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Death Notice No. 21 (To all Unit Administrations):



The Province of Spain, recommends to our fraternal prayers our dear brother, **VALENTÍN SOPELANA**, of Marianist Community of *El Pilar* (Madrid), who died in the service of the Blessed Virgin Mary on July 30, 2014 in Madrid, Spain, at the age of 85 with 67 years of religious profession.

On February 13, 1929, in Escota, a small village in Álava, a child was born, to be baptized the next day with the name of Valentín. His parents, Pio and Marcelina, had a large family of eight boys.

Valentín's childhood was passed in the family setting. At the age of seven he received the sacrament of confirmation. He entered school at the usual age; he played with his many brothers and with other children of his own age. He prayed, he knew that God was someone important in his life. On September 30, 1942, he entered the Postulate at Escoriaza (Guipúzcoa) where he continued his studies and matured his faith.

His teachers at that time said of him that he was a good boy, a bit timid, well brought up and conscientious. He was raised well, but had limited intellectual gifts. He was docile and had good judgment. His vocation matured. Three years later he expressed the desire to begin the novitiate, and he entered it on September 11, 1945, after the required discernment. At the end of a year, on September 18, 1946, he made his first vows as a Marianist religious.

He remained for a year more at Elorrio and then, in 1947, he entered the Scholasticate of Carabanchel Alto in Madrid. He understood and accepted his intellectual limits. Everyone knows, as he did, that the essential for a religious is not in his capacity for studies but in his availability to follow Jesus. Always an enthusiastic person, he pursued training oriented towards the domain of manual work. Valentín and his superiors judged that to be the right path for him. He was content and his work filled his life.

Some years later, Valentín realized that he had not given sufficient time to study. At the time of the decision, that had been understood by everyone, but now, he felt uneasy about it. No one knew what might have happened if he had followed the usual cycle of studies: perhaps he would have failed with all the consequences that would follow, and everything would be worse. Nothing about it could have been certain. It was a different time; intellectual formation seemed less important than it does today and we can't judge the happenings of the past with today's criteria. The fact is that throughout his life Valentín had problems about accepting his situation.

At the end of the scholasticate in 1949, he remained in the same house and was fully integrated into the life of the community, working at book-binding. He prepared for his perpetual profession, which he made on the Feast of the Assumption in 1952. That same year he was sent to Tetouan, Morocco, to the Colegio del Pilar in that city, to share in the business management of the house.

He found himself in a new milieu and a new culture, with all its challenges and problems. The school began to recruit many students and the bookkeeping demanded time and attention.

Tetouan is located 40 km from Ceuta, a small Spanish enclave on the African coast. Valentín had to frequent that town to buy supplies. He had good relationships with the Spanish merchants. A school has all kinds of needs, and Valentín tried to respond to them all. His interest in commerce would be one of the constants in his life. He remained six years in Tetouan.

A surprise awaited him in 1958: the General Administration wanted a Spanish religious for the community at Via Latina in Rome to take care of various services in the house. Valentín accepted the request. He became Valentino, the name he continued to use when he eventually returned to Spain eleven years later. In Rome, he did a bit of everything: binding documents to be sent to communities, acting as porter at the front door, lending a hand in housecleaning, serving as driver for the Superior General or other members of the General Administration.... He was very popular and, although a bit timid, with a bit of contact he became able to establish relationships with a wide variety of people. Valentino did not pass unnoticed in the GA community.

Over the course of those years, the boarding section of the Colegio San Felipe Neri in Cádiz closed its doors: many other study centers had been built, and the city was so small that it became much easier to pursue one's studies while continuing to live in the family home. But the number of university students never ceased to grow, along with the need for appropriate lodging for them. In 1968 the facilities of the boarding section became, with a few minor renovations, a university residence hall. One year later, Valentín was sent there to share in the business management, where he worked for two years.

From 1971 to 1976 he returned to work in the community in Tetouan.

In 1975 the house in La Parra, which had served as novitiate for some years became a house of prayer open to persons and groups who were looking for a place of peace and quiet. Valentín joined that community to work at the maintenance and business management of the house.

Two years later he went to Jerez de la Frontera. This would be his last active period before retirement, a period of fourteen years. During a good part of that time, he served as porter. In 2001, now retired, he joined the community of the Colegio del Pilar in Madrid. His was an active nature that declined little by little. The people who worked in the house loved him well: a cook who had served the community for several years, upon learning of his death, came to his funeral, "because she had good memories of him."

In June 2006, he celebrated the 60th anniversary of his first religious profession. On that occasion the Provincial Superior sent him a letter that summed up his life: "When you recall those years, all sorts of memories come to your mind. You have your complaints: they are a part of the limitations of our life. In any event, I am sure that when you look back, you see above all the events that deserve gratitude to God who guides our lives, often through twisted lanes. But in the end, we have many reasons to be grateful."

At the beginning of 2014 Valentín's health deteriorated and he was hospitalized. Pancreatic cancer was diagnosed and he was transferred to the provincial infirmary, the community of Siquem. A cure was medically impossible; he knew it and accepted it. Sometimes he would even joke about it. Palliative care helped him to support the situation. In the morning of June 30 he finally passed into the house of the Father. Our prayer accompanies him along his way.