



Life and Death of

Sr. Maria Lucas Lee (Lee Jongwon)

December 29, 1911 - October 3, 2006

Sr. Maria Lucas was born on December 29, 1911. She was the second child of 8 children: One older brother, two younger brothers and four younger sisters. Her father, Leo Lee and her mother, Agatha Kim were very devout Catholics and raised their children in Catholic faith. Her family was well-to-do with lots of land located around Hehwadong, eastern Seoul. She was a very obedient and religious child and studied well at school. She kept in her heart a wish to be a religious Sister. She graduated then well-known Ewha Girls' High School founded by the American Protestant Missionaries at the end of 19th century.

At the time of Japanese colonization, Korea didn't have any medical school. In order to become a medical doctor, one should have passed a challenge-examination. She passed this and got her medical license on May 30, 1940. She went through her residency at the Seoul Severance Hospital and worked at Yulmokdong OB/GYN Hospital in Incheon near Seoul.

On September 1, 1942, she joined the Missionary Benedictine Sisters at Wonsan, North Korea but due to her ill health she couldn't pronounce her vows. Even then, she stayed with the Sisters and worked at the Sacred Heart Clinic in Hamheung till August 20, 1948, waiting for her health to get better. But because of the oppression of the North Korean communist regime, she left North Korea for the South with her younger sister who had been in the Wonsan convent novitiate. They safely arrived in Seoul and after some rest and recuperation, she went to work at Choong-nam Charity Clinic for the poor and refugees. On June 25, 1950, when the North Korea invaded the South, she and her family moved to Busan, the extreme south port. She took care of the poor patients at the Blessed Mother's Clinic in Yang-san, Kyung-nam from January 1951 to 1956. Meanwhile, the German Sisters from the Oksadok hard labor camp were repatriated and some of them wanted to come back to Korea. One of them, Sr. Gertrud Link came to Daegu to restart the Korean novitiate. She became the first Novice Mistress of Daegu Priory in September 1956 and she nudged Sr. Maria Lucas to try again her vocation. Sr. Maria Lucas couldn't make up her mind. Then, her father told her, "Go because God is calling you!" After this positive advice from her father, she got the courage to retry her vocation at the age of 45. Thus, she became one of the first candidates in the South with Sr. Benedicta Hong, Sr. Pia Chang and Sr. Cecilia Kim. As a postulant, she took care of the patients at the newly opened Fatima Clinic.

Finally, on December 8, 1958, at the age of 47, she made her first profession thanking God in tears of joy and happiness. Around the end of 1958, she was to help out the Antonio Clinic in Gongpyungdong, Daegu. But in September 1960 she had to come back to the Priory House from Antonio Clinic due to her broken leg. Later the Antonio Clinic was merged into the Fatima Clinic. Sr. Maria Lucas took care of the children in the Pediatrics Department of the Fatima Clinic (later Fatima Hospital) from 1961 to 1965.

On December 14, 1965, Sr. Maria Lucas pronounced her final vows and moved to Sang-ju to start the Sang-ju Fatima Free Clinic for the poor and medically needed. Sang-ju Fatima Free Clinic was opened in February 1966. Then, in September 1967 Sr. Maria Lucas came back to Daegu Priory House and took care of the sick Sisters in the infirmary. For the Sang-ju Fatima Free Clinic, medical residents from the Daegu Fatima Hospital, taking turns,

took care of the poor patients. Also, she worked in the Dermatology Department of Daegu Fatima Hospital from 1967 to 1970. From 1970 to the end of November 1985, she was in charge of the Priory House library.

Sr. Maria Lucas loved books. She always had books in her hand and read a lot of them. She tried not to burden others on account of her weaknesses or illnesses. Since she broke her leg in 1960, she had been experiencing troubles in her legs. As she got older, this got worse. But she did not request any special treatment, instrument, walker or anything for her legs. She could walk slowly with one careful step after another. Nevertheless, she was always present for the Convent hourly prayers. She was honest and reasonable. Her memory and reason were clear at her advanced years and even at her death bed. Her prayer life was always thorough and complete. She was a very good model to us all.

She wanted to remain in her first floor room where she could be alone but our infirmarian Sister begged her to move to the second floor infirmary room. In December 2004, she finally agreed to move there. Since then, she got help from the nurse Sisters in the infirmary. She thanked for the help she got from Sr. Gabriella and obeyed her directions. Way before her death, she arranged all the things in her room, categorizing them into subjects and gave some materials to the archivist.

One week before her death, she said she got cold and had no appetite. The day before her death, she gradually got worsened hour by hour. Therefore, Sisters watched her all day by taking turns. On the day of her death, before and during the morning prayer of Lauds, she didn't look good at all. That morning she received the Last Sacrament still in a clear mind. After the Sacrament, Sisters came one by one and greeted her. She answered each call and recognized each Sister by name. Her breathing got worse and she told the Sisters, "I am leaving you today." While Sisters were saying the rosary, she peacefully stopped breathing closing her eyes and left us for the Heavenly Kingdom. It was 10:00 a.m. on October 3, 2006.

Sr. Maria Lucas left behind a model of genuine religious life of patience, integrity and obedience for us to follow. Now she is in God's bosom for which she has yearned during all her long life of 95 years.

*"The Lord look upon you kindly and give you peace!"*  
(Numbers 6:26)

*Dear God, give our dear Sr. Maria Lucas your glorious eternal life!*

October 5, 2006  
Sr. Gertrud Kim, OSB, Prioress  
Daegu Priory