



Society of Mary - Compañía de María - Soci t  de Marie
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January 18, 2022

Biography of Death Notice N. 5

The Province of Spain recommends to our fraternal prayers our dear brother, **Juan Cruz PEREA ARMENTIA**, priest, of the community of S.Bartolom , Madrid, Spain, who died in the service of the Blessed Virgin on January 15, 2022, in Madrid, Spain, at the age of 75 with 57 years of religious profession.

Juan Cruz was born in Labastida ( lava, Spain) on November 24, 1946, the second to last of six siblings. His parents, In s and Cecilio, possessed a deep faith and piety. They instilled this same faith and piety in their family. As a child, Juan Cruz felt the desire to follow Jesus and proclaim his good news as a priest and missionary. In his family there were two Marianist religious: his maternal uncle, Father Francisco Armentia, and his cousin, Father Luis Perea.

Juan Cruz entered the postulate in Escoriaza in 1958, when he was about to turn 12 years old. From there he went to the novitiate in Elorrio in 1963, where he professed his first vows a year later, on September 12, 1964.

His formators described Juan Cruz as a sociable, helpful and pious young man.

He had a very good aptitude for sports, an activity to which he devoted a lot of energy and passion. As the years went by, he would especially enjoy playing fronton. He also had a taste and aptitude for music.

From a young age, he showed great self-esteem, with all the virtues and risks that this implies. His strong character was on more than one occasion a source of annoyance to others. However, he accepted with humility the corrections of his superiors and worked hard to control himself in that aspect of his life.

After his first profession of vows, Juan Cruz spent his four years of scholasticate in Zaragoza, beginning his studies of philosophy and letters.

His first assignment was to La Almunia de Doña Godina, a village in Aragon with a peasant tradition, where he began his educational work in the school. He enjoyed those four years very much, thanking God for being able to proclaim the gospel among simple and needier people than those he had met in Zaragoza. During that time, he renewed his vows year after year, until he made his perpetual profession in 1970.

From Aragon he went to the community of Barcelona. He went there in order to complete his studies, specializing in pedagogy. At the same time, he worked as a teacher in the Colegio del Buen Pastor, located in the working class district of Zona Franca.

In September 1976, he went to the international Marianist seminary in Fribourg (Switzerland), where he enjoyed four years of theological formation, life in a multicultural community and pastoral service to the Spanish immigrants living in Switzerland. After his ordination in 1980, which took place in his hometown, Juan Cruz went to Valencia, where he lived for the next five years. In addition to teaching, he began his duties as a school chaplain: celebrating Mass, hearing confessions, catechizing, accompanying and preparing spiritual exercises. At the beginning of his second year, he became the superior of that large and heterogeneous community, which included young Marianist students and some pre-novices.

After five years, the provincial proposed that he go to the parish of San Cristóbal in Barcelona as pastor. He lived there for eight years; years of great dedication and evangelizing growth. Overcoming difficulties with certain inherited desires to

avoid change - "it has always been done that way here" - he knew how to generate participative dynamics, counting a lot on the laity and contributing to the start of the Marianist Fraternities in Barcelona. To this day, these fraternities continue to grow and give life, although the Marianist religious community left almost 10 years ago.

In 1993, new needs arose in the province and Juan Cruz went to his native region, specifically to the community that animated the school in Vitoria. He left parish work and returned to focus on educational and pastoral work in a large school, becoming both teacher and chaplain.

After four years in Vitoria, the provincial appealed to his generosity and asked him to join the small Marianist community of Burjassot (10 km from Valencia), to replace the parish priest, who was elderly and in poor health. The parish of San José Obrero borders a very poor neighborhood with a mostly gypsy population that was artificially created just a few years before he arrived. There, Juan Cruz will live his longest mission period - 10 years - in which he will struggle with the feeling of loneliness and with challenges different from those he was used to. However, he will also grow as a person and patiently sow the Kingdom throughout that time.

A bit worn out, in 2007 Juan Cruz went to the community of Santa Maria del Pilar de Zaragoza, so that he could recuperate. He enjoyed the following eight years. There he would eventually retire from his work as a teacher, but would continue to work as a chaplain, also assuming the service of superior of the community for the last three years.

After the creation of the new Province of Spain, Juan Cruz joined the mission of Almeria: two parishes and a very special school, which serves gypsy and Moroccan families. He became the parish priest of Santa María de Belén, in the heart of the gypsy neighborhood. For five years he worked there. He did not allow discouragement to overcome his efforts. He worked hard but did not see much growth in that tiny Christian community. Nevertheless, he visited all the houses, knocked on doors, organized events and greatly improved the physical facilities.

In 2020, a year and a half ago, the provincial superior asked Juan Cruz to take on a new mission: to be part of the Marianist community of Orcasur, in Madrid,

being the new pastor of St. Simon and St. Jude, the parish of that working-class neighborhood, created with the arrival of the Marianists 50 years earlier. It was difficult for him to leave Almeria, but despite his age and the fact that his health was beginning to fail him, he accepted the new mission with confidence in the Lord. In fact, he gave himself with great enthusiasm to the parish of Orcasur, where he was able to enjoy only a few months, due to the operation to remove a tumor and the unexpected change of community.

The process of discernment of the Province in view of the new plan for communities led to an unexpected turn of events when Juan Cruz had only been at Orcasur for a few months. It was decided - with the approval of the Archbishop of Madrid - that the community would move to the neighborhood of Orcasitas, in order to work at both the school and the parish. Juan Cruz became the pastor of San Bartolomé. Here, too, he began his mission with renewed enthusiasm... until, three months later, when metastases, derived from the previous tumor were discovered in the lymph nodes. There was little else to do. In little more than a month, the disease consumed him until his death on January 15.

If anything has characterized Juan Cruz throughout his life, it has been his fidelity to prayer, which has kept him faithful to his vocation, despite the various crises of life. He felt called by Jesus to follow him, knowing himself to be weak and sinful - he used to go to confession every first Friday of the month. At the same time, he felt very much loved and chosen to spread the good news of Jesus. From that knowledge flowed his inexhaustible evangelizing and priestly passion. We thank the Lord and Mary for having given him to us as a brother.