia

Dolores was born on September 12, 1920 in the hamlet of Domingotegi in Itsasondo (Guipúzcoa), the daughter of Juan and María. Her mother tongue was Basque, and it was amusing to note that when she visited her family she spoke Spanish and Basque indistinctly. Everyone was amused by this mixture.

Her family was very Christian and very blessed by God. There were nine brothers and sisters: six girls and three boys, and she was the fifth. She had a sister who was a Sister of the Slaves of Christ the King. She always kept in close touch with her and, according to Dolores, her sister was the saint of the family. Out of all the members of the family, brothers, sisters and sisters-in-law, she was the only one left. She was looking forward to the party, and her nieces and nephews were already thinking about organizing it. Together with her, we will celebrate that day here at the Community. For her nieces and nephews, Dolores was a close aunt who cared about everyone, about their situation and who, when she called them or spoke to them, tried to reconcile them. She was proud of them, although she always asked them questions about their Christian life.

Dolores was known above all for her prayer life. She was a woman who spent hours in front of the Lord exposed and was, most of all, a person who interceded, prayed for the world, prayed for her Community and prayed, above all, for her family. She never had enough time to finish her

prayers. A Sister who lived with her in Santa Cruz in Tenerife tells us that she was a golden Sister in terms of her availability, her self-sacrifice, her work and her delightful relationships.

Her last home, before coming to the Riofrio Community, was Sarria, where she stayed for nineteen years. The teachers, when they heard of her death, told us that she was a great woman, always ready to do all the work for the house, the school and the local people. Wherever she was needed, she was there. What stands out most about her is her closeness and kindness to everyone. She was a much-loved Sister. Indeed, her niece confirms it.

In her last years in Sarria, she began to feel the burden of age. The Province decided to send her to a Community of elderly Sisters, and she arrived in Riofrio on August 1, 2011. Her adaptation was not difficult and it was a time of thanksgiving for her as she was able to pray more because, according to her, it was the only thing she could do at that time.

Her life in our Community was one of continuous prayer, hours spent before the Blessed Sacrament, so much so that she forgot the time and we had to go and fetch her, and as the Lord kept her mental capacity almost to the end, she was very attentive to the Sisters who were more unwell than she.

During the stimulation exercises, a time of various activities with the Sisters, she loved card games and always wanted to win. She attended memory classes and what she liked most were the arithmetic exercises because, according to her, when she went to school in her village, she got an A in math. She was very funny and loved community meetings.

She coped very well with the lockdown. The virus didn't get her, but totally unexpectedly, on May 1<sup>st</sup>, she went straight to the Father's house.

The Riofrio Community is grateful to God for having been able to live with such a prayerful and spiritual Sister. Her life has been a great example for us and now, Dolores, you will be able to pray for our Province and our Community.

The Community of Riofrio  
(Original in Spanish)

# Sister Marie Saint-Bernard of Jesus

Pierrette Arbelot from Le Repaire

## "Ita Pater"

- Born on May 5, 1920, in Esparjac
- Postulancy on April 1, 1942 at Le Plessis
- Novitiate on January 19, 1943 at Le Plessis
- First Vows on April 13, 1944 in Lyon
- Final Vows on April 13, 1947 in Bordeaux
- Deceased on June 28, 2020 in Montpellier

A native of Gascony, a region of France which she had a slightly cunning spirit, Marie Saint Bernard was born into a family traditionally devoted to the Church and to France.

Her elder brother, Bernard, was ordained as a priest in 1937. Whether this was an omen or a desire by her parents for her future, Marie Saint-Bernard's solemn Communion in 1924, at the age of 4, represents "*Our Lady of the Clergy*": the Virgin holds the priestly stole in one hand and the Child Jesus in the other, offering the Host to the Communicant.

Her Sister, Anne-Marie, known as "Nanou" to those close to her, joined the Benedictine Sisters, where she did not remain, but wore the habit of a Religious for the rest of her life. The two sisters were very close friends, phoning each other almost daily in recent years, supporting each other in the trials of old age. Sister Marie-Saint Bernard, who was already running out of strength, would trot to the reception desk to pick up and return the handset before we had a connection in our rooms. Her sister, in a nursing home in Albi, was to take off to heaven a few weeks later.

Their brother Jean, a lieutenant in the 4<sup>th</sup> Moroccan Rifle Regiment, was killed on May 18, 1944 during the Italian campaign. The citation on him read "An officer of incredible courage, daring and audacious to the point of recklessness. Remarkable team trainer, full of drive, fell gloriously at the head of his section during an operation to clear a neighboring unit that was being fiercely counter-attacked..."

Marie Saint-Bernard had just professed her vows in Lyon a month earlier... The anonymous yellowed small piece of paper bearing the text of this quotation continues: "His place is empty and yet he lives with us because he is in God... He sees us, he speaks to us, he speaks to us....".

Indeed, it was in the midst of the war that she entered the Assumption, attracted by these two aspects of the charism: the life of prayer supported by monastic forms of life, with the emphasis on the liturgy, joined to the work of education. She was a staunch defender of SCHOOLS and educational institutions, and of freedom of education. She was not without suspicions about the evolution of educational practices in our country. She was delighted to receive a visit from a young Sister who was studying to become a teacher. Her curriculum vitae clearly shows how she served in this field in various establishments in France, as a teacher and class teacher, especially in the 6<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grades. She was proud of her 34 years in 'Freedom Education' and of only owing two years' salary to the French Ministry of Education!

In 1967, she was called upon to temporarily take over the management of a parish school in the 8<sup>th</sup> district near Lübeck, which had to be supported.

Restructuring is nothing new. At the end of the 1970s, the Province was considering whether to maintain the Community and the school in Cannes. In 1976, Marie Saint-Bernard took over the management of the school while at the same time being Superior of Lochabair (this was the era of the double Community, the other being based at Villa Sainte Agnes). The visiting members of the "School Commission", the forerunner of the guardianship, will remember the stormy atmosphere and the vehemence of the parents gathered in assembly, and the petition launched by our Sister; they were ready to alert Rome!

Throughout these years, and for a long time afterwards, Marie Saint-Bernard worked as a catechist. When she reached retirement age, she still faithfully went to the parish of Lourdes-Centre every week, accompanied by a friend who was a driver.

Outside the Community, she had practically no family except for cousins who faithfully visited her every year. Her heart and her relationships went out to the most classical in the Church (qu'est-ce que ça veut dire en français?) or the most prayerful. She subscribed to the newsletters of

several clearly "conservative" monasteries. She had also kept very faithful links with certain deeply Christian families in the houses she had visited; she prayed for the future of children who could play their part in the recovery of Christian France.

She spoke little of her interior life, but from some of the testimonies received after her death, it seems that intercession played a large part in it. It was her own way of supporting the work of the Lord and His co-workers.

She was shocked by ways of doing things she found inappropriate: for example, during the Eucharist, one of our friends' priests prayed for "Francis, the Bishop of Rome", not "Pope Francis"!...

In fact, she was suffering: the collapse of Christian society, the disappearance of landmarks, the diminishment of our numbers, at least in the West, the way in which the forms and customs of Religious Life were being diluted in Communities and Seminaries, deeply saddened her. She was bitter about it, and it was difficult to talk about it calmly with her. And when elections approached in our country, at whatever level, the climate became more tense. In her last years, a registrar came to the house to organize the mandates of the very elderly Sisters, but then she had to find a mandatary, which was not without its problems!!!

Was it this pain that made her difficult to deal with? Or her infirmities? Or her personality? It was hard for her to depend on lay staff, often from foreign countries, for the most intimate care; a whiff of caste and superiority made her authoritarian and somewhat capricious... On the first day, she asked a Congolese nurse's assistant: "Are you intelligent? The care-giver in question, who had a passion for the philosopher Ricoeur, didn't hold it against her and even came with a superb bunch of flowers on her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday, but the question had hurt him..."

This Centenary, so eagerly awaited by her and by the Community, found her rather tired. She did not have the strength to go to the chapel for the very brief Thanksgiving Celebration that had been planned. She did, however, make an appearance in the refectory for the dessert delicately prepared by our cook. And when Catherine Myriam pushed her wheelchair into her room, which looked like a real resting place because she had received so many flowers from her relatives, former patients,

staff, care-givers and the parish, she said: "I can really see that I am very much loved!"

Sister Jacqueline was well aware of her taste for Gregorian music, and had promised her several times: "We'll sing your funeral Mass in Gregorian".

"Saint-Bé", as we used to call her familiarly, passed away, leaving the Community, already a bit scattered by the holidays, more destitute in this respect. The Church was preparing to sing 1<sup>st</sup> Vespers of Saint Peter and Saint Paul when she went knocking on the door of her baptismal patron saint.

The liturgy of heaven has now fulfilled her hopes, far beyond anything she could have imagined or hoped for, and she has joined the great saints of monastic life. The liturgy of heaven now fulfills her hopes, far beyond anything she could conceive and hope for, and she has joined the great saints of the monastic life.

We know that she intercedes for us, asking the Lord for the whole Congregation to be truly faithful to the Spirit of the Assumption.

(Original in French)

# Sister Augusta Maria of the Savior

Maria Rosa Melas

## **“Domine Tu scis quia amo Te.”**

- Born on May 23, 1926 in Villasor (Ca)
- Postulancy on July 7, 1951 in Rome
- Novitiate January 13, 1952 in Rome
- First Vows on January 18, 1953 in Rome
- Final Vows on January 22, 1956 in Genoa
- Deceased on July 6, 2020 in Rome

Sister Augusta associated the amazement of a child with the seriousness of a scientist, with a sharp sense detail to the point of being fussy, the ability to marvel at a flower, a sunset, to give thanks for everything; she often said: "from morning to night, I have no reason not to be grateful, I'm never bored because I love to read, life is so rich".

She was so conscientious that she could sometimes seem meticulous. She had the ability to love with discretion and delicacy, with a mind that was attentive and open to others and yet always a bit wrapped up in her own world. She was not an innovative person, she observed closely without looking too far, but her sense of wonder led her to broad spiritual horizons as a contemplative.

During her summer holidays, she loved to go with the Genzano Community and spend time reading and praying in the quiet, immersed in nature.

Irene remembers her as a science teacher when she was a schoolgirl in Cagliari:

“She knew how to communicate her enthusiasm and passion about her subject, wanting to share her knowledge with us; many of the students had chosen natural sciences or geography; she knew how to be motherly and tender while involving us in the studies”.

Although she had left the education profession, she remained faithful to her vocation as an educator; in fact, she turned towards formation, accompanying with love and commitment the group of Friends of the Assumption in Viale Romania, faithfully helped by Sr. Paola Teresa. This phase of her life helped her to continue to live the charism, sharing with the laity and keeping her heart open to the gift of faith.

We share the testimony of one of them, Giancarlo, which reflects on the feelings of the whole group: "Sister Augusta was a gentle and determined woman, a joyful synthesis of the qualities of 'mother' and 'educator'. She was an effective witness to the charism of the Religious of the Assumption, thanks to the practical sense with which she lived her love for the Lord, for nature and for people. She was always smiling and available, stimulating initiatives to root the pillars of the charism in the Friends of the Assumption:

- the care with which she prepared prayer texts with the Friends,
- the encouragement to participate in the sharing during the Assumption Together meetings, which always took place within an atmosphere of great fraternal communion,
- the encouragement to define and develop group trips, aimed at natural and cultural experiences and friendship between Sisters and lay.

If the group of Friends "Viale Romania" is still active today, many years after the closure of the Pius XII Institute of the Religious of the Assumption, it is also thanks to our dear and beloved Sister Augusta, who from Heaven continues to follow us and stimulate us in the mission of Assumption Together: "To translate the passion that dwells in us by transforming society together according to the Gospel".

Her niece Lavinia remembers her as such: "Just over a year ago, Aunt Augusta returned to the Father's House, and in a few days' time it was the feast of the Assumption. Her memory is always present, but in a more special way these days. Aunt Augusta was a constant, discreet and important presence in my life. She always had a gentle concern for each and every one of us. She was always there for us at the most important times, supporting us with her prayers, but also with very concrete actions.

She was one of the most serene and fulfilled people I've ever known. Above all, she saw the positive aspects of life and thanked the Lord for everything. She knew how to take full advantage of the beauty of nature and the loving closeness of her loved ones.

Despite many health problems, if she was asked: "How are you?", she would always answer: "Thanks be to God I am fine, I cannot complain, at my age, I have to thank the Lord". That was her way of being till the very end.

She was an example of fraternal love. For me, it was magnificent to see Aunt Augusta followed with affection until the end of her life. The Superior and the Sisters were close to her, and the staff in charge of her care were also very attentive."

In the last years of her life, when her memory and strength were diminishing due to illness and age, Sister Augusta did not allow herself to be well treated, but with a rather spartan attitude, without many frills, she discreetly kept her heart attentive to others.

Her daily life was occupied by the Lord, and through the small things she was still able to do on a daily basis, you could feel that she was immersed in a greater horizon, as if her real center of interest was in Him. When she came to pray in the chapel, you could see her absorbed, almost smiling. She gave importance to the liturgy and, whenever possible, she made a point of keeping the breviary, often losing herself between the pages!

At Fraternity of Hope meetings, she always had a word of wisdom. Lately, she always repeated two things: "We don't have to be thankful from morning till night" and "Do God's will at the moment, in everything that happens to us", No matter what subject we were talking about, she always managed to contextualize these two "antiphons" of hers, so much so that it made us smile and sooner or later one Sister would say "you'll see Augusta is now going to express her convictions"!

In her final days on earth, she suffered physically and possibly spiritually too, but faithful to her style, she remained someone who took no space or attention for herself.

Her death leaves a painful void, but her presence was certainly a great gift, for which we thank the Lord, following her example.

The Community of Rome – Quadraro

(Original in Italian)

## Sister Belén María of Jesus

Elicia Lucina Lozano

**"Suscipe Domine omniam mea." - (Receive, O Lord, all that I am.)**

- Born on June 30, 1935 in Grañeras
- Postulancy on September 8, 1954 in Leon
- Novitiate on July 19, 1955 in Mira-Cruz
- First Vows on July 26, 1956 in Mira-Cruz
- Final Vows on August 22, 1961 in Valladolid
- Deceased on September 2, 2020 in Riofrio

Belen Maria was born on June 30, 1935 in a small village in the Province of Leon called Las Grañeras. She was the eldest of three children, one of whom passed away at an early age. Her parents influenced Belen's vocation by instilling in her a deep experience of the Christian faith. She came to know the Assumption during her studies at the teacher training college in Leon. It was there that she felt the Lord calling her, accompanied by Sr. Ana Josefina and Sr. Maria del Pino whom she loved and admired.

At the end of her first formation, she was sent to the College in Malaga. She stayed there for ten years. In Malaga, she was much loved by the pupils, parents and teachers and, because she had a prodigious memory, when she returned in 2015, she was able to recognize many of her pupils who were already mothers and some grandmothers.

Following Malaga, the Congregation asked her to set off for the Province of Central America and Ecuador. At the time, in the 1960s, when she went to a mission country, it only took a few months to get to know the customs and way of life of these countries and, without this necessary time of

inculturation, Belen began her new mission. She went from being a teacher of little ones to being the Mistress of Novices for young Latin American girls. This was not easy for her. These novices are very attached to her and grateful. She spent many years in initial formation and, in 1978, she was assigned to the Chalatenango Community in El Salvador. It was a difficult time in the country, a time of persecution of pastoral agents, priests, religious and lay people, but a very rich time for pastoral work, a time of unconditional dedication and communion with the Church. Together with her Community, she worked very hard in the parish. She had the great privilege of working closely with Monsignor Romero. She was deeply affected by this difficult situation and remained very united with the people of El Salvador. Whenever she spoke of El Salvador, it was with great gratitude and affection. She wanted very much to return to this land. To give us an idea of what this period (1978 to 1981) meant to her, the death of Monsignor Romero occurred in March 1980. At the heart of this situation of violence and repression, Belen's attitude was very evangelical, committed to justice, and always with great kindness.

In 1981, she was appointed Councilor and Superior in Cuenca (Ecuador). Leaving El Salvador in these circumstances was a painful time for her, but she was ready to go wherever she was needed. She gave herself to the Community, to pastoral work, to the Fe y Alegría center and to the Communities of the country, because at the time, the Councilor in Ecuador had a special status that required her to visit Communities that were geographically very far from the center of the Province.

In 1985, she was once again asked to be Provincial of C. A. and Ecuador. Nine years of accompanying processes and Communities, of searching together for God's will for the four countries, of discerning insertions, she was always very close, very humble and very helpful. All the Sisters felt loved by her.

And once again, another change. At the 1994 General Chapter, she was elected General Councilor. It was a time of broader and deeper knowledge of the Congregation. Her contribution, based on the situations experienced in the different countries of her Province, was a source of richness for the Congregation. Humility, closeness, depth, evangelical criteria and breadth of vision marked this period of her service.

At the end of her mission at the General Council, she returned to Ecuador where she went to Quito, to the college in Guayaquil and in 2009, her only sister, with whom her 96-year-old mother lived, was diagnosed with metastases. She had no choice but to come to Spain to look after her mother and leave what she loved so much, but with the hope of being able to return. It was a difficult period during which she accompanied her mother and looked after her sister. In July 2009, her beloved and only sister died, and in December it was her mother's turn. "I find myself without roots", she says. Leaving behind her brother-in-law and niece, she spent several long months in Olivos.

And... once again, in the south of Spain: El Palo. After two years, she was sent to El Olivar to look after the Community. It was here that the first symptoms of the cause of her death appeared. First an operation and the following year, another. She received chemotherapy but was not affected by it and continued to live a normal life with regular check-ups.

At the end of her two years of service at El Olivar, she was assigned to the Santa Isabel Community. A Sister from this Community tells us: "Belen was always an example of simplicity and knowledge...I remember her interventions, always so justified, and her reflections full of wisdom but expressed with such humility in the tone of her voice...I find it comforting that she had the blessing of leaving surrounded by your affection and accompanied by the Peace of God...I unite myself in prayer with the whole Community and I share the pain, because I feel it..."

In May 2019, the Riofrío Community is going through a difficult situation: some Sisters are in hospital, others have died. We asked her if she could come and help us and do us the great service of collaborating in the Community's journey. And it was with great availability that she came to live here. Her discreet help, her simplicity and her humility have been a great help and an example to us.

In January of this year, 2020, she went for a check-up on the eye that had been operated on, and the ophthalmologist found a spot in her other eye: a metastasis. It was a hard blow for her, for the Community, for all of us. Her motto from the start was: I am in God's hands. And her attitude: serenity until the end, but love of life and the desire to live. She made it clear that her process was the same as that of her sister. No chemotherapy

had any effect on her. The Olivos Community accompanied her and looked after her with love during the chemotherapy. This was at the time of the pandemic. There was nothing to be done medically. At the end of June, she came to the Community. At first, she walked to the chapel, then she got into a wheelchair and gradually lost her strength.

Belen lived her Word. She gave everything to her Lord. Everything belonged to Him. She remained conscious until the end. She knew that her time was coming. She never complained about anything; she always gave thanks for everything. She lived these moments as she had lived her life. The staff at the home were in awe of her kindness. They all loved her very much. The Communities who were spending their holidays here at the time accompanied her with their affection, their presence and their prayers. And her last Community in Santa Isabel was able to be with her right to the end.

Her niece came often, always looking after her and giving her lots of attention. Belen was very concerned about her and her fate. Her numerous cousins visited her whenever they could. They all loved her.

“Belen, you can well say: I gave myself in health and in pain, to everyone and in such a way that death found me only in Love. You are already interceding before the Assumption of Heaven for the Congregation that you loved with all your heart, for the Province of Spain, for your Provinces of Cuba and Ecuador, and also for this Community that was lucky enough to have you as a very dear Sister. Thank you, Belen, for all the testimonies of life that you have left us.”

With all the affection of the Community of Riofrio

(Original in Spanish)

*Testimony of the Province of Ecuador*

Religious and missionary - Mother and Sister... In ordinary times...

From this land of Ecuador and in union with the people of Latin America, with one grateful heart, a land she loved and where she gave her life so that the seed of the Kingdom might be visible, we come to the Province of Spain to honor, thank and bless God for such a precious gift: the life of Mother Belen Lozano among us.

Once again, "God has visited His people..." through her presence, her life, her missionary spirit, visible in a woman of very profound dimensions.

She was an artist who united Sisters and lay people of all generations in a single body and spirit of communion, making the reality of every person and every place her own. She filled the heart of every person: the poor, the less poor and the simplest. No culture, custom or tradition was inferior or superior in her heart, everyone was unique, we all had a place, a meaning, a reason for living.

For souls who live in God, Ordinary Time becomes a day of celebration, a great day of encounter, the long-awaited, dreamt-of and desired meeting with the Lord of life without limits. Mother Belen left us on this day of Ordinary Time. For her, this day was the "Great Day". September 2 became a day of celebration. Because for her, there was only one step left to take towards the holiness she had already achieved.

A woman with a passion for God and for the Congregation, she crossed this earth doing so much good, sowing seeds, accompanying so many stories, sometimes as a mother, sometimes as a Sister, at times transformed into an educator and formator of spirit and will with firmness and conviction, without ever losing her sense of humor and hope.

A woman with a soft, simple, serene and tender gaze. A woman of competent words, deep and lasting relationships, firm and faithful character, mature faith and critical thinking. A life of constant discernment to make good triumph over evil. A big Sister who left us a legacy of testimonies.

We are grateful to her family who laid in her the first foundations of this spirit from which we have been fortunate to benefit. And also, to her Province of origin, Spain, and to the Congregation which did not hesitate to give her to us as a missionary and pilgrim among the poor of the Gospel; and to her who did not hesitate to be chosen and sent.

Today, around her life and on this Easter day, we feel particularly united to each Sister of the Province of Spain, with deep gratitude to the religious and lay people who cared for her with such love and sensitivity in this last stage of her life. May they be filled with God's grace and blessings.

Peace in her eternal rest, joy in eternal life, joy in the Father's house. Happy reunion with her loved ones, with Marie Eugenie and all the Assumption in heaven. With deep affection, the Sisters of the Assumption of the Province of Ecuador and the lay people of Assumption Together whom she knew so well.

(Original in Spanish)

## Sister Gabrielle Annunciata de la Sainte Vierge

Aurora Santiago Mendoza

"Domine, tu scis quia amo te."

- Born on May 10, 1934 in Navotas Rizal
- Postulancy on March 25, 1957 in Manila
- Novitiate on March 25, 1958 in Manila
- First Vows on October 15, 1960 in Herran (Manila)
- Final Vows on October 17, 1965 in Manila
- Deceased on September 8, 2020 in Makati (San Lorenzo)

We give thanks to God for the life of our dear Sr. GABRIELLE ANNUNCIATA de la Sainte Vierge (born Aurora Santiago Mendoza) and affectionately called Sr. Gabby. She has lived true to her name until the end of her life here on earth. She passed on to eternal life on September 8, 2020, the Feast Day of the Nativity of Our Blessed Mother. What a celebration they must have in heaven!

Sr. Gabby was born on May 10, 1934 in Navotas, Rizal. She became a postulant in the Congregation of the Religious of the Assumption on March 25, 1957 and made her First Vows on Herran, Manila on October 15, 1960. In the course of her life as a Religious of the Assumption, Sr. Gabby was assigned to many Communities, namely: San Lorenzo, Iloilo, Baguio, Santiago-Isabela, Puerto Rivas in Bataan, San Simon, Aliw, Malibay, the Provincialate, Provincialate/Canlubang and Kauswagan. She had given herself fully in the apostolate as a Catechist, Parish Worker, Community Econome and in the latter days of her life, her apostolic

engagement was the “Apostolate of the Smile” and the “Apostolate of Presence” as she continued to proclaim God’s love by her being. She would have celebrated her Diamond Jubilee of Religious Profession this year.

Sr. Gabby is a woman of few words. She is very welcoming and available and yet discreet and undemanding. To those who visit Emmaus Community in San Lorenzo, Makati City, she would be one of the first Sisters to greet you and ask if you have eaten and just be present with you. Once, she requested me to accompany her in her 8-day retreat. I was moved by what she said, “The Lord knows that I love him, I do not need to say it again and again but rather to live it fully.”

She was in the 86<sup>th</sup> year of her life and the 60<sup>th</sup> year of her Religious Consecration. The Word engraved in her ring, *“Domine tu scis quia amo te.”*

(Original in English)

## Sister Anne of Mary Immaculate

Anne Bosquillon de Genlis

### "Ecce ancilla Domini."

- Born on November 14, 1925 in San Sebastian (Loire)
- Postulancy on July 17, 1954 in Val Notre-Dame
- Taking the habit on February 21, 1955 at Val Notre-Dame
- First Vows on March 2, 1956 at Val Notre-Dame
- Final Vows on April 3, 1961 in Lübeck
- Deceased on September 11, 2020 in Montpellier

What rich Christian soil the family of "sœurette or Auntie sœurette", the affectionate nickname of this fifth child and used by her family and Sisters until the end of her life! On her father's side, an aunt was a Visitation nun and two uncles were missionaries in China, one Jesuit and the other Lazarist; her maternal great-aunt, Sister Marie-Agnes, looked after a

group of nine cousins at Val Notre Dame, including Sr. Anne's two eldest cousins; she joined them there to prepare for her First Communion in 1932. Our Sister used to say: "I entered the Assumption at the age of 6!"

The war came and swept all that away. It was back to France and life in Cassel in the ancestral family home.

In March 1943, Anne heard the Lord's call to be a missionary during a recollection of the Jecists. It would take her a long time to declare her vocation and to tear herself away from the tenderness of her family. Throughout the post-war years, she worked as a "School Health" assistant in the devastated area of Flanders, which she crisscrossed by bicycle.

She made the decision for her vocation and the decision to leave Cassel, which was not an easy one. She returned to the Val where her eldest sister, Sr. Jeanne-Catherine, had preceded her for her first years of formation and made her religious profession in the snow on March 2, 1956.

Mother Marie Denyse had just restored the juniorate and Anne was happy to attend the Institut Catholique de Paris.

Her "mission" had already begun in France: a spell at Lamazou followed by 5 years at N-D des Anges, as the primary school in Lübeck was known. Anne was to be seen among the "little ones", whose candor she seemed to share; it was during this period that she made her perpetual profession in 1961. In 1963 Mother Marie-Denyse called her to Auteuil to form novices and then junior Sisters from all over the world. This was the period of countless foundations. Anne's turn came in January 1966, the start of a long missionary life spanning almost half a century! This was the time when the Congregation was passionately reading "Les carnets de route" by Jean Ploussard, a young Redemptorist and emulator of Father de Foucauld, who had died prematurely in Tchirozerine. The Redemptorists had a mission in the desert, with good contact with this semi-nomadic population, but the Tuaregs refused to entrust their daughters to the school which they had initiated, as long as there were no women to welcome them. With her Council, Mother Marie Denyse came up with the idea of a foundation. Her meeting with Monsignor Berlier, Bishop of Niamey, resulted in a threefold project: in Zinder, a secondary school for girls, in Tahoua, a primary school, and in Tchirozerine, a small Community of four, including our Sister, which started out in a tent. They looked after

the school, ran a dispensary and promoted meetings on women's education.

In 1971, farewell to Tchirozerine! The Tahoua mission school needed a headmistress. Anne took on this role for 6 years.

As the Assumption gradually took root in West Africa, young girls showed a desire to join. They started a postulancy and then a novitiate in Bobo-Dioulasso for West Africa. Later on, the "bible camps" that had been set up in Côte d'Ivoire under the leadership of Sr. Jeanne Catherine would cross the borders of the region.

After Niger and Burkina-Faso, the call came from Benin to Abomey in 1996. The mission is very close to the one in Notse, Togo, where the formation of the Province's postulants, entrusted to Sister Yveline-Myriam, has been transferred. Sister Yveline-Myriam was the 1<sup>st</sup> AMA in Tchirozerine thirty years earlier, and she is now constantly trying to get Sister Anne to join her in preparing the succession to the Assumption in West Africa.

Together with the Community, we also share the catechism teaching at the primary school located 6 kms away in the bush, the running of Bible Camps and, for our Sister, the pastoral care in the prison, which is visited very regularly every week. Affiliated with "Prisoners without Borders", the Community is well supported by the friends of Assumption-Ensemble; they integrate this apostolate into their activities, taking care of the prison garden and the health education of the prisoners to help them take charge of the hygiene of their living environment; we can't imagine the total destitution of this environment! The EWE language, spoken in the south of the country, is an obstacle for the Sisters, so every week a brother comes to lead the celebration of the Word in the prison's tiny courtyard. We can say that a sort of good understanding has been established with the director, who facilitates access for our Sisters. To this can be added support for the families of young people with disabilities; if they are equipped with disability aids and attending school, the possibility of vocational training opens up for them.

Along with the Sisters, Anne displayed the soul of an apostle, a concern to be present alongside the most disadvantaged in the name of Jesus, with a humanity full of delicacy and common sense, "virile and tender" as the

Rule of Life says. She and her Sisters were astonished when the French embassy in Lomé requested that she be awarded the Légion d'honneur!

In 2010, while on leave, a serious health problem added to her respectable age prevented our missionary from returning to Africa as she had so much wanted. She would have liked to die there like Sister Jeanne Catherine, 11 years earlier.

Another phase began. Anne offered her eternal smile to the Sisters and friends of Compiègne, where a small escalator was installed to spare her heart when she had to go upstairs. The Sister "in charge" of the Community would be very moved to see Anne, who was much older than her, with a sort of prestige as a pioneer of the mission, ask her for an appointment to simply and humbly hand over her life... which she would do right up to the end, putting up a little piece of paper at each retreat of the month, with the references of the Bible that she would pray in four prayer moments of the day.

Then came 'La Guille' in Lyon, in this house belonging to the Little Sisters of the Assumption, where several Communities from different Congregations lived together very fraternally and where our Sisters were very happy, and finally Montpellier, where she arrived to celebrate Saint Augustine in 2015.

It reminded her of Cassel, with the park, the birds, the squirrels, everything enchanted her. She asserted that it was in her character and that she had always been like that; but the stars were not as bright as in the desert night! After dinner, under the amused gaze of our director, Anne hobbles off, her watering can in one hand and her English cane in the other, to go round the plants. She had hidden a little pair of pruning shears in a corner so she could trim the wilted roses. However, it's the Grotto above all that is like a magnet for her; she visits the Blessed Virgin there every day; they have a very strong bond; after the Office Anne never failed to stay on in the chapel and faithfully pray her rosary.

She has nephews, excellent professional musicians, who are beginning to travel all over Europe. Their maternal grandmother lives in Montpellier; This earns the Community a beautiful concert when they come to visit it at the time of the end of the year: harp, not so easy to move, flute, violin, cello, a real treat!

One of the highlights of Anne's life in Montpellier was the celebration of her 60<sup>th</sup> year of religious life. Together with Sr. Christine-Marie and the Community, her family, led by her niece Alix, organized a weekend-long celebration. The Jesuit Father, still unknown to her, who presided at the Eucharist, was so struck by Anne's simple radiance during his preparatory meeting with her, that he asked to greet her when he later visited Montpellier, where he no longer was.

Anne's life was peaceful and spiritually dense. As long as she could, she attended our nearby parish church, took part in animating the Office, offered to do small services, never missed a moment of Community life or celebrations, tried to find her way through the mass of papers that a Sister regularly came to help her file, but above all kept her heart faithfully attached to her Lord. "I am with my Beloved", she said to one of us who knocked on her door without any answer. This "Lord", whom she was waiting for, whom she could feel coming, and to whom she asked to wait: "not before August, please"! Indeed, she was hoping to return to Cassel one last time to say her goodbyes!

And the Lord was to welcome her in September!

Several months earlier, when she found out that she might have to leave Montpellier for the EHPAD in Issoudun, to be a "presence" with the Sisters there, she was unsettled. Underneath the radical dedication to the Lord's will manifested by her Superiors, she sensed that the detachment was going to be very hard.

Circumstances changed her plans. Anne's place became more necessary to Sister Marie Laetitia, whose health had suddenly deteriorated.

One early September morning in Montpellier, "the Beloved" came to fetch our dear Sister Anne, to welcome her into the wonder of heaven.

The Community of Montpellier

(Original in French)

# Sister Thérèse of Mary Immaculate

Nicole Donnet

**"Maria conservant omnia verba haec, conferens in corde suo."**

- Born on January 31, 1927 in Antwerp
- Postulancy on December 8, 1946 in Val Notre Dame
- Novitiate on September 17, 1947 in Bordeaux
- First Vows on December 18, 1949 in Forges
- Final Vows at Val Notre Dame on December 30, 1952
- Deceased on September 12, 2020

Sister Therese of Mary Immaculate passed away on September 12, 2020, very discreetly, at 'Sainte Anne nursing home', near Boitsfort, where she lived her last days in silence - she could only communicate in writing because of her deafness - but always with a radiant smile and a moving look of tenderness and light.

Sister Therese got to know the Assumption at Val Notre Dame where she spent a year in a program called "studio", masterfully led by Sister Jeanne Marie. It was also in Val that she entered, a year after her older Sister Monique Elisabeth, on December 8, 1946. She completed her novitiate in Bordeaux and then in Forges from which she returned to Val and Leuven to pursue university studies in History. She wrote a bachelor's thesis on the economic history of the Val at a time (12<sup>th</sup> century.) when the abbess reigned over several monasteries, a masterful thesis much appreciated by her professors who would have liked to see her undertake a PHD, but we did not think about this at the time (1956) and she returned to the Val as a class teacher and then as tireless headmistress, from 1958 to 1965.

A teacher testifies: "Sister Therese was the first to welcome me to the Assumption and her gesture marked me forever. Young teacher that I was, I soon found encouragement and shared, real moments of happiness ... Afterwards, we met again, letters were exchanged in the difficult moments of the Val (which the Sisters will leave in 1984) but always in great confidence and it was a very great grace for me to have known her."

As a headmistress, Therese was extremely considerate: a desire, a project was barely expressed, that she took action and organized it in every little detail.

In 1965, she became Provincial and thus participated in the General Chapter of 1970 which elected her General Councilor at the same time as Sister Claude Emmanuel. For Belgium it was a lot but we got to welcome among us Sister Astrid Eugenie, from Rome! A new experience to live in Auteuil in Community with Mother Helene. Then Therese will be "Vicar" of France, a delicate mission that she carries out with tact. After that she becomes General Secretary for eleven years for Sister Hélène and then to Sister Clare Teresa who tells us: "I remember Therese as extremely nice, generous, and a faithful Sister. She was lovable and kind. Rarely upset, with a very serene and equal temper, she knew how to enjoy events and if they were hurtful, she covered them. It was during this period that she composed a large number of music scores for the Office, adopted in France and Belgium and even as far as the Sanctuaries of Lourdes where her Magnificat was sung "Magnifique est le Seigneur, tout mon cœur pour chanter Dieu!"

She flew to Rwanda in 1989. She was 62 years old! She taught in the Novitiate and at the 'Foyer Sainte Thérèse' in Kabuye. But suffering from Guillain-Barré syndrome, she had to return to Boitsfort where she fortunately recovered. She was present at the parish, at the primary school, at the Vicariate of Religious Life. It was then, while being in Welkenraedt for two years, that she became a fixture at the 'social' store and visited people in their homes, before returning once again to Boitsfort, where she had the same activities.

In 2007, she joined Ciney while still being a volunteer at Oxfam but she had needed to rest... Her Sister Monique Elisabeth watched over her... However, Sr. Monique went ahead of her to heaven as she had preceded her in the novitiate! Therese, in her most present moments, will say in a tone of affectionate reproach "Monique left without saying goodbye!"

The Community had to withdraw from Ciney because of the transformation and the Sisters, after having waited long and patiently, divided themselves between the Community of Boitsfort and the nearby

Home ‘Sainte Anne’. It was there, that Thérèse ends a life given in silence, leaving us with her radiant memory of love and peace.

The Community of Boitsfort

(Original in French)

## Sister Maria Aparecida da Eucaristia

Maria da Aparecida Dias

“Misericordias Domini in æternum cantabo.”

- Born on July 28, 1927 in São Paulo
- Postulancy on January 2, 1957 in São Paulo
- Novitiate on January 12, 1958 in São Paulo
- First Vows on January 13, 1960 in São Paulo
- Final Vows on February 11, 1966 in São Paulo
- Deceased on September 17, 2020 in Brasilia

Aparecida was born in Araraquara, a town within the state. When she was still very young, the family moved to the Bom Retiro district of São Paulo. A Salesian school was close to her home. Aparecida studied at a state school, but attended the Festive Oratory every weekend. At a young age, she joined the Marian Congregation. She wanted to dedicate herself to religious life. So she asked to join the Salesian Sisters, but in those days they didn't welcome black women... A disappointment for Aparecida. However, she retained a deep friendship and gratitude for the Salesian Sisters. She continued going to their house, as a member of the Marian Congregation. Later on, she visited them whenever she could, happy to see again the Sisters she had known in her youth.

A few years later, she heard that the Assumption could welcome her. So, she came, made a discernment and ended up entering the Postulancy in 1957. And in January 1960, she finally had the joy of pronouncing her Vows.

She was mainly at the college in São Paulo, but also at the one in Goiânia. Open and always smiling, she made friends with teachers, parents and the Sisters' families. She liked to be at the entrance of the school when pupils came in and out, having a word for everyone - whom she knew by name. Former pupils, even those who had left many years ago, never forgot her, remembering the way she communicated joyfully with everyone, saying: "May God make you happy! Enthusiastic about sports, she was present at every game, where she overflowed with joy, encouraging the players with her shouts and observations.

She loved to sing and was a member of the parish schola cantorum. She was also involved in adult catechesis, especially in preparation for the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation. Always present at the parish celebrations, she also liked to go the São Paulo Cathedral on occasions. The parishioners remember her faithfully.

She had a special devotion to Nossa Senhora Aparecida, the patron saint of Brazil, after whom she was named. She never missed an opportunity to visit her sanctuary, 170 km from São Paulo. In recent years, even weakened by age and illness, she wanted to go there at least once a year, on her birthday. And she found a way to be driven there by her friends, especially the volunteers from the college's social work.

At this point, more details are needed here, because this activity began on her initiative. She noticed that every Sunday a few boys from working-class neighborhoods came to Mass, offering to look after the cars in the street - to get a few pennies. She approached them, invited them to play football in the school, offered them a snack - and so, having "tamed" them, ended up inviting them to come on Saturdays (when there were no classes). Her friends from the school and the parish volunteered. Help with studies, games, catechesis... Of course, the Sisters' Community got involved, and then the pupils' parents started to help out... And now, around one hundred boys and girls come every week for this work, which is still going strong. We added a monthly formation course for parents, especially mothers. - And even though over the last two years the corona virus has prevented any face-to-face activities, they continue to receive cash aid (monthly food baskets) and maintain a link with what is now called "Projeto Esperança". (If the situation improves, we hope to be able to restart face-to-face activities in 2022.)

Sister Aparecida was very close to people at times of celebrations and difficulties. She would have a word of congratulation, a visit, an expression of strength for everyone - Sisters, families of Sisters or students, staff of the school, of the parish and so many other friends!

However, the years were beginning to get harder... Sr. Aparecida was gradually losing her strength - and in the last few years it was very difficult for her to accept the limits of her age; to accept a refusal, an annoyance - even if the other Sisters patiently tried to show her that this refusal was for her own good. The limitations of her health meant that she had to move to Brasília, where the house had better conditions for ongoing health care - and this change saddened her. She didn't want to be far from São Paulo, far from the Aparecida sanctuary...

A few weeks after her arrival in Brasília, she had to be hospitalized, and her fragile state meant she had to go into intensive care. This was a high point in the pandemic, with visits forbidden because of the risk of someone bringing the virus to other patients. The doctors, who were very dedicated, kept us informed every day over the phone - and one of the Sisters managed to talk to her over the phone. A few days later, she passed away to receive the reward of a life given to the Lord and others - especially the poor.

Let us pray for her, who now sings the Lord's praises for all eternity.

Sr. Maria Rachel

(Original in French)

## Sister Thérèse Myriam of the Cross

Marie Galan (known as Bartete)

**"Fac ut ardeat cor meum in amando christum deum."**

- Born on June 27, 1922 in Oloron Sainte-Marie
- Postulancy on August 14, 1957 in Auteuil
- Novitiate on April 12, 1958 in Auteuil
- First Vows on April 30, 1959 in Lübeck
- Final Vows on July 29, 1964 at Auteuil
- Deceased on September 22, 2020 in Montpellier

You could tell from her slight accent that she was born in the South of France, or rather in Béarn, the homeland of 'Good King Henri' who was so concerned about the welfare of his subjects, the king of 'the chicken in the pot every Sunday', and her family name smacked of the land and its village customs.

Her father was a baker, and she always had a real respect for bread. She couldn't stand it being wasted or thrown away, nor could she stand it being put on the table any old way. She was impressively thin, but she ate a lot of bread, and you wondered where she put it! She kept the rest in a pretty little checkered bag for the night or the next day.

Sister Thérèse had come to the Assumption late; a true late vocation, especially in her day!...

Mother Marie Denyse had seen her closely during her first years of religious life in Auteuil. She spotted her skills in the Community. She had also seen the beginnings of the Saint Gervais boarding school, which was being set up in the former "Beau Rivage" hotel. So, when Sister Marie Gonzague's accident forced her to relinquish her responsibility, Mother Marie Denyse named our Sister to the General Bursar's Office. She was 42 years old and had just made her perpetual profession a short time earlier. She remained in the bursar's office until 1969, with a brief foray into Nalliers (1969-1970).

Then began a wonderful period of joy, fruitfulness, friendship and shared responsibility with Sister Agnès de Jésus. The year was 1971. The merger of 1968 with the Sœurs Gardiennes Adoratrices de l'Eucharistie of Orléans had to be made more effective. They had a house in Pamplona; the Community was under the responsibility of Sr. Agnès de Jésus (from Surirey). Sister Thérèse Myriam, who had been born near the border, learned to speak Spanish very easily, and spent 8 years of work and happiness there, which she will always remember with gratitude to Sr. Agnès, as will all the others who lived under her guidance!

It was time to return to France. The house at Forges, with its multi-faceted activities at the time: a large boarding school, an elementary school, a secondary school, a rural center, etc., with its extensive property holdings and hectares of land, and with an uncertain future as to the management of the school, was in need of a real headmistress. So, there you have our Sr. Thérèse at work... and at prayer!

One Sister said: "I remember her one evening, prolonging her prayer after Compline: "It's to give me strength for tomorrow! Like a captain at the helm, she tenaciously lived through the particularly difficult times when the school was in turmoil. It was too distressing for her, so the ship sailed on, leaving her to head for other horizons where the burden would be shared.

Sister Agnès de Jésus has just been called to succeed Sister Anne-Geneviève as Superior of the new Community in Montpellier. The Province of France had just built a residence in the park between the primary and secondary schools. The Sisters left the unsuitable premises of the school to settle in a larger and older house that was well suited to this new perspective: welcoming the older Sisters of the Province, those returning from "mission" and those who need to regain their health, thanks to the good medical environment and the proximity of the school that offers the possibility of participating in our educational mission.

The memory is faithful. Sr. Agnès asked for the help of Sr. Thérèse Myriam and their tandem was formed again in 1983, to the joy of the Sisters and their collaborators.

One of the most faithful recounts: *"I met Sr. Thérèse Myriam for the first time more than 40 years ago. Then, one day, our relationship became a true friendship. We were part of the various management associations both at the Sisters' convent and at the school. From time to time, she had her "grumpy" look, but she responded to all requests and there were many... She was responsive, available, efficient; benevolent, discreet. The Foyer owes her a lot.*

*(Bertrand Marguerite)*

She underwent formation with the Red Cross to better serve the older Sisters. She also left her mark in the neighborhood: at the florist's who never failed to offer flowers for the chapel, at one of our pharmacists who could not hold back her tears on hearing of her death, at her dear Carmina's, a young employee who arrived from Spain when she was still a child to work at the school, and whom Therese accompanied when she had to leave the boarding school, when she had to leave her unusual attic room, find another place to stay, and, above all, gain a little more independence in the city.

Her nephews were always happy to visit her several times a year, and they never failed to spoil the Community.

Our Sister's last years were overshadowed by her double infirmity: we would meet her wandering in a corridor, half-groping and asking who was there; she would sigh: "You have to know what it's like not to be able to see and hear!" Classical music did her good for as long as she could switch on her hearing aid, and her password, when she needed someone, was a "coucou" repeated as often as necessary.

Her announcements of her imminent death, made by herself, provoked some comical situations when, unperturbed and stiff in bed, she took part in the Sacrament of the Sick that she had asked for and then asked us if she had answered the priest correctly and if everything had gone well. We were emotional, she was in need of support or rehearsing for the 'big day'?

As at other times in her life, Thérèse's depressive tendencies could get the better of her. Every evening, a Sister went to help her, to get ready for the night and find a little peace before going to sleep.

Now the house in Montpellier is completely turned upside down; the renovation work undertaken over the last 2 years is nearing completion. We know that, in the Communion of Saints, Thérèse has followed everything and will continue to watch over the renewal and new direction of this house that she has served so well.

The Community of Montpellier

(Original in French)

## Sister Augustine of the Good Sheperd

Augustine Rasoamalala

**"It is my Father's glory that you bear much fruit."**

- Born on September 21, 1958 in Ampasimanjeva, Madagascar
- Postulancy on December 25, 1981
- Novitiate on November 1, 1982
- First Vows on November 1, 1984
- Final Vows on September 18, 1991
- Deceased on September 28, 2020 at Fianarantsoa

Sister Augustine du Bon Pasteur RASOAMALALA was born on September 21, 1958 in Ampasimanjeva.

She was the eldest of six children born to David Edouard and Baotrano Georgine from Antanambao-Ampasimanjeva: four boys and two girls. Sister Augustine's younger sister, Anatolie, is a Religious of Saint Joseph d'Aoste. Her father was a community catechist for forty years in Antanambao-Ampasimanjeva.

Sister Augustine was baptised in Ampasimanjeva on the day she was born and received the Sacraments of the Eucharist and Confirmation in Ampasimanjeva.

Sister Augustine, like many young people in search of a vocation at the time, came to our Community to discern her vocation in 1977 and began

her Postulancy formation at Ambohimahasoa on December 25, 1981, entering the Novitiate on November 1, 1982 and making her First Vows on November 1, 1984.

She pronounced her Perpetual Vows on September 18, 1991 and celebrated her 25<sup>th</sup> jubilee on August 29, 2009 in Ambohimahasoa.

From the time she left the Novitiate in 1984, Sister Augustine was sent to the Antsenavolo Community to take care of pastoral catechetics, accompany the spiritual movements of the young people and animate the families to improve the development of the rural areas. She had a gift for animation and this was her specific mission right up to the end. She stayed in Antsenavolo until 1990, the year she pursued the same mission in the missionary district of Befata, in the Ambohimahasoa deanery, spending one week a month in the wilderness with the Ambohimahasoa Community. Our Sister served this district until 1998.

In 1998, Sister Augustine returned to Antsenavolo until 2003. From there, she joined the Ampasimanjeva Community until 2010. That year, she was sent to the Community of Andohan'Iakaka until 2013, then, she was sent to Alakamisy-Itenina to continue her pastoral work till 2019.

Sister Augustine's health began to deteriorate and she was sent to the Provincial House in Ampiatakely in 2019. The Congregation took care of her hoping for an improvement at the beginning of 2020. Unfortunately, a relapse occurred towards the end of July, and the doctor referred her to the C.D.S. in Fianarantsoa. Our Sister received the Sacrament of the Sick there. We continued caring for her at home from September 21 until the Father welcomed her peacefully into his care on September 28, 2020.

Sister Augustine was a straightforward person who never hesitated in saying what needed to be said and done. She had the gift of sharing with simplicity in Community. The animation of the rural Christian movement was her most fruitful field of action, since she had been part of it in her youth. As a rural development missionary, she wanted to help peasants go further in their way of doing things to overcome poverty and improve their living conditions.

Sister Augustine was keen to introduce the Father to all those entrusted to her, and she never ceased to advise them. During her illness, she found

the words to encourage those who cared for her and accompanied her; she never stopped saying: "I'll soon be cured and we'll go home".

She never neglected times of personal and Community prayer, especially adoration, Marian devotion and the Rosary of Mercy. When her health was particularly difficult, she liked to repeat "Jesus, I trust in You".

Sister Augustine placed great importance on accompanying the people with whom she worked and those entrusted to her, such as sessionists, members of movements, the young who approached the Congregation and other people who relied on her.

She had a special love for the poor.

She sought to fulfil joyfully the responsibilities entrusted to her by the Congregation.

Now that she is with the Father, we are sure that she will keep praying for the Kingdom of the Father to come, and that what she sowed will continue to bear fruit.

(Original in French)

## Sister Chantal Marie of the Eucharist

Chantal de la Fournière

### "Mihi vivere Christus est."

- Born on October 26, 1935 in Buenos Aires
- Postulancy on February 25, 1954 in Val Notre Dame
- Novitiate on October 31, 1954 in Val Notre Dame
- First Vows on November 1, 1956 in Val Notre Dame
- Final Vows on November 9, 1961 in Buenos Aires
- Deceased on October 31, 2020 in Montpellier

Chantal, affectionately known as "Chantal DLF" to distinguish her from the two Chantals in the Montpellier Community, was the 3<sup>rd</sup> of six children, 2 girls and 4 boys, who remained very attached to her, especially

the last 3, who moved to Argentina where the siblings were born. Her youngest brother, Yves, who was born when she was 15 and whom she looked after a lot, came to see her twice during her illness, at the end of her life, as did her eldest brother who lives in Paris. One of her sisters-in-law always gave news to the Community at Christmas and New Year.

Her features were "*strong and gentle*", expressing affection, a listening attitude and compassion. You could sense her great interiority and sensitivity, as well as her great fragility and anguish... She was the "*walk or die*" type, but with gentleness, "*Chantal sobre et paradoxalemente! Chantal who walks (a lot, and always) while reading!*" wherever she was! She was pleasant in Community, a participant and always eager to share her reading and her spiritual discoveries. "*She had a very deep sense of the Word of God, the fruit of personal work deepened by prayer*". Chantal knew how to point out our Community's inconsistencies, in a positive way, always with calm and reflection. She had a rather excessive horror of dirt, and when she said 'no', that was the end of the matter!

She was a Councilor of Sr. Danielle Romet in West Africa who tells us: "*She was like a 'radar' for me; she sensed what was good for the Church, here and now, a nascent Church, inculcated, linked to the land and the biblical soil*". She was also capable of entering into "*pastoral combat*" if a priest wanted to import methods that were unsuited to the environment! She "*felt with the Church*".

Her missionary experience has been diverse: Argentina, West Africa, Central America and France.

However, her missionary passion, wherever she went, was undoubtedly **the transmission of the Word of God**. *Sr. Ana Catalina of the Province of West Africa, tells us:* "*She allowed herself to be penetrated by it and was able to transmit it in such a way that those who listened to her were seized by it from within and in turn wanted to pass it on*".

The mission to Danané, in Ivory Coast, a land of first evangelization, was "*a particularly rich and exciting period*" for Chantal and her Community (1978-1989) "*with the formation of the catechists, the first evangelizers in this region of Ivory Coast, the accompaniment of the families of the catechists, the leaders of the village communities and ... the Sunday homilies to assist the parish priest*".

With the youth of the colleges in Togo, with the catechists in Burkina Faso, with the grassroots Communities of Christian Civil Servants, Chantal has the same desire to pass on, to form, so that the Church may be born and grow.

From America she retained her boundless admiration for Mgr. Romero and a great love for Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Having arrived in Montpellier in 2017, Chantal left us in October 2020 after suffering serious heart problems. She was offered surgery and, after much hesitation and against all the odds, she chose to have it done. She fought to live despite the post-operative complications and the poor prognosis of the hospital medical staff, and returned home. There, much loved by the nursing staff, she continued, without looking for it, her work of evangelization simply by being patient and listening. She never complained, even though, despair touched her at times. She was always very present in the Community, at her own pace, and yet you could sense that little by little and discreetly, she launched out ... into the Deep!

*"Thank you, Chantal, for being such a zealous missionary by our side" Sr. Marie Therese Kansolé, Province AO*

*"Peace to you, dear friend, in fullness" Sr. Marie Danielle AO*

The Community of Montpellier

(Original in French)

## Sister Christiane Hélène de l'Incarnation

Christiane Marchet

**“Come to me, all you who labor, and I will give you rest.”**

- Born on July 23, 1942
- Postulancy (Augustines de l'Hôtel Dieu de Paris) on April 6, 1968
- Novitiate on October 22, 1968 at 68 rue des Plantes, Paris
- First Vows on November 1, 1970 at 68 rue des Plantes, Paris
- Final Vows on December 8, 1975 at 68 rue des Plantes, Paris
- Deceased on November 15, 2020 in Étampes

Christiane Marchet was born in the 14<sup>th</sup> district of Paris. During her childhood, she lived with several foster families in the countryside, particularly in the Sologne region, of which she had many fond memories. She was baptized when she was ten years old, on January 1, 1953, and confirmed the following year, a sign of concern for the Christian education on the part of the family with whom she lived at the time.

She had a strong bond with Madame Signoret, who met her through her Jesuit brother. Christiane was 19 at the time and was searching for a vocation. Madame Signoret had no news and called her, even though she had already been gone for a few hours.

Having studied nursing at the public health service (Public Assistance), as was the rule, Christiane was required to work for five years in one of its establishments. However, she obtained a dispensation allowing her to join the Augustinian Religious of the Hôtel Dieu de Paris on April 6, 1968 at 68 rue des Plantes in the 14<sup>th</sup> district. The Sisters ran the Hôpital Notre Dame de Bon Secours at the same address and worked in other hospitals in Paris.

At the time, she was a beautiful young girl, blonde, with a straightforward gaze that seemed to scrutinize you, with steel blue color eyes that you could never forget.

Thanks to the research carried out by the Novice Mistress, Sr. Madeleine Demaldent, who joined the Father's House a month after her, Christiane finally got to know her mother, her half-sisters, the twins Caroline and

Patricia, and a half-brother for whom she developed a deep affection. She loved talking about her sisters.

The loss at of her twin sisters within a few months of her fortieth birthday caused her a great deal of suffering.

She received the habit on October 22, 1968, during a simple celebration in the Novitiate, and became Sr. Christiane Hélène.

However, it was in the chapel of Notre Dame de Bon Secours, then at 66 rue des Plantes, that, in accordance with hospital tradition, she pronounced her First Vows on the feast of All Saints 1970.

During her years of temporary profession, the young Sisters from the various Augustinian Congregations of the Federation of Augustines de France met once a month with a formator either in rue St. Maur, rue de la Santé or rue des Plantes. It was an enjoyable day of reflection, sharing and relaxation in the large garden of the rue de la Santé or under the cherry trees in rue des Plantes. The group of Augustinian Religious Sisters of Paris, GRAP as we called it, was a rich source of exchange and interrogations in the post-Council years.

Sr. Christiane Hélène shared many of her questions about the future, and about her own future, at a time when her Congregation was ageing.

As a nurse, she worked in one of the departments of the Notre Dame de Bon Secours Hospital, on the site of the Motherhouse, then at the Orléans Hospital for a year. Returning to rue des Plantes in Paris, she pronounced her Final Vows on December 8, 1975 and returned to the halls of the Notre Dame de Bon Secours Hospital.

In 1978, as the two Congregations were working towards a union, Sr. Christiane Hélène spent a year sharing the life of the Augustines du Précieux Sang d'Arras, on rue St. Maur in the 11<sup>th</sup> district. The Superior at the time was Sr. Jeanine Bertrand.

There, she discovered home care, going up and down many stairs with little or no lighting in many old buildings, overcrowded hovels and the surrounding factories, but also a young and dynamic Community.

She then returned to rue des Plantes, but among the elderly. From 1978 to 1983, she shared the life of the Notre Dame Community, while working at

the hospital. She then joined the new "Sainte Geneviève" Community, made up of six Sisters: three Augustines from Paris and three from Arras, the first step towards union. They had their own premises on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor and were independent from the Community, responsible for cooking, cleaning, etc. They all worked in different capacities at the hospital. The Community underwent changes after the union and Sr. Christiane Hélène became Superior.

Following the merger with the Augustinian Sisters of Montbrison in the Haute-Loire, she joined the Community living in the open air in the beautiful setting of Le Mont, one of the villages in the Commune of Essertine in Châtelneuf.

She formed part of the chaplaincy team at Montbrison Hospital, 7 kilometers away, where Sr. Marie Rose Lasset and other Sisters worked as infirmarians.

Christiane Hélène had a cheerful personality and enjoyed a good laugh. A keen walker, she covered miles of the Monts du Forez. She also enjoyed playing scrabble, watching Westerns and reading books about country life, which her brother kept her well supplied with.

But soon she had the painful experience of a serious illness. One after the other, Christiane Hélène courageously overcame two major health problems from which she would never fully recover, and from which she was later diagnosed with Parkinson's disease.

In 2001, back in Paris, where she loved the countryside, she was put in charge of typing the articles for "PONT", the Congregation's in-house newspaper, and taking care of the dispatch, helping Sr. Jeanne Maillard, the Assistant General and General Secretary. She was then part of the welcoming Community of the Generalate.

For five years, Christiane Hélène was local Superior of the Sainte Geneviève Community, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the house. She was also part of the catechumenate of the Parish of Saint Pierre de Montrouge, whose parish priest was none other than Father Philippe Marsset, who has since become Auxiliary Bishop of Paris.

She returned to the Community d'Accueil' in 2011, but gradually had to give up her activities. Parkinson's disease is increasingly disabling; her capacity to speak was becoming difficult, which was very distressing for her and those

around her, who could no longer hear or understand her. After a number of falls resulting in fractures and hospitalizations, she went to the Ehpad St. Joseph in Etampes in the Paris region on September 28, 2018, initially for three months, where a Community already existed. There she was reunited with Sr. Saint Roch, who had been her Superior General. Finding the place safe, the stay became permanent.

It was a new and painful stage, but as far as she was able, she kept her zest for life, playing "tenacious" games of scrabble every day after lunch with the activity leaders and other residents. Reading, watching TV, doing crossword puzzles and praying, to which she remained faithful even when she was unable to attend the Office in the oratory, filled her days.

Her wheelchair became her means of transport as long as she was strong enough. She loved having a bit of greenery, flowers from the park in her room, a little treat for visitors.

Sr. Christiane Hélène really experienced the decline of all her abilities, including the ability to communicate with those around her, before leaving us unexpectedly during a stay in the hospital.

Sister Marie Françoise Bisiaux

(Original in French)

## Sister Hélène of Jesus Savior

Hélène Levasseur

- Born on June 13, 1924 at Saint Saëns (76) in Normandy
- Postulancy on February 11, 1946 at the Augustines of the 'Précieux Sang' in Arras
- Novitiate on August 16, 1946 at 13 rue Pasteur, in Arras
- First Vows on September 25, 1948 in Arras
- Final Vows on August 21, 1954 in Arras
- Deceased on November 16, 2020 in Abbeville

As Sr. Madeleine Lamiot said in her welcoming message at the funeral: "Sister Hélène, at the age of 96, you have gone to meet your Lord after a long life of prayer, love and service".

Hélène was born in Saint Saëns, Normandy, on June 13, 1924. She was baptized on June 28. She was the eldest of six children. The three boys started their own families and the three girls became Religious. Hélène and the youngest, Yvonne, joined the Augustinian Religious Order, while the third chose the Cistercian order at the Belval Abbey in Saint Pol on Ternoise, in the diocese of Arras. She was the first to join the Father's house before the Abbey closed.

When the youngest was just four years old, her parents passed away and the children were placed in the orphanage at Laventie, run by the Augustine Religious. All her life, Hélène spoke of Sr. Marie Béatrice, who looked after her with affection and a concern for education. With great love and self-sacrifice, Hélène was a caring Sister to everyone. Over the years, she also became the confidante of her nephews and nieces.

On February 11, 1946, Hélène knocked on the door of the Augustines of the 'Précieux Sang' at 13 rue Pasteur in Arras.

On August 16<sup>th</sup> of the same year, she received the white woolen tunic, the scapular and the white veil of the novices. Soon after, on September 25, 1948, still at 13 rue Pasteur, she pronounced her First Vows and then joined the Community running the St. Jean Hospice in Laventie in the Pas de Calais. She then moved to the hospice in Arras, not far from the Motherhouse, where she continued to care for the elderly, who were not always easy to look after.

She had a cheerful, playful nature and was a good singer, bringing a little lightness and joy to those around her, but she also knew how to set limits. She was loved by all the elderly.

Hélène pronounced her final Vows on August 21, 1954 in Arras.

After all those years, from 1948 to 1967, working with the elderly, she became "My mother Lélène" for the little ones, boys and girls aged 3 to 5, in the Beaucerf LocalC council Home, near Boulogne sur Mer. For eight years, she generously gave all her time, care and heart to these children who were "difficult children with social problems" deprived of

affection. The Augustinian Community was also responsible, for a while, for the school for boys' over the age of 6. Although the children had all they needed, the premises were modest and the Community's living facilities even more so.

The year 1974-75 was a blessed time for Hélène, who took full advantage of all the contributions made by the various people involved during what the Congregation called "the Third Year". She has fond memories of this time and loved sharing her experiences.

She then returned to Beaucerf and the Community, where a 27-year-old girl was struck down by viral hepatitis in a matter of days.

The following year, Hélène was offered a major change of life. Still in the Boulonnais area, but in the expanding town of Wimille, in the heart of a working-class neighborhood, a Community was set up with four Sisters in civilian dress. Danièle was a teacher in St. Patrick's school, another was a nurse, Hélène was housekeeper and learned to cook. In the afternoons, she made clothes which were sold for the benefit of the poor school, which was in need of equipment. The Community was also involved in the life of the parish. This was a happy time for Hélène, when she also brought all her natural gifts to help the kindergarten school.

The Community of Solesmes in the north of France then benefited from her skills for six years. Once again, she was housekeeper, preparing meals during the week for seven Sisters with a variety of responsibilities: home nursing, teaching, member of the diocesan catechetical team. Hélène was also the switchboard operator for the care center and welcomed many people who came to the Community. She kindly mocked one of the "Sunday cooks" who liked to prepare soups in packets, by telling her: "It's the soup woman of the day".

She was a friendly person, making friends with the shopkeepers and neighbors in this town of 5,000 inhabitants. As the years went by, her eyesight began to fail; she had to stop sewing, but would continue to knit for a while...

The Bethany Community in Arras became her home for fourteen years, despite the stairs. She knew her way around the house!

However, in 2012, she had to move to Notre Dame de France nursing home in Abbeville. Gradually, her disabilities started adding up, and it became difficult for her to hear or walk, but she remained attentive to others and concerned about her family's health problems. Her last remaining occupation was crocheting for a while, as she had so skillfully worked with her hands. Only the rosary remained for her as it did so many times throughout her life. A simple, upright woman of deep faith, she had great confidence in Mary.

Undoubtedly, it was Mary who introduced her to Jesus on November 16, 2020.

Sister Marie Françoise Bisiaux

(Original in French)

## Sister Yelba Florentina

Yelba Florentina Berriós Delgadillo

### **"Ecce, fiat, alleluia!"**

- Born on October 16, 1926 in León (Nicaragua)
- Postulancy on March 27, 1953 in León (Nicaragua)
- Novitiate on February 18, 1953 at Val Notre Dame
- First Vows on March 25, 1955 at Val Notre Dame
- Final Vows on April 30, 1960 in Santa Ana (El Salvador)
- Deceased on November 17, 2020

Yelba was born on October 16, 1926 in the El Laborío district of León, Nicaragua, of which she was very proud. She was one of the first women to study at the national university, graduating as a pharmacist.

She was a cheerful, humble, helpful person, very attentive to everyone. Welcoming, very peaceful and grateful, she loved community life, adoration and the Eucharist. Very Marian.

The spirit of "joyful detachment" was a constant call in her life, even if it was often painful for her. She loved Marie Eugénie, who was a source of inspiration for her life. She was a great educator, devoted to the poor, especially the most vulnerable. It was difficult for her to stop going to the school as she grew older.

She was a pillar of the life of the Province, of its research, its struggles, its progress.... Open to reality, she was interested in what was happening in the world and in the country where she lived her mission. With a family spirit, she loved her blood family and her Congregation.

She served the Province in animation services and with great missionary spirit and unconditional dedication. She carried out her mission in Nicaragua, Guatemala, El Salvador and Ecuador.

On November 17, 2020, at the age of 94 and after 65 years of religious life, she gave herself to her Lord forever, embracing His loving will and saying "Here I am, alleluia!"

Community of La Palmera. Diriamba, Carazo, Nicaragua

(Original in Spanish)

## Sister Thérèse of the Child Jesus

Thérèse Berthe

### **“Petite dans le grand Tout”**

- Born on December 3, 1928, at Sailly-Labrousse dans in Pas de Calais (France)
- Postulancy on September 7 1947, with the Augustines du Précieux Sang at Arras
- Novitiate on March 4, 1948 in Arras
- First Vows on avril 19, 1950 in Arras
- Final Vows on août 11 1956 in Arras
- Deceased on novembre 27, 2020 in Abbeville in the Somme

“Thérèse, great musician, now makes all her harmonies resonate in heaven.” It is with these words that Sr. Hélène, our Provincial, informed us of her death, a few days after the feast of Saint Cecilia. Sister Thérèse of the Child Jesus led so many choirs in parishes and Congregations during her long life and, accompanied on the harmonium and organ at so many Eucharists, ceremonies in the city of Arras and its surroundings, given so many piano and organ lessons... It must be said that in her youth she obtained a First Prize in piano at the Lille Conservatory of Music.

Born in a village in Hauts de France, in Pas de Calais, Sailly-Labrousse, Thérèse was an only child. Around the age of nine, the parish priest suggested that she learn music theory and practice playing on the church’s harmonium, which she accepted with great joy. He will be her first teacher. Her parents encouraged the development of her artistic gifts, undoubtedly at the cost of many sacrifices. Her mother forbade her to wash the dishes to protect her hands. Despite the war and restrictions, she went to Lille to take classes at the Conservatory.

At the end of her studies, while her teacher was considering a career in Paris for her, Thérèse preferred to respond to the call of the Lord. She knocked on the door of the Augustines du Précieux Sang in Arras. One of her aunts was already a member of the Congregation. Thérèse entered the Postulancy on September 7, 1947. She had not yet celebrated her nineteenth birthday. When she took the habit on March 4, 1948, she received the name Sister Julie Marie. Julie being her mother’s first name. It was undoubtedly a trial for her parents to see their only daughter leave.

13 rue Pasteur in Arras would be her home base during all the years of formation, the place of her First Vows on April 19, 1950, and of her definitive commitment on August 11, 1956, then of her active life.

Various missions were entrusted to her within the large Community of the Motherhouse. She knew the smallest nooks and crannies of every machine: from the heater to the smallest tape recorder.

Assistant to the Mistress of Novices, Sr. Marie Madeleine Hanot, at the time when the Novitiate had around thirty novices, was not her least mission. This earned her the affectionate nickname “Aunt Julie”, of course for “internal” use reserved for novices!

She was attentive to everyone in the distribution of daily work and took into account skills and competencies. Of course, she was also a “Chant Mistress”, with great concern for pedagogy, giving both the spiritual and liturgical meaning of the text... and ensuring that the tempo was respected.

She collaborated actively and for a long time with the liturgical leaders of the diocese of Arras: Mgr. Belliard, Fathers Lartésien and Podevin.

For many years, Sr. Thérèse also took responsibility for the student hostel which occupied part of the house. This sometimes gave her a lot of trouble and shortened her nights. Until recent years, some who became mothers kept links with her. This shows how much they had established bonds of trust.

For several years, Sr. Thérèse assumed the role of Superior of the Community even though the Novitiate was no longer in the house.

At the same time, she was present in different places in the city of Arras to lead Masses, play the organ for funerals and weddings, give lessons, and in the summer, actively participate in the organ sessions of the diocese for train young people.

Until her old age, as long as she was able, she directed the choir of a small group of lay people animating the Sunday Eucharists in the chapel of the house, in collaboration with the neighboring parish. There were many participants and it was a friendly community of faith.

Sr. Thérèse was cheerful and joyful, knowing how to encourage and make remarks with delicacy. She knew how to marvel. Besides music, she loved playing scrabble. As she grew older, walking became more difficult needing first one then two canes, daily life more burdensome in a large house with many stairs. She then requested to enter a nursing home, which years before, she had feared so much.

At Notre Dame de France in Abbeville, where a piano followed her, she further enchanted the other residents with her music. No doubt, she performed “The Letter to Elise” for them, which she knew by heart.

During the merger, Sr. Thérèse had chosen, like her patron saint, to add "of the Child Jesus" to her first name and her motto clearly says what she wanted to live: "Little in the Great All."

May the Lord grant her to live in fullness today, while illness has done its work and the Lord has welcomed her into His House.

Many of us can say, as Sr. Françoise Martin wrote: "I really enjoyed knowing Sr. Thérèse and living close to her."

Sœur Marie Françoise Bisiaux

(Original en français)

## Sister Marie Madeleine Hanot

- Born on July 20, 1924 in the Pas de Calais, in the Hauts of France
- Postulancy on September 7, 1946 (Augustines du Précieux Sang) in Arras
- Novitiate on March 26, 1947 in Arras
- First Vows on April 25, 1947 in Arras
- Final Vows on July 2, 1954 in Arras
- Deceased on December 7, 2020 in Saint Nicolas les Arras

As Sr. Hélène, Provincial of France, wrote in announcing the demise of Sr. Marie Madeleine Hanot, it was at the end of a long life "at the service of the government of her Congregation" that she joined the Father's House ten days after Sr. Thérèse Berthe, with whom she had worked for many years. Both of them no doubt wanted to sing "live" Mary's praises together on December 7, as they had done for many years in Arras.

Marie Madeleine was born on July 20, 1924, in the Pas de Calais department, in the small village of Moyenneville. There were five children in the family, and she was the third after two boys. The daughters were consecrated to the Lord, one in a secular institute and the other with the Augustines du Précieux Sang, a Diocesan Congregation at the time.

The sense of humor of the priests of the Diocese of Arras earned them the friendly nickname of the "Hanot saints" (to be read quickly, with a liaison, to recall a well-known aperitif in France).

On September 7, 1946, Marie Madeleine knocked on the door of 13 rue Pasteur in Arras. The following year, on March 26, when she took the habit, she was given the name of Sister Marie Georges, Georges being the first name of the youngest member of the family. As with Abraham, this change of name was "a sign of God's choice". She once said that for a long time, she had not liked the name given to her by her parents, " the name of a sinner ", she used to say.

The novitiate was located in the buildings of the Mother House, and with the exception of her final years, practically all her life was spent there.

However, in 1948, Sr. Marie Georges was sent to England, and more precisely to London, to study to become an anesthetist. The Congregation then had two Communities there.

Sr. Marie Madeleine then studied nursing at the Red Cross school in Arras. On April 25, 1949, while still at 13 rue Pasteur, she pronounced her First Vows.

As a young graduate, she spent a year doing various internships in hospitals and clinics where Communities of the Congregation were based: Montreuil sur Mer, La Varenne, Saint Hilaire in the Paris region, Boulogne sur Mer, etc., while remaining based in Arras.

In 1951-52, Sr. Marie Georges became "Assistant" in the Novitiate before being Sub-Prioress for two years in the Motherhouse Community.

When the Novice Mistress was unable to attend due to health reasons, she was appointed Sub-Mistress of Novices in 1953. The Mistress soon had to be replaced.

It was with great generosity that she agreed to pronounce her Perpetual Vows without ceremony, in the chapel sacristy.

She was not yet 35 years old, as was canonically required, to become Novice Mistress, but on July 2, 1954 she did so by a dispensation.

For the next ten years, she was in charge of up to thirty novices and postulants.

She formed many French Sisters, but also the first Malagasy, guiding each one with gentleness and firmness, with a great sense of discernment.

In other words, she was very busy, assisted by Sr. Bénédicte Berthe in organizing the daily work assigned each morning to the novices and postulants. What's more, the Motherhouse was undergoing renovations, a happy time when expansion was necessary! Welcome to all kinds of renovations, especially in 1963.

On April 16, 1964, the General Chapter, meeting in the great hall on the first floor, elected her as Superior General for six years.

She took over from Mother Marie Véronique Danicourt, who for eighteen years led the Congregation with boldness and wisdom, establishing it in Madagascar, Reunion Island, Spain... dreaming of Latin America.

On April 16, despite the comforting words of Mgr. Gérard Huyghe, Bishop of Arras, who had presided over the elections, "you will be happy", there were novices in tears!

With her cheerful disposition, Sr. Marie Georges loved to laugh, do crosswords, play and win at scrabble, read the magazine *Femme d'Aujourd'hui*, walk, travel, discover new horizons and share them with others.

Each year, a session for a particular age group was held in a different venue, and an excursion or Community trip was organized, providing an opportunity to discover a part of France, and one year, at the invitation of another Congregation, the venue was in the Netherlands.

When the opportunity arose, Sr. Marie Georges returned to her baptismal name: Marie Madeleine.

Following twelve busy years, with the opening of Communities in less favored places such as the diocese of Amiens, in Madagascar, she contributed to the founding of the Community in 1957 by travelling there with the Ecclesiastical Superior.

From her trips to the "big island", she brought back photos of the Sisters, who had increased in number over the years, new Communities, landscapes, flowers and... fruits we had never seen before.

At that time, within the Federation of Augustinian Sisters of France, the Augustinian Sisters of the Precious Blood of Arras and those of the Hôtel Dieu in Paris were in the process of merging in view of a possible union. Sister Marie Madeleine will be the first Superior General, with particular responsibility for formation and overseeing the drafting of the new Constitutions. Each of the two Congregations had a Superior General and a Council, and retained full management autonomy. This was the case from 1977 until August 3, 1982, the date of the fusion of the two Congregations.

Archbishop François Marty of Paris agreed that the new religious family should take the name "Religieuses Augustines de Notre Dame de Paris", in memory of the founding of the Hôtel Dieu under the protection of the Canons of Notre Dame, the origin of the Paris branch of the Congregation in 732.

A new Superior General, Sr. Jeanine Bertrand, was elected and a new Council was set up, with Sr. Marie Madeleine as one of its members.

She became local Superior of the large and active Accueil Community at rue Pasteur in Arras until 1983. She carried out the same mission for four years at Sainte Catherine les Arras, a peaceful green setting where it was nice to relax. Back to Arras, she continued her mission of accompaniment in the Bethany Community, where Sisters with health problems lived, and finally with the elderly members of the third Community of the La Procure house. The Sisters are still very active there, sewing or knitting to help the works in Madagascar.

With the passage of time, the shadows of age clouded her mind and caused her terrible anxiety, and she was relieved of all responsibility, a very painful transition for her and those around her.

On July 24, 2012, she had to be admitted urgently to a nursing home that was newly opened. Among the other residents in Courchelette, she found a little serenity among "Sisters". Every time we visited her, she asked if there were any novices and how many. She never failed to ask about the Sisters in Madagascar.

Despite excellent care in this establishment in the Northern department, a move that her brother soon found difficult to assure, it was decided that she should move to the Ehpad St. Nicolas near Arras.

She was admitted there on January 4, 2016. She was surrounded by care and affection, particularly from the directress she had known previously. For many years, the "Amitié / Accueil" group led the diocesan "novena" to St. Benoît Labre in Amettes. Living together for a week created links between the young volunteers and the Religious chosen by the Council.

"At the Saint Nicolas Nursing Home, Sr. Marie Madeleine was always welcoming and smiling at the people who came to visit her," says Sr. Jean Philippe, even though she no longer recognized them. It was there that she met her Lord a few days before the feast of the Immaculate Conception.

"After having accomplished the works of God, she herself became the work of God by the offering of her life", as the celebrant said at her funeral in the chapel at 13 rue Pasteur in Arras, where she had prayed for many years.

She was a woman of courage, a woman of communion, and the words of Saint Augustine: "My life will be full of life close to You" sum up her long life.

Sister Marie Françoise Bisiaux

(Original in French)

## Sister Madeleine of the Annunciation

Madeleine Demaldent

**"Unless you become like little children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven." Mt 18:3**

- Born on June 5, 1929 in Paris, France
- Postulancy (Augustines de Notre Dame de Paris) on April 16, 1956 in Paris
- Novitiate on June 13, 1957 at, 68 rue des Plantes in Paris
- First Vows on August 8, 1959 in Paris
- Final Vows on August 22, 1962 in the chapel of the Hospital of Notre Dame de Bon Secours in Paris
- Deceased on December 23, 2020 in Etampes

It was in the 20<sup>th</sup> district of the capital, Paris, that Madeleine was born, on June 5, 1929. She was an only child though she had a cousin, Bernard, of whom she spoke a lot, as he was like a brother to her. He passed away before she did. She had another cousin, a Religious of Saint Chrétien in Sarreguemines, and other cousins living in Nicaragua.

A poliomyelitis contracted in childhood left her with sequels, which gradually disabled her, first with a cane, then a wheelchair. This did not prevent her from continuing her studies and obtaining a Bachelor of Science (Chemistry) degree, learning to drive, which she loved very much. The Boulevard des Maréchaux was her favorite route in Paris.

At the age of 27, she entered the Augustinian Sisters of the Hôtel Dieu in Paris, rue des Plantes, on April 16, 1956. She received the full habit on June 13, 1957.

There is still a large area with fruit trees around the buildings and the novitiate had its own recreation area behind the Red Cross nursing school. Madeleine was not the last to lead these meetings.

She pronounced her First Vows on August 8, 1959, and her Perpetual Vows on August 22, 1962, in the chapel "of the sick", as it was called at the time, in the chapel of the Hospital of Notre Dame de Bon Secours. Sr.

Madeleine studied nursing at the Red Cross school and obtained a state diploma. Later on, she attended the "Ecole des Cadres" where she obtained another diploma.

It was to another Congregation of the Augustinian Religious founded in the thirteenth century at Coutances in Normandy and who at the time worked at the Hôtel Dieu, that Madeleine was sent after her profession. She stayed there for three years.

A fusion between the two Congregations in Paris and Coutances was then underway. The Augustinian Sisters of Coutances merged with the Augustinian Sisters of the Precious Blood of Arras on May 31, 1966.

"The Lord has the art of writing straight with crooked lines" and the union of the Augustinian Sisters of Paris and Arras brought them together in a new Congregation, the Augustinian Sisters of Notre Dame de Paris, on August 2, 1981.

Returning to Paris in 1965, Sr. Madeleine was appointed Mistress of Novices. She was to take charge of forming the last Sisters to enter the Congregation. Aside from being concerned with their formation to the Religious Life, she allowed some of them to rediscover their family links. She then returned to work as a nurse at the Notre Dame de Bon Secours Hospital.

When, in 1971, the Council of the Congregation decided to "go outside the walls" and establish itself in the suburbs, in Aubervilliers, four Sisters were ready. Sr. Madeleine was part of this small Community for a while, living in an apartment. Each of them was professionally involved in the world of physical health and also in the parish. A Jesuit, Father Joseph Thomas, helped the Community to re-read its activity.

In 1983, Sr. Madeleine was sent to Arras, in the Pas de Calais. There, she discovered home care and life in the Provinces. She was on duty at the care center at 11, rue Pasteur, a very demanding activity at the time.

She was a member of the Third Year formation team and gave very much appreciated Church History classes. Some Sisters have retained a taste for reading and research.

Still in the Pas de Calais but in Amettes, a small village of one hundred inhabitants, the birthplace of Saint Joseph Benedict Labre, Sr. Madeleine discovered the hills of Artois and the concerns of the responsibility of the Community. She also took care of the finances of the retirement home.

In 1998, she arrived for a seven year stay in a different type of Community, in Solesmes in the North. It was a Multi-Purpose Community: on site, a care center and three Sisters who are nurses, a primary school teacher at St Joseph's school, two Sisters in pastoral work, one in the deanery and the other in the parish before being called to the diocesan catechesis team, a housekeeper ensuring the liaison.

It was at the Care Centre, in a part of the house, that Sr. Madeleine was on duty for care and registered requests for home nurses. As long as she could, she climbed the four stone steps leading up to the building. She was also involved in a group in the parish called the Evangelical Service of the Sick, of which Sr. Anne Marie Wynands was then in charge.

Madeleine had a very cheerful personality and loved to laugh and make others laugh, sometimes telling stories. She had an easy approach with children, which made it easier for her to provide them with certain types of care. She quickly made friends in this village of 5,000 inhabitants.

As she grew older, the daily difficulties caused by her disability became more severe. Sometimes they got the better of her, when she was overwhelmed by the anxiety of exceptional journeys, such as a trip to Lourdes on the pilgrimage train of the Diocese of Cambrai.

Back in Arras, Madeleine became responsible for the "Bethany" Community, which welcomed Sisters with health problems.

In September 1999, Madeleine arrived at the "Mon Repos" retirement home in Etampes. The management was still assured by a Religious, but very quickly things changed. A few Sisters were residents there, but in a communicating building, there was a Community. Very quickly it was necessary to call for a management mandate to ACIS France and then give up the establishment and thus allow its total reconstruction.

She agreed to get involved in the running of the new establishment: EHPAD Saint Joseph, as President of the Social Life Council and, did it very well, appreciated by the new Director. He has managed to keep the

family spirit in the establishment, which has almost doubled its capacity once the work had been completed.

For a while, Madeleine participated in certain activities, then her strength declined as well as her interest in her surroundings. She sometimes still had good responses in meetings with the Community.

Several hospitalizations in recent years made it sometimes difficult to communicate with her. However, we remember a woman of prayer, living as much as she could the words she had chosen: "Unless you become like little children, you will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven." Mt 18:3

Sister Marie Françoise Bisiaux

(Original in French)

## Sister Maryse de la Trinité

Maryse Desplain

### "Where are you going... if not to God?"

- Born on November 15, 1943 in Le Touquet (France)
- Postulancy (Augustines du Précieux Sang) on April 23, 1965 in Arras
- Novitiate on November 21, 1965 in Arras
- First Vows on August 28, 1967 in Arras
- Final Vows on September 3, 1972
- Deceased on December 24, 2020 at the St. Nicolas les Arras Ehpad

The writings of Saint Augustine had long nourished her spiritual life, and it was this phrase: "Where are you going if not to God" that she chose at the time of the merger, as was mentioned at her funeral. Maryse was born in Le Touquet, a popular seaside resort in the Hauts de France, on November 15, 1943, into a family of four girls. It was at her solemn Communion, as we used to say in those days, at the age of eleven, that she heard the Lord's first call. We know this from the confession she made at

her jubilee celebration of fifty years of religious life in 2017 in Paris, in the presence of Mgr. Noyer, a great friend of the family.

Maryse officially gave her answer to the Lord at the age of 22 when she entered the Augustinian Sisters of the Precious Blood in Arras, Pas de Calais. It was in the vast house on rue Pasteur that her first formation took place: Postulancy and Novitiate.

Her second year of Novitiate was spent in the Community of Tourcoing (Nord). She worked in the Notre Dame des Anges school group, a place where the Community collaborated with many lay people after having been run by the Franciscan Sisters of Notre Dame des Anges, who merged with the Augustinians in 1958.

After her First Vows on August 28, 1967, Maryse was sent to Paris for two years, at rue St. Maur in the 11<sup>th</sup> district, to continue her religious studies at the Institut Catholique. This period of preparation enabled Maryse to take on with a certain ease the ecclesial responsibilities that would later be entrusted to her in various dioceses: Amiens, Paris, Annecy and Saint-Etienne.

During the 1969-70 school year, she was directress of the school run by the Congregation in Bapaume, Pas de Calais. The Sisters had long managed a boarding school there to enable girls from rural areas to continue their studies. Sr. Maryse then returned to Tourcoing until 1976.

On September 3, 1972, she made her Perpetual Vows in her home parish of Le Touquet, surrounded by her family. She was soon given responsibilities, becoming a member of the General Council of the Augustinians of the Precious Blood in 1976.

For a long time, she was the audiovisual specialist for the Augustinian Congregation. None of us can forget the 'Gospel' given by a group of volunteer Sisters in Arras, Paris and Lyon in honor of the sixteenth centenary of the birth of Saint Augustine in 1986. Along with Sr. Odette Roaux, she was an ardent driving force behind the event.

Sr. Maryse then went to the Lille Community for a year, before joining the recently opened Wattignies Community. She loved music, but also dancing, and she really 'danced' well in the Community of rue Saint Maur in Paris, where she was local Superior from 1983 to 1991.

The layout of the premises made it possible, following in the footsteps of the Little Sisters of the Assumption, to host the Paris catechumenate, which led to some wonderful encounters, a stay-in social worker to monitor the women released from the nearby Roquette prison, etc. The care center was very active both on site and at home, and the commitment to the St. Ambroise parish was very strong. The Community was also a port of call for student Sisters: future nurses in formation in rue des Plantes, others at the school for catechists in rue de Varennes or at the Catholic faculty in rue d'Assas.

After the capital, Maryse discovered the vast horizons of the Monts du Forez at a place called "Le Mont", seven kilometres from Montbrison. The parish sector benefited from her biblical knowledge.

Sr. Maryse always cared for her sisters and her family, and they always returned the favor. She had many friends throughout France.

"Everywhere she went, she showed a great quality of welcome, without ever giving the impression of being disturbed, as the Sisters who lived with her can testify. She shone through her smile, her kindness. She radiated a smile and kindness. With her concern for the little ones and the poor, she was able to mobilize the Moreuil Community and the parish to provide practical help for the children of Madagascar" as was mentioned at her funeral.

After the relative isolation of Le Mont, it was in the heart of the large industrial town of Moreuil, in the Somme Department, that Sr. Maryse stayed for six years. During that time, she was asked to join the Episcopal Council of the Diocese of Amiens, whose bishop is Mgr Noyer. Her mission as delegate for the Religious Life meant that she was well known throughout the diocese.

It was after the peaks, the mountains, facing Mont Blanc in Combloux, at the chalet "Les Gentianes", that Sr. Maryse deployed her gifts for hospitality and relationships for four years.

Of course, everyone in the Congregation knew about her more or less vegetarian diet, with or without dairy products. A naturopath, she also introduced us to fair trade and ecology.

After spending a few months in Tournai, Belgium, Sr. Maryse returned to the Ste. Geneviève Community on rue des Plantes in Paris from 2015 to 2018.

She was called to join the "En chemin.com" Commission, which was working to prepare hearts and minds for the merger with the Religious of the Assumption. Until the illness got to her, she gave the best of herself.

Then came the shadows of physical and moral suffering, which forced those in charge to consider, against their hearts, her entry into a nursing home at St. Nicolas les Arras in June 2018 for better care. It was there, to everyone's great surprise, that the Lord would come to take her on December 24, 2020.

With Saint Augustine and Saint Marie Eugenie, she was finally able to contemplate the Trinity.

Sister Marie Françoise Bisiaux

(Original in French)

## Sister Rosilda Rousseau

- Born on February 8, 1929
- Postulancy (Augustines du Précieux Sang) in Arras
- Novitiate on April 7, 1949 in Arras
- First Vows on August 23, 1951 in Arras
- Final Vows on August 10th 1957 in Arras
- Deceased on December 31, 2020 in Abbeville

It was on the last day of the year 2020 that Sr. Rosilda met her Lord, and she was very fond of the hymn "Find your presence in my life". For several years, she had been expressing the desire for the great Encounter.

The eldest of a large family, she was born on February 8, 1929. Her parents were boatmen, and she had a difficult early childhood transporting goods on their barge.

Placed in a family, she recalled: "I lived in the countryside during my childhood in a small village in the Pas de Calais: Bouvigny-Boyeffles, with an elderly couple. He worked as a shoemaker.

In 1939, I was 10 years old when the Germans invaded Bouvigny. They arrived in lorries and had cannons aimed at both sides of the streets so that they could fire if anyone armed with a gun wanted to aim at them. I can assure you that everyone was very scared. We hid in the house and looked out of the window, hiding behind the curtains."

As a teenager, she lived in an institution in Arras, where she was trained as a secretary. In 1945, before she entered the Augustinian Sisters of the Precious Blood, she witnessed the liberation of the town, which left a lasting impression on her and which she often spoke about.

When she took the habit on April 7, 1949, Rosilda was given the name of Sister Saint Pierre. Sent to Belgium, near the town of Tournai at Mont Saint Aubert, she was to deploy all her talents in the service of young single mothers and then children placed in foster care because of family difficulties.

The premises where the French boarding school at Bapaume in the Pas de Calais had been located became a social children's home and was extended and completely renovated with the construction of four pavilions, family-style homes where life was good.

Throughout almost twenty-five years, Sr. St. Pierre was active there, constantly striving to improve life and make it more open, by taking the youngest children to the seaside and taking part in local events such as the Tour de France.

For many years, she gave the love she had lacked to many children in similar situations. For all of them, she is "Ma Mère St. Pierre", more or less well pronounced!

Intelligent, intuitive, with a great sense of humor and also a touch of curiosity, she knew how to set the mood and was never short of ideas! She was very active in the Community that ran the establishment called "La Goudinière", and was adept at finding donors for a difficult financial situation.

After Belgium, Sr. Saint Pierre moved to England, to Kearsny Manor, near Dover, where the Congregation ran a residence for elderly women.

Back in France, in Tourcoing in the North, in a small Community, she became involved with Secours Catholique before moving to the Generalate in Paris. For several years, as part of the Notre Dame de Bon Secours site, Sr. Rosilda looked after the children in the maternity unit during their mother's health consultations.

The Limousin Region, at Saint Léonard de Noblat, gave her a chance to get back to the countryside. At Lussac, at the request of the Limoges diocese, a small Community provided various services to the best of its ability. She spent many hours picking blackberries and apples and pears in the surrounding orchards after the harvest, much to her delight!

With age, health problems and the closure of the Community, Rosilda returned to Arras to the "Bethany" Community for Sisters with health issues.

The proximity of Belgium meant that her family could come and visit her, and Rosilda was able to visit one or other of her sisters, whom she had managed to reunite with after many years of separation.

A woman of relationships, Rosilda made new contacts during her stay in Arras.

On August 18, 2015, she entered the EHPAD Notre Dame de France in Abbeville, where a Community of Augustinian Sisters live. Still very alert, she moved around the corridors of the different floors to meet the other residents because she loved the company!

Rosilda gradually lost her zest for life, despite all the help she was given, both by the professionals and by the Congregation, refusing to eat or take part in Community life... The mystery of all human life, with its wounds, its suffering, its joys and its deep affections.

On December 31, she returned to the Father's house.

Sister Marie Françoise Bisiaux

(Original in French)

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