

## In the Father's House

«As we have been united  
in the profession of the faith,  
so let us keep ourselves united  
in suffrage and intercession».  
(Fr. Alberione)



In the early morning hours of 14 August 2020, our brother priest died in Pasay City (Philippines)

### **FATHER SOCRATES EUSTAQUIO BERNARD MONTEALTO** **69 years, 57 of Pauline life, 48 of profession and 43 of priesthood**

Father Socrates, or “Father Soc” as he was commonly known, had been suffering from severe kidney disease since 2011, which forced him to have frequent dialysis sessions. Worsened for a few months, in the night between 13 and 14 August, a serious crisis forced him to an emergency hospitalization at *San Juan de Dios* Hospital in Pasay City, where he probably arrived already dead.

Father Soc was born in Iloilo City on 20 October 1950 into a very large Catholic family, consisting of ten children (of which he is the eighth), six boys and four girls. Dad Eustaquio is a lawyer, Mom Judith is a teacher. He was baptized on 5 November 1950 in the Church of the Immaculate Conception of Iloilo and received Confirmation on 23 June 1966 in the St. Elizabeth Church of Jaro, three years after joining the Congregation. On 10 June 1963, at the age of 13, in fact, he crossed the threshold of the community of Makati, where he began his Pauline formation. After the aspirancy and postulancy, in June 1971 he entered the novitiate in Makati. Here on 4 July 1972 he made his first religious profession, taking the name of Bernard. He then made his perpetual profession, again in Makati, four years later, on 29 October 1976.

The formators noted over the years his growing attitude to the fundamentals of the Pauline religious life: a life of intense and regular piety, love for liturgical service, progress in managing human and fraternal relationships, good intelligence, excellent application in the apostolate, which in the years of formation is concentrated above all in the sector of production.

After attending High School, he studied theology at the Archiepiscopal Seminary in Manila, before specializing with a Master of Arts in Higher Religious Studies at the Pontifical and Royal University of Santo Tomas, also in Manila. These studies, completed after the priestly ordination received on 27 March 1977 in Makati, will be very useful for his first apostolic assignment: Master of aspirants in Makati, a position he will hold until 1980.

In June of that year, the Superiors transferred him to the community of Pasay City, which welcomes him for the remaining years of his life. Here he will be local Superior (1993-1996 and 2011-2016) and will have a brief experience as head of diffusion in the Pasay City area (1999-2000). But his life in this community is linked above all to his collaboration with Our Lady

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of Sorrows Parish, the parish entrusted to the Society of Saint Paul in a district of Pasay, Metro Manila. As soon as he moved there, in fact, he joined the parish priest of that time, Fr. Moises Pascual Leviste, a man animated by a great pastor's heart, who initiated him into the first rudiments of parish life.

The context of the parish is characterized by a great social inequality, in a neighbourhood where very rich families stand side by side with others who are very poor, both economically and culturally: at that time in fact according to statistics, 70% of the inhabitants are below the poverty line while, as many as 50% lived in miserable conditions. Driven to respond to the needs of the moment, on 17 August 1986 Father Soc started – with a handful of willing lay people, the help of diocesan Caritas and a lot of faith – the Our Lady of Sorrows Outreach Foundation, Inc. (OLSOFI), a charitable reality linked to the parish and committed to the social and cultural progress of the local population, especially children and their families. Over the years, this reality is gradually credited to various civil authorities for its role and the seriousness of its action, based on the self-help of the local population, personally called to redeem their condition. In this way, school courses for children and young people, health programs and food aid for families, professional training for adults combined, of course, with many catechesis courses, have thus been launched and increased over the years.

The figure of Father Soc will remain forever etched in the memory of many people, of many poor people and of the members of our Philippine Province. Only his very jovial, communicative, lively and empathetic character made possible a work like OLSOFI, constantly in need of funding that he had always guaranteed during the 24 years of life of that organization.

We will now remember him as a precursor of that “outgoing Church” to which Pope Francis constantly appeals to us. To the intercession of Father Soc we entrust the current efforts of the Society of Saint Paul to be ever more “Pauline” as an “outgoing Congregation” towards the people of God, towards the many old and new poverties that characterize this very particular time.

Rome, 14 August 2020



Father Stefano Stimamiglio, ssp  
Secretary General

*The Superiors of Circumscriptions are to inform their communities for the suffrages prescribed (Const. 65 and 65.1).*