Society of Mary - Compañía de María - Société de Marie
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November 12, 2026

Biography of Death Notice N. 16

The Province of Spain recommends to our fraternal prayers our dear brother **Fernando CANO-MANUEL ABARZUZA**, priest, of the Marianist community of Siquem, Madrid, Spain, who passed away in the service of the Blessed Virgin Mary on November 9, 2026, in Madrid, at the age of 95 with 77 years of religious profession.

Fernando spent more than half of his life in Brazil, as a missionary. He went there in 1976, a year after the arrival of the Marianists in the country. He lived there for forty-six years, until November 9, 2022, when he joined, for health reasons, the community of Siquem, where he died four years later. Fernando longed for Brazil, he wanted to return there; he still used Portuguese to express himself and in that language expressed the little that, due to his cognitive decline, he could express verbally.

Many people in Baurú, Marilia, and Tupá, the three cities in the state of São

Paulo where he was stationed, remember Fernando as a Marianist priest always willing to do good, to listen, to be a kind presence, and at the same time full of depth and warmth.

He was highly valued by the former seminarians, priests, and bishops, who benefited from the training Fernando offered them, as a professor of philosophy and theology at the interdiocesan seminary of Marilia. His favorite subject was the Gospel of Saint John, which for him was a keystone in the New Testament, especially its prologue. He was passionate about education, about passing on his love for the word of God in the Bible. He was also, for a few years, spiritual director at that seminary. Many considered him a wise man and a mystic with his feet in the mud; they came to seek his advice and guidance.

In Marilia, now retired from teaching, although still very pastoral, he devoted himself to caring for flowers, mainly orchids, in the garden and orchard. He devoted a lot of time to this task, with a passion that was contagious.

During his last years in Brazil, especially in Baurú, already ill and in a wheelchair, he spent long hours praying in the community chapel, in front of the Blessed Sacrament. When he arrived in Siquem, he expressed his desire to pray without interruption. He always had a book with the daily mass readings at hand, the first year, after his return to Spain, in Portuguese (until it had to be replaced because it was so worn out) and then in Spanish. On the first day of each month, a new copy was placed in his room at night, without him noticing. He managed to recover physically and gained weight, although he always complained about the excess food placed on his plate; His muscles strengthened, he walked again, and he wandered around the house having kind words for everyone he met.

Sometimes he had outbursts of bad mood and temper, when he didn't understand what was happening to him and when he was cold, but these did not extinguish his great kindness, sensitivity, and gratitude for all the care he received during his illness. Fernando was a tender person, grateful for the verbal and physical kindness he received, to which he always responded with cordiality and a disarming smile.

He continued to be an endearing man throughout his very long life, even when

cognitive decline took its toll on his personality. He was, until the last day of his earthly existence, the face of God's goodness.

Fernando was born in 1931 in Cádiz, *the little silver cup*, a beautiful city on the Atlantic coast, in southern Spain. In his childhood and adolescence, in that land of Cádiz, he drank in the air of his open personality, full of horizons, salty, gentle yet wild, like the sea. There he was a student at the San Felipe Neri school, where he met the Marianist religious. He lived in the city center, in Plaza Mina, the former orchard of the Franciscan convent, an emblematic place and home to the city's Museum of Fine Arts. His father was a soldier in the Spanish navy, and his mother, like so many women of that time, was dedicated to household chores. He had four siblings, all boys.

He made his first profession at the novitiate in Elorrio, in 1949. After three years of studies at the Carabanchel scholasticate in Madrid, he went on to teach at the Nuestra Señora del Pilar school in Madrid. He pronounced his perpetual vows in 1954. He remained at the Pilar school until 1959, the year he went to the seminary in Fribourg. From this period as a teacher, there are still students who fondly remember him as a good Marianist educator. In 1955 he graduated in Philosophy. In 1961 he earned a bachelor's degree in theology. He was ordained a priest in his hometown in 1964. He went to Valladolid as chaplain to the postulants, and in 1967 he was appointed director of the school. In 1970 he was appointed director of the school in Cádiz Extramuros. In 1972 he joined the provincial team as assistant of apostolic action. In 1976 he was assigned to Brazil, where he would be parish priest, novice master, superior of the unit, director of the interdiocesan seminary, superior of the house of formation, secretary of the sector, and, in 2020, retired.

He encouraged other religious from the Province to join the mission in Brazil, where he lived his Marianist life happily and devotedly. He participated in the life of Marianist Lay Communities, in grassroots communities, and in ecclesial life, with a liberating perspective. He worked tirelessly to found parish communities, dependent on a mother parish. In San Sebastián, parish of Baurú, he started thirteen of these communities.

In the community of Siquem, Fernando spent long hours in his room, staring at

the garden absorbed, contemplating the beauty of the roses. A few days before his unexpected death, he received the ten-year-old students of the school, played with them at conducting them in a clapping concert, smiling endlessly, and encouraged them to be happy *children*.

On November 9, the solemnity of the Virgin of Almudena, patroness of Madrid, he suffered a stroke at dawn, which brought him close to death. At that hour he received the anointing of the sick. At eleven in the morning, with the community doctor present, he entered a peaceful agony that lasted almost eight hours. He was accompanied at all times by the members of the community, especially Lolo, his companion and friend on the mission in Brazil. The brothers prayed with and for him, showing him affection and closeness in his passing to the Father. From his bed, he participated in the Mass of the day celebrating Mary, which surely placed him with her Son. May he rest in peace.