

**M**ARÍA FRANCISCA YÁÑEZ GONZÁLEZ DEL VALLE was born in Havana (Cuba) on 20 February 1907 in a very Christian household. She was baptized the following 13 March with the names María Josefa de la Concepción. For her parents and friends she was always Josefina. Due to various reasons, her parents, Vicente and Concepción, moved to the United States of America during two brief periods. Although it caused frequent changes of schools during her childhood, the experience enriched her tranquil and reflective disposition and helped her to understand cultural differences in her later years. On returning to Havana, she attended the College of Our Lady of Lourdes, ran by the Sisters of St. Philip Neri (in Spanish, *Religiosas Filipenses Misioneras de Enseñanza*).

Even as a child, Josefina gained the confidence and admiration of those whom she encountered. Mo. Mercedes Baguer Rodes, one of her past teachers and superior general of the Sisters of St. Philip Neri, described her thus: “She had a beautiful face and was well-mannered, punctual, orderly, and simple. Above all, she was honest and most faithful in fulfilling her duties.” In 1930, Josefina graduated from the university with a teacher’s diploma. Two years later, she became a member of Catholic Action and, through her initiative, began in the College of Our Lady of Lourdes the School of St. Joseph for the education of working women. Mo. Baguer narrates to us: “She had a deep social consciousness. The poor and destitute exerted a particular attraction for her. They are her preferred ones.” This option for the poor was a constant in her life. And in order to realize this more fully, Josefina decided to consecrate herself in the congregation of her religious teachers.

Upon obtaining the permission of her parents, she traveled to Spain in February 1936 to begin her initial formation in the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Philip Neri. A few months later, the violent Spanish Civil War broke out. Josefina was able to flee to Italy with a group of professed sisters in whose exile and difficulties she partook. Not long after, she was able to return to Havana. However, her religious formation suffered a severe though temporary setback when her parents withdrew their permission after the premature death of her brother, her only other sibling. After overcoming this obstacle, Josefina was able to commence with her novitiate at Havana. With the name María Francisca, she professed religious vows two years later on 16 July, the feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. On that same feast in 1944, she made solemn profession.

María Francisca’s life as a religious began as a teacher in her very own alma mater. There, she distinguished herself with the very virtues that adorned her childhood and youth. In the years that followed, she would take on other assignments and responsibilities. Those who came to know her spoke about her simplicity, understanding, and tolerance; her kindness and patience; her spirit of sacrifice and self-denial; her equanimity in the midst of difficulties; her predilection for the poor; and, above everything else, her profound faith and consummate love for others.

In 1952, at the age of forty-five, she was elected superior general of her congregation. During the eight years she held office, the Sisters of St. Philip Neri advanced in various fields of endeavor. In the Americas, eight new foundations came into being, mostly in poor and marginalized areas. Her missionary zeal and love for the Church emboldened her to bring the Good News of the Reign in remote places where neither culture nor the Word of God has arrived. Impelled by these ideals, and with her eyes toward the future, she gave great impulse to the formation of the religious of her congregation, preparing them for works of great social and missionary commitment.

Her fruitful life and work came to an abrupt end in 1960, during her visitation to the Americas in order to boost the opening of new mission houses. She fell ill in Havana, the very city that witnessed her birth, education, religious formation, and outstanding pedagogical and formative work. Two months later, on 28 August, in the presence of her parents and her community, María Francisca Yáñez died, offering her life in union with the blood of Christ for all those who suffer without the consolation of faith and hope for life hereafter.

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## INFORMATION ON THE CAUSE

1. **ACTOR:** Sisters of Saint Philip Neri, Missionaries of Education

2. **ITER:**

- ❖ *publication of the decree “competentia fori”:* 25 May 2001
- ❖ *publication of the decree “nulla osta”:* 27 November 2003
  - *opening of the diocesan process:*
  - *closing of the diocesan process:*
- ❖ *validation of the diocesan inquest:*
- ❖ *publication of the Positio:*
- ❖ *session of Historical Consultors:*
- ❖ *meeting of Theological Consultors:*
- ❖ *ordinary congregation of Cardinals and Bishops:*
- ❖ *promulgation of decree on martyrdom:*
- ❖ *beatification:*
- ❖ *promulgation of decree on a miracle for canonization:*
- ❖ *canonization:*

3. **POSTULATOR:**

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