



Sr. Paschala Santiago, OSB

May 24, 1921 - Sept. 16, 2007

Introduction before the Funeral Mass d
delivered by S. M. Angelica Leviste, OSB

My dear Sisters and brothers,

Today as we bid goodbye to our dear Sr. Paschala, memories of student days at St. Scholastica's College, Manila, and lively memories of novitiate days in the convent and above all, beautiful memories of the life we shared in community with our sisters become alive in my mind and in my heart..

As students, we used to meet Sister Paschala along the corridors of St. Scholastica's College, Manila: from afar one could sense a certain strictness written all over her face and her whole bearing; but as we approached her and greeted her, her face would light up, joyful and radiant, dispelling our fears and apprehensions.

As novices, we had closer interactions with Sister Paschala that revealed her true self .. a Benedictine sister who had an eye for beauty and gifted with hands that created beauty. She was, then, in charge of our beautiful chapel at St. Scholastica's, Manila. She instilled in the minds of novices the sacredness of the chapel, a place of worship to the Blessed Trinity, the House of God. Therefore, everything in the chapel had to be kept clean. She had sets of brushes of varying sizes and corresponding trapos to be used for cleaning the altar, another set to keep the sterling glow of the tabernacle, and still another to polish the delicately crafted iron grills behind the altar. She had an electric brush for the floor and another brush to clean the brush. I could go on enumerating the various kinds of brushes we used to keep the House of God in perfect condition. Very organized in her work, she insisted on keeping the altar linen and the priest's vestments immaculately clean and stored in perfect order. She trained us to ring the church bells for Mass and the Angelus on time, exacto en punto, not a minute earlier nor a minute later.

In all the communities where she was assigned, Sister Paschala would give joy to everyone with the artistic cards and welcome blackboards that she prepared for visitors of the community. Those were the days when computers were not yet in style. With the stroke of a paint brush or melted crayons, she produced all sorts of letterings and designs; and anyone coming to the community felt welcome with daintily made cards. And, what was so beautiful was the fact that Sister Paschala was willing and ready to share her artistic talents with other sisters.

Later, when she retired here in this Baguio convent, she made the chapel elegantly beautiful on special feasts with her classic and artistic decoration, all in perfect harmony to bring out the royal glory of God. Her love for beauty found expression in her care for plants, flowers and trees, for anything that brought out the splendor of God's creation. To decorate the house, she rarely bought flowers .. she taught the younger sisters and the staff to look around in the garden and utilize what is available, to be used in decorating the chapel and other parts of the house.

Another facet was her passion for mission; her commitment to the education of our students. As a young postulant in our school in San Fernando, Pampanga, Miss Santiago taught Tagalog. A pure Tagala from Bulacan, Miss Santiago insisted on correct grammar in speaking and writing exact verbs, exact tenses, nouns, prepositions, hence she was called Miss Pantukoy... Miss Preposition.

Later on, our higher superiors, saw Sister Paschala's capacity to shape minds and hearts of the youth. So, they sent Sister Paschala to take up Masters in School Administration. She was Grade School Principal in our schools in San Fernando, Angeles, Lapu-Lapu and Tabunok, Cebu. Sister Paschala showed that rare quality of a strict disciplinarian while at the same time capable of touching hearts and therefore, much loved by the faculty, parents and friends of the school community.

Born in Hagonoy, Bulacan on May 24, 1921, Sister Paschala was the second of the five children of Benito Santiago and Pascuala Natividad Santiago. We have with us here the only surviving sister of Sister Paschala, Mrs. Felicitas Reyes, whom we lovingly call Ate Fely. With her are members of the large Santiago-Natividad clans. It is so edifying to note the strong bonding among the members of the family and their relatives. On the night when Sister passed away, some of the members felt Sister Paschala's presence in their midst. Upon receipt of the news of the passing away of their dear Ate Saning, (she was baptized Susana), they right away organized their travel to Baguio to join us in bidding good-bye to the beloved Sister Paschala.

Ate Fely was only 8 years old when Sister Paschala left home to enter the convent. But she has vivid memories of her older sister whom she calls Ate Saning. Already as a young girl, her Ate Saning was very responsible and committed to duty. When some young people seemed to bully her younger sisters, Saning would stand in their defense. When typhoons or big storms raged Bulacan, the family would move to their big ancestral home but Sr. Paschala would stay in the house. A valiant young girl, she would tie the windows and cabinets with a rope to save them from the destructive force of the storm.

It is this strong sense of responsibility that Sister Paschala brought to the convent. As I said at the start, whatever task was assigned to her, Sister Paschala did it with a strong sense of duty. As a Guest Mistress in the Priory House, she saw to it that rooms for visitors were lovingly and carefully prepared. What ever task she set her hands on, she did it with great intensity. Perhaps this caused her to suffer from recurring migraine and headaches; perhaps this caused her the aneurysm that led to a stroke and kept her bedridden, speechless and immobilized for two and a half years.

All through this past two and a half years, there were times when Sister Paschala painstakingly would lift her eyelids and shed a tear or so. These were tender moments when somebody would express her love for her or express an apology and ask for forgiveness. It is during these moments that we get a glimpse of Sister Paschala's philosophy in life. We can use the words of the song, " I won't regret, I can't regret all I did for love..."

Last night, we, sisters, sat together in community, sharing memories of our dear Sister Paschala. I would like to sum up what we said of her:

Sister Paschala: A woman with a Passion for Beauty

Sister Paschala, a woman with a Passion for work and mission!

With grateful hearts, we say goodbye to you, Our dear Sister Paschala. Thank you for sharing your life with us.

Manila Priory, September 18, 2007