



Dear Sisters,

Today, March 19, 2025, at Saint Agnes Hospital in Fresno, California (United States), at 8:45 AM (local time), the Divine Master definitively called to himself his Disciple and our sister of the USA-Ireland Delegation:

SR. M. ESCOLASTICA – MARIA EUGENIA FRANCO

ARAIZA

born on December 25, 1936, in Tacuba (Mexico).

Maria Eugenia, the firstborn of a large family, received Baptism a few days after her birth and was educated in the faith by her Christian parents. Her family lived in Tacuba, a historical area situated in the north-western part of Mexico City, at one time an important site of the ancient Tepanec Kingdom and part of the Aztec Triple Alliance.

Heir to the great culture of its people, Maria Eugenia bore some of its characteristics, among these being a strong, decisive character, with a spirit of initiative that was, at times, autonomous. With the journey in faith, there also increased within her an intense love for Mary, the Virgin of Guadalupe, who protected her and became her true Mother, Teacher and Queen throughout her life.

Maria Eugenia entered the Congregation on January 23, 1957, in Mexico City, in the prime of her youth, with the desire to consecrate her life entirely to God. The initial formation gradually introduced her to the consecrated life and, after the year of Novitiate, she made her religious profession in Mexico City on January 6, 1960, receiving as a “new name” the challenging name of Sr. M. Escolastica.

During the period of temporary vows, she was confirmed in the vocation as a Sister Disciple and, consequently, firm in the decision to “persevere in it until the end”, as she repeated in her requests for the renewal of vows and in that for the perpetual profession, which she would make in Staten Island (N.Y. - USA) on January 6, 1965.

In 1960, the first ministry entrusted to her was the priestly apostolate in the Pauline house of Mexico City. In 1962, she was sent as a missionary to the United States. There she continued in the priestly service in the houses of the Society of St. Paul in: Derby (1962), Boston (1964), Canfield (1966), Staten Island (1968), again in Canfield (1970) and then Los Angeles (1973).

In 1974, there was a transition in her ministry: Sr. M. Escolastica was called to assist in the Liturgical Apostolate Center, first in Staten Island and then in Boston (1975).



On August 6, 1981, she returned to her country of origin and was appointed Local Superior in the Pauline house of Mexico City. In 1991, she was transferred to our Divine Master community, where she was also Local Councilor; in 1993 she was appointed Regional Councilor for Mexico. In 1996, she was Local Superior in Guadalajara, Casa Madre Tecla, where she remained until 1999, fulfilling various services. She then returned to the Divine Master community in the same city, before returning to the Divine Master community in Mexico City.

On August 17, 2005, she returned definitively to the United States, to the community of Boston, and from April 4, 2007, she was in Los Angeles, California.

Sr. M. Tiziana Dal Masetto stated: «During my twelve years in the Los Angeles community, I had the grace to be in close contact with Sr. M. Escolastica Franco as a companion in the community. Our community life was deeply shared: we took turns in leading the daily liturgy, in the preparation of meals, and the housework, warmly welcoming the members of the Holy Family, the Pauline Cooperators and the Adorers.

Sr. Escolastica had a special talent for the sewing of sacred vestments, a ministry she fulfilled with devotion and love for the priesthood of Christ. She loved to welcome the visitors and delicately guide them toward Eucharistic prayer in our chapel. She deeply loved the three-fold charism of our Congregation and often shared her experiences of ministry. She had the joy of serving Blessed James Alberione during his visit to Brooklyn and generously collaborated with the Founding Mothers in the first years of the Sister Disciples of the Divine Master in the United States. She affectionately remembered Mother Lucia Ricci, Mother Tecla Molino, Sr. Eugenia Baggio, Sr. Trinity Taricco and others, often emphasizing the strong unity that bound them.

Sr. M. Escolastica arrived in the United States as a young professed sister and returned to Mexico only for brief visits. She remained deeply committed to her missionary vocation as a Sister Disciple of the Divine Master.

She was open and keen, quick to understand the situations, and often expressed her wisdom through a proverb or an appropriate song. Orderly and organized, she presented herself with simplicity and quiet dignity. She knew her strengths and her weaknesses. Although she could sometimes have a lively temperament, she would then compensate with acts of thoughtful and unexpected kindness. In this last period, she expressed deep gratitude for all the care and assistance she received.

2025 was an especially difficult year for her. After a fall, she spent some months in rehabilitation and her heart required constant medical attention. With the attentive assistance of the nurse, Emily Esguerra of the Holy Family Institute, she received professional care for all of her needs».

Particularly significant is also what Sr. M. Kathryn Williams, Delegate Superior of the USA/Ireland, wrote: «With a heavy heart, we received the unexpected news that today, March 19, 2026, Feast of Saint Joseph – patron of the dying and delicate guide of a holy life – our dear Sr. M. Escolastica Franco Araiza was called to the Lord's House. This loss takes place so soon after the death of Sr. M. Gioviana Fratelli, barely eighteen days ago.

The community of Fresno, and all of us, deeply feel the loss of these two dear sisters, faithful disciples and authentic missionaries.

During the Spiritual Exercises last year, Sr. M. Escolastica confided to me with simplicity and serenity: “It is time for me to go”. At the time, I did not fully understand what she was saying. She asked to be transferred to Fresno, expressing the desire to participate in daily Mass, to deepen her spiritual life, and to prepare herself for the final journey.

In God’s mysterious providence, only sixteen days after her arrival in Fresno, the Lord called her to himself. She attended the funeral of Sr. Gioviana, and had a short time to reflect upon the Lord’s ways. Now, she too has entered into his eternal peace».

Let us give thanks to God for the gift of these sisters and all who have brought to completion their vocation and mission, invoking their intercession for the Pauline Family, for priests, and for the new generations of young people who God joins to our communities, as we await his return.

Sr. M. Escolastica, live in God and rest in peace!

Rome, March 20, 2026.

Sr. M. Regina Cesarato

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