

Mother Carmen Martín Moreno biographical summary

Introduction

"Each of us," writes Pope Francis, "knows different stories that have the fragrance of the Gospel, which have testified to the Love that transforms life. These stories demand to be shared, told, brought to life in every age, in every language, by every means." That's why we're here this evening to "place on the candelabra" an FMA missionary who has infused her journey with the fragrance of the Gospel. Mother Maria del Carmen Martin Moreno (Madrid 1918-2001).

An ardent missionary, a woman of hope, a Mother, a friend, a formator attentive to opening horizons, to stimulating in the best way possible, to awakening or strengthening the missionary yearning in those she met.

Her father Francisco (1879-1941) chose a military career and joined the Spanish National Army. He was Chief of Staff in Toledo.

Her mother, María de los Remedios Rodríguez, was a cultured woman, open and supportive, kind and elegant, with a solid faith, a fervent Catholic, and a good educator of her children.

Carmen was a girl open to culture and gifted with a lively intelligence. She attended the school run by the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart in Madrid until she obtained her high school diploma. She learned Italian and French.

She later obtained a nursing diploma from the Red Cross.

Her friend María Luisa Barrera (who would become an FMA)

The two shared a deep harmony of ideals. Maria Luisa was also a nurse, and together they assisted wounded soldiers in the "San José" hospital in Burgos. They were also volunteers in a group call together by Bishop Escrivà de Balaguer.

Their friend Pilar Lizaur introduced them to the FMA Institute, and they were all attracted to the Salesian educational charism.

Don Angel Sagarminaga y Mendieta

A key figure in Mother Carmen's life. First Director of the Pontifical Missionary Works in Spain (1926-1968). Guide and advisor in the maturation of her missionary vocation.

House of Barcelona Sarrià

January 31, 1941 – She became a postulant in the house of Barcelona Sarrià, where she also made her novitiate.

August 5, 1943 – She became an FMA. The motto of the group: *Always Magnificat in sacrifice.*

Her first community as an FMA: Provincial House of Madrid Villaamil

Teacher, oratory assistant, catechist until 1952.

"She transmitted her missionary spirit with such ardor and enthusiasm that she made us dream of other worlds!" (an oratorian). She made her perpetual vows on August 5, 1949.

Volunteer in Portugal at the house in Lisbon Monte Caparica (summer 1946)

She expressed her generosity in an emergency situation. In the summer of 1946, a typhoid epidemic broke out in the boarding school, requiring the urgent involvement of nurses. She volunteered, even at the risk of her own life. She worked alongside Sister María Luisa Barrera. They were unable to leave the dormitory, where there were 200 sick girls.

"We felt the help of God and the strength of Mary Help of Christians, who rewarded our work done with so much love, because none of the girls in the house died, despite the gravity of most of them. At night we took turns sleeping; the other one kept watch... But we were happy... We were allowed, with precaution, to leave only on August 5, because Sister María Luisa had to renew her vows for the third year, and I had to renew my three-year vows."

Burgos "Barriada Juan Yagüe" (1952-54)

In 1952, she was appointed superior of the new foundation in Burgos, a very poor house, but full of educational activities: oratory, sewing and dressmaking courses, evening school, remedial lessons, nursery school, elementary school, middle school, and vocational training.

Madrid "Nuestra Señora del Pilar" - Paseo de las Delicias 64 (1954-1960)

For six years she was superior of a house with a school up to the baccalaureate level. There was also a formation house for aspirants and postulants. "Her goal was to form 'the house of the love of God' in the community. She was very human and wholly devoted to God. She had tact and wisdom in distributing work to each Sister and a delicate sensitivity so that we all felt happy. She demanded what she gave us first."

Béjar "Maria Ausiliatrice" College (1960-61)

Superior for one year in a house where there was a primary school and a high school. From September 18 to 24, 1960, she participated in the International Oratory Conference in Turin.

Palencia "Orphans of the Railway Workers" (1961)

Superior for two months (September-October)

Barcelona – Provincial House (1961-68)

October 1961 – She was appointed Provincial of the Province of "Our Lady of Pilar." Visits, gatherings, meetings. However, everything always started with personal encounters. She had the gift of easily interacting with everyone. She stood out for the

depth of formation she brought to all her interventions.
In 1962, she welcomed Mother Angela Vespa on a visit to the Province.

Turin (February-March 1968)

She was called by Mother General to collaborate in the preparation of the XV Special General Chapter (1969).

Caracas - Venezuela

She was appointed Provincial of the houses opened in Venezuela and thus embarked on a "missionary" journey. She remained there only until October 25, 1969.

Rome - XV General Chapter (1969-70)

She was elected General Councilor, with the task of coordinating the "Documentation and Press Sector of the Institute."

During the six-year period 1969-1975, she made "extraordinary canonical visits" to various provinces of the Institute.

List of canonical visits made

Each encounter was a gift from God for her, a new opportunity to open herself to the beauty and variety of the charism inculturated in the five continents.

Province of "Our Lady of the Letter" in Messina (Italy)

Province of St. Joseph (Antilles)

Province of "Mary Help of Christians" in Medellín (Colombia)

Province of "Santa Rosa da Lima" (Peru and Bolivia)

Sacred Heart Province of Quito (Ecuador)

Spanish Provinces: Barcelona, Madrid, and Seville

Rome – XVI General Chapter (1975)

During the XVI General Chapter (April 17 - July 28, 1975), she was elected Visiting Councilor. It was the first time that the role of Visiting Councilor was officially introduced into the General Council. Five Visitors were elected. This was necessary due to the size of the Institute at that time, which was present in 60 countries and consisted of 65 provinces.

List of provinces visited

Visiting the provinces was a new missionary calling for her.

- Province of "Saint Teresa" in Madrid (Spain)
- Province of "Mother Mazzarello" in Belo Horizonte (Brazil)
- Province of "Mary Help of Christians" in Seville (Spain)
- Province of "Laura Vicuña" in Manaus (Brazil)
- Province of Our Lady Aparecida in Porto Alegre (Brazil)
- Province of "Immaculate Help" in Campo Grande (Brazil)
- Province of Our Lady of Pilar in Barcelona (Spain)

- Province of St. Catherine of Siena in São Paulo (Brazil)
- Province of Mary Help of Christians in Recife (Brazil)
- Province of Our Lady of the Salve in Alessandria (Italy)
- Province of the Immaculate Help of Christians in Campo Grande (Brazil)

Rome – XVII General Chapter (1981-1982)

During the 17th General Chapter (September 15, 1981-February 28, 1982), she was elected General Councilor for the Missions on December 3. It was her task to animate *Project Africa* in the Institute and to promote the missionary renewal in the provinces.

List of provinces visited and animated with a missionary heart

Meanwhile, she continued her visits, giving priority to Africa, where various presences were opened in new countries.

- She visited the Delegation of Mozambique
- The houses in South Africa
- Short visit to Lesotho
- Province of "Our Lady of Africa" in Lubumbashi (Zaire)
- Trip to Angola in search of the first headquarters for the FMA
- The first foundation in Kenya
- Towards the first foundation of the FMA in Sudan
- Visit to the "St. Mary Mazzarello" Province in Bangkok (Thailand)
- Visit to the "Stella Mattutina" Delegation in Seoul (Korea)
- Visit to the "Alma Mater" Province in Tokyo (Japan)
- Missionary animation visit to Hong Kong
- First foundation in Touba (Mali) and visit to Ivory Coast

Rome – XVIII General Chapter (1984)

After 15 years as a member of the General Council, she felt it was opportune, as she herself said, for "new blood capable of renewing it to enter the Institute."

20 Missionary in Equatorial Guinea (1985)

On January 25, 1985, she left for Malabo (Equatorial Guinea). Finally, she could feel truly "in the missions," as she had so desired. In May, she was assigned to the mission house in Batete on the island of Bioco.

She was assistant to the girls, catechist, gave remedial lessons, and developed teaching materials. She was a nurse and helped with the housework.

Malabo Elà Nguema "Mary Help of Christians" (1992)

In 1992, she was transferred to the "Mary Help of Christians" Community in Malabo Elà Nguema for health reasons. She was the school secretary, catechist, assistant, librarian, and collaborator in community activities. She enjoyed giving of herself, and the Sisters welcomed her as a precious witness of life.

August 5, 1993 – She celebrated 50 years of religious profession in Duékoué together with the young professed Sisters.

Libreville (September-October 1993)

After a severe heart attack, she was transferred to Libreville (Gabon). The last bout of malaria she contracted had repercussions on her heart and caused lung inflammation, so she spent a short period of time in the capital.

She wrote the biography of the young Guinean FMA who died on May 13, 1995: *Una perla preziosa* (A Precious Pearl).¹

A confidential letter

On October 18, 1993, she confided to Mother Lina Chiandotto: “I am happy because Sister Yvonne [the Provincial] wants me in the Province and told me that if the day comes when I can no longer work, my presence and my prayers are enough for her. I am very grateful to her because she truly is a soul of God. ***This way, I will be able to die in Africa, as is my desire.*** I have no fear of death. When you receive the news of my death, say the *Magnificat* and the *Alleluia* because it will be the beautiful day of my encounter with God-Love, even though I am a ‘sinner.’ ”

Return to her homeland (1998)

On June 21, 1998, she returned permanently to Madrid to "Santa Teresa" House. Only because of explicit medical advice did she agree not to return to Guinea.

She collaborated on several translations from French and Italian into Spanish. She was involved in compiling the history of the Province since 1943. As a direct witness to the events, she was the most suitable person for historical research. Her vision was far-sighted, and she therefore felt a responsibility to pass on a documented and accurate history to future generations. At the age of 81, she learned to use a computer!

The last journey

On August 29, 2001, she was admitted to the hospital and her condition was serious. Loved and cared for by her former secretary, Sister Ciriaca Hernández, she died at 3:30 a.m. on August 30, 2001.

Now we understand better how significant the title of the biography is: *Gospel Fire in a Missionary Church*. As Pope Francis wrote in *Evangelii gaudium*: "My mission of being in the heart of the people is not just a part of my life or a badge I can take off; it is not an ‘extra’ or just another moment in life. Instead, it is something I cannot uproot from my being without destroying my very self. I am a mission on this earth; that is the reason why I am here in this world. We have to regard ourselves as sealed, even branded, by this mission of bringing light, blessing, enlivening, raising up, healing and freeing" (n. 273).

¹ See MARTÍN-MORENO Carmen, *Una perla preciosa: Sor Andrea Muatetema Rivas 1997; Une perle precieuse: Soeur Andrea Muatetema Rivas (1969-1995)*, Rome, FMA Institute 2002.