



Obituary
SR JUSTINA PRIESS, OP
13.2.1939 – 30.6.2021



“Together with others –
for the sake of Jesus and the Kingdom –
to the ends of the earth.”

(Sr Justina, personal motto.)

Martha Maria Priess was born in Wallertheim in the Diocese of Mainz to Jakob and Elisabeth Priess on 13 February 1939 shortly before the outbreak of World War II, the third of six children.

She remembered learning to trust in Providence and in the protection of Mary, Mother of Mercy, as Church and religion played a large part of her growing up years. Her experience in the Catholic Youth Movement had a formative influence on her and was a natural preparation for religious life. She spent two years at a Commercial School in Bingen and worked in an office for two years.

Sr Justina entered Neustadt in August 1957, made profession on 2 May 1959, and left for Oakford in November 1959 on the “Edinburgh Castle”. She completed her matric at Oakford, received a teaching diploma at the Natal Teacher Training College, and a BA degree through the University of South Africa.

She taught at St Catherine's Empangeni, at Genazzano (as principal when the school for Indian children replaced that for Coloured children because of the Group Areas Act), at St Mary's Oakford as principal, and at St Xavier's Oakford, and later in Soweto.

After a sabbatical at the Casa di Studio in Rome, Sr Justina was called upon by the Bishop of Johannesburg to revamp a former school near Soweto into the Kliptown Pastoral Centre for nearby parishes. Co-workers were trained and programmes developed, and work begun on implementing the Bishops' Pastoral Plan “Community Serving Humanity”.

From 1987- 1990 she assisted as a team member of the Casa programme in Rome, studying part-time and obtaining a Diploma in Spirituality from the Angelicum. After that she moved to Burghwallis in England as the Care Manager for St Anne's Rest Home, remaining there until the property was sold in early 1994.

On her return to South Africa Sr Justina re-joined the Diocese of Johannesburg as head of the Department of Evangelisation the mandate of which was to establish pastoral councils on parish, deanery and diocesan levels.

Then for ten years she was involved in teaching English to adult refugees and asylum seekers trying to make their way in a new country, before stepping back to mentor the project from a distance. She helped in the establishment of Bienvenu, a home for refugee mothers and their children.

What she called her final project was the "Right-to-School" in Bertrams, assisting children of poor families to receive at least a basic education in nearby government schools.

She served as Local Prioress of the Gauteng Local Community from 2001-2017. She had a gift for writing and poetry, often with a Dominican or spiritual theme.

In October 2017, when the Villa Maria property was sold, Sr Justina left for Magaliesburg to begin her retirement, cooking for the community and engaging with boys of Boys Town. When her health began to fail Sr Justina moved to Riverside Park in Pietermaritzburg in 2020. She died at Riverside Park on 30 June 2021.

Now at peace, she enjoys the company of the Lord whom she served so generously all her life. May she rest in peace.

Creation – Incarnation – endless Bliss
From Eden's Lake to gifted Godliness.

(Sr Justina 2015/2019)

RIP