



*Dear Sisters,*

In the heart of the night of June 24, 2021, the Solemnity of the Birth of Saint John the Precursor, at 2:00 AM in the DM community of Bogotá (Columbia), a voice was heard: “Behold the Bridegroom! Come out to meet him” (Mt 25:6). The call was clearly heard by our sister

**SR. M. MELBA– MELBA PADILLA GUARNIZO**

**born on February 1, 1959 in Ambalema, Tolima (Columbia).**

On March 6, 1959, in accordance with the custom of the Christian families, she was brought to the baptismal font. At the age of seventeen she left her family to follow the Lord who invited her to be consecrated to him in order to offer herself to doing good.

She entered the Congregation on July 19, 1976 in the DM community of Bogotá and, at the conclusion of the novitiate, she made the religious profession on August 15, 1980. She would confirm this with the perpetual profession on August 15, 1986, in the same community.

The Divine Master led Sr. M. Melba in the various communities of the Province of Columbia/Ecuador and, in generous obedience, invited her to follow and serve him as a missionary disciple even beyond the territorial confines. From 2002 to 2003 she participated in the Course on the Charism of the Pauline Family in Rome, consolidating the joy of the vocation she received and the sense of belonging to this marvelous missionary Family in social communications. At the conclusion of this service she wrote to Sr. M. Regina Cesarato, Superior General at that time: *«The mission of walking in unity with the sisters from Argentina has been a school. I learned from those who preceded me in the consecration and experience of life. I am grateful for the opportunity to participate in the life of the Congregation from a broader perspective: like Moses, I removed the sandals from my feet to enter into a holy place»* (August 15, 2014).

Sister Melba distinguished herself as a person who was joyful and festive: she carried music and rhythm in her veins, she lived and felt the music, with an innate sensitivity for dancing. She carefully cultivated her own formation.

She was very sensitive toward the priests: from 1981 to 1982 she offered her contribution at the community of the Society of Saint Paul in Bogotá, and from 1989 to 1992 she collaborated with the Episcopal Conference in Quito (Ecuador). Frequently in the

adoration or community prayer she presented to the Lord the intentions of the priests and of the young in formation. She was near the priests, counseling and encouraging them in their vocation and ministry.

At various times, she spent years as a missionary in Ecuador (1989-1996 and 2018-2019), also assisting in the Liturgical Apostolate.

She had a great sensitivity for the Pastoral Work for Vocations, using every available occasion to present our Charism as Sister Disciples to the young women; she was always willing to go to the villages, in the pastoral missions, during the strong periods of Easter and Christmas to pray with God's faithful people.

She was the first to promote machine embroidery, opening new and creative ways. Like music, even the colors touched Sr. M. Melba deeply. Drawn by the harmony of the colors, she was able to interpret and to express emotions of joy or sorrow, fostering in the faithful and in the liturgy the formation to prayer in beauty. She did not have a great love for hot and cold colors, but vibrant and suggestive colors, vivid colors that have an impact and that communicate the nearness of the Mystery. Sister Melba, with her artistic taste, was able to blend colors in the computer embroidery of chasubles, stoles and altarcloths: a harmonious and balanced blend that transmits the harmony and the beauty of God.

In the final stage of her life, in which she learned to live the apostolate of suffering in her own flesh, she would often affirm: *«I have been converted with Saint Paul and I have a great sense of gratitude for the sisters»*. With serenity and self-denial she bore the lymphatic cancer that spread throughout her body, accepting the necessary treatments, sustained by prayer and fraternal charity. During the night of June 24, a heart attack caused her death. With her deep spirituality and her love of the Virgin Mary, we are accompanied by the certainty that she is enjoying the beatific vision of the beloved and sought after Face: the Master and Lord Jesus.

Dear Sister, we entrust to you the sisters of the Province of Columbia/Ecuador, and especially Sr. M. Gloria Jiménez Quevedo, the Provincial Superior who, with the other sisters of the government, begin their mandate of service to the communities for the edification of the Church and of society.

*Sr. M. Michaela Monetti*