



OBITUARY NOTICE



SISTER MARIA JULIA LEUTA
ANNA MARIA

entered Eternal Life on on July 21, 2020
at the age of 100
and 70 years of religious life.

+2119

'Ana joale nka neha ba lefats'e, pelo ea ka e leng ea monghali?' (book 17) **""Ah! Can I give to the world my heart which belongs to my Lord?** Sr. Anna Maria loved to sing these words from the Sesotho Catholic Hymn Book. She also savored Psalm 84.

**"How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts!
My soul longs to be there !"** Ps 84, 2-3

Born on January 15, 1920, Sr. Anna Maria is the second of ten children. Her parents, Cyprianus Ratsomo and Meriama Maletloaelo first name her Mookho; however, she is given the name Maria when she is baptized on December 12, 1920 and then Julia at the celebration of her First Communion and Confirmation on October 13, 1926. At that time, there are very few Catholics in the region, as most people are still deeply rooted in traditions that are largely opposed to the Catholic Church. In order to protect their little girls from the pressures against christian practices, Maria Julia's parents send her and her older sister to live with their aunt in Natal as reprisals against Catholicism are far less present there.

She attends an elementary school in Natal managed by the Sisters of Precious Blood. From the age of twelve, Maria Julia hopes to become a Sister within their Congregation. A little later on, her request for admission to join them is unfortunately denied by the Bishop of Marian Hill due to her young age. However, the parish priest advises her to go to Lesotho, near her hometown, to meet with the Sisters of Charity of Ottawa. These are unaware that Maria Julia has been denied entry due to her age. Maria Julia has heard of the Grey Nuns and learned that they have a Residence in Pitseng, Lesotho. She thus decides to go to meet them.

It is in 1938 that her father accompanies her by horse to Lesotho, just like Abraham who brought his son Isaac as an offering to God. Maria Julia is admitted as a postulant and then to the noviciate in 1939. She pronounces her temporary vows in January 1940, followed by her perpetual vows on January, 1943.

Sr. Anna Maria recalled later on: *"As I matured, I developed real devotion to the Grey Nuns of the Cross. I no longer compared the Precious Blood Sisters to the Grey Nuns, as I first did with great nostalgia of Natal."* She concludes that she never regretted her decision to join our Congregation.

Sr. Anna Maria soon demonstrates many skills, initiative, resourcefulness and intellectual curiosity, all qualities sought in a good teacher. The authorities agree that she should study at St. Mary's Training College to become an elementary school teacher. After successfully completing the program, she teaches at Paray Primary School at St. Marguerite Marie Convent; at Natal Shongweni and Inchanga in Zulu and at Our Lady of Pontmain Convent. She is also the only qualified missionary among the Sisters of Charity in Natal who can teach in Zulu.

Sr. Anna Maria is reserved, efficient in managing her time and meeting deadlines, organized and very focused on record keeping. She documents the course of events with great precision and clarity. The authorities are very pleased with her incredible administrative skills. They send her to the large Roma Parish administered by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

From 1964 to 1981, she provides secretarial work and helps to write a Missal in Sesotho in collaboration with the Mazenod Institute. Her obedience also assigns her to work at the Lesotho Catholic Bishops Conference (LCBC). Shortly after, she is appointed as Provincial Treasurer. She is so delighted and grateful when in 1990 she comes to Canada for training sessions in accounting. She then experiences at a deeper level the "SCO family spirit" and her sense of belonging is reinforced.

At the end of her term as Provincial Treasurer in 1992, she enrolls in a one-year librarian course with the Lesotho National Library and ends up working as a librarian at Pitseng High School from 2001 to 2009. She enjoys working with young students and exceeds learning expectations. Not only does she maintain records and inventories very accurately, she assigns book summaries to students, which effectively helps them to learn English.

After retiring, Sr. Anna Maria moves to Paballong Convent. She is the first centenarian in the Lesotho Province. She often receives visits from her close and extended family and friends. In order to celebrate her 100th birthday with them, the festivities are held at the beginning of October 2019 as her health is deteriorating rapidly and it is feared that she may not make it to her birthday in January. However, the many prayers are answered and Sr. Anna Maria regains energy and her

zest for life when she hears the announcement of the celebrations surrounding her jubilee. On January 15, 2020, against all expectations, Sr. Anna Maria blows out her 100 candles.

We thank God for the privilege of having Sr. Anna Maria by our side for all these years. She was an exceptional teacher and was particularly skilled at helping her students to learn. Meticulous and detail-oriented, she was so organized and skilful in maintaining records and files that she actually made it quite easy to write her obituary.

People from all over the Diocese of Leribe and the entire country were appreciative of her accompaniment of the Sodality of Mary Immaculate Conception. Two devotions that she held very close to her heart: the Stations of the cross, and the Holy rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary. In fact, she always carried her rosary with her.

Sr. Anna Maria was assuredly welcomed into heaven in the fullness of God's light and peace. Now that she is with the Lord and the Blessed Mary whom she loved and served with all her might, may she continue to watch over us and to intercede for us.

