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“I think that what we suffer in this life can never be compared to the glory, as yet unrevealed, which is waiting for us.” (Rom. 8:18)

Dearest Sisters,

On 26th July 2009, Feast of St. Ann, at 2.30 p.m. at Harneshwar Hospital, Talegaon, **Sr. Anita Coutinho** passed away peacefully and went to her heavenly abode accompanied by St. Ann herself whose name she bore. Those of us who were close to Sr. Anita will well remember that she was fondly called ‘Anna’ by her dear ones.

Anita Coutinho was the youngest child born to Sabino and Daisy Coutinho of Pune on 25th April 1951. She pursued her school education with her 2 elder sisters Odilia and Brenda at Mount Carmel School, Lullangar; while her 2 elder brothers Stanley and Sarto studied with the Jesuits in St. Vincent's High School. Soon after High school Anita dedicated her career to the noble teaching profession while simultaneously pursuing her graduation and B.Ed. Before joining the Congregation, Anita taught at Loyola High School, Pune and also at St. Joseph's Night School which catered to the underprivileged and the dropouts. Her vision was clear – service to the poorest. She felt a gentle and loving voice beckoning her to dedicate her life in His service. She hearkened to this irresistible voice and chose the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Ann to accomplish this dream.

She joined the Postulancy on 26th July, 1981 at Raichur on the Feast of St. Ann, our Patroness. She entered the Novitiate on 1st May, 1982 at Talegaon and made her first vows on 7th May, 1984 at Talegaon. After the completion of her Juniorate course in Bandra in 1985, she was sent to Raichur as a Teacher. In June 1986 she was transferred to Tivim as a teacher concurrently studying for M.A. at Goa University. In 1988 she worked as teacher in Jamnagar. In June, 1989 she went for her Tertianship to Bharuch. On 7th May 1990 she said her final ‘YES’ to God. She continued to teach at Holy angels' Convent, Bharuch till May 1995 from where she was transferred to Jamnagar as a Principal. She was appointed as a Provincial Councillor and Vicar of the Province in June 2000. She exercised her responsibility from the place where she worked. She was appointed as the Provincial Superior in June, 2003. In 2005, due to her ill health she tendered her resignation from the responsibility as Provincial Superior and was sent to Mithapur for treatment and rest. For better nursing care she was transferred to Talegaon Apostolic Community in June 2005.

Sr. Anita was magnanimous to the core, bubbling with life; in fact she loved life and brought life wherever she went by her radiant heart warming smile. Little wonder then that her favourite quotation was Jn. 10:10. **“I came that you may have life and have it in abundance”**. “Love injected carefully is change effected gradually” This was the secret of Sr. Anita's life. She had the art of listening – the children, the young, the old all found refuge in the “Principal's office”

and came out – with spirits revived, their smile returning, eyes sparkling again, their whole being rejuvenated. Her availability to the people was round the clock even at the risk of her own health.

She had a great flair for writing and was eloquent in speech. People stood in awe when she addressed them; ex-students still nostalgically speak of how they longed to see their dear principal, Sr. Anita on the stage whose words not just enthused them but also empowered them. She was a born leader, excellent teacher and a good administrator!

Resolute in her mission, open to the Spirit, she worked for God's Kingdom with preferential love for the poor. Wherever she was transferred she had some project for the poor. Her compassionate solidarity with the poorest and the powerless has left an indelible mark on the hearts of all.

She had excellent relationships with the public in fact she knew how to be all to all. She knew each one by name! And oh what a feeling of belongingness that created. She empathized with the people and reached out to the maximum within a minimum span of life. It's not surprising then that at her funeral, in spite of heavy rains, people (including ex-students from far away) flocked to pay their last homage and bid farewell to the one they loved so dearly.

Sr. Anita was a life giving person, a bridge builder in the community. Sisters loved her company and admired her simplicity of life. She was humble and had the sense of fulfillment in life. In her short tenure as the Provincial Superior, sisters had absolutely no problems in approaching her. She went about with her friendly smile, infinitely patient and totally available to her sisters. She has been an asset to our Province and our Congregation. We treasure her memories!

A woman of prayer and spiritually strong she walked in the footsteps of our founders and had a special love for Blessed Mother Enrichetta whom she imitated in her daily life. She instilled love for prayer in her students and even conducted Charismatic prayers for them.

This beautiful young life was cut short, struck sharply...from the height of activity to gradual inactivity. The Lord tested Sr. Anita in the crucible of suffering like gold that is tested in fire. It was her faith in Jesus coupled with her love for Him that enabled her to embrace her cross – her long, painful agonizing sickness. Sr. Anita suffered from Parkinson with septicemia, a disease which day by day rendered her helpless and made her fully dependent on others. She was grateful to every person who visited her and acknowledged every act of benevolence with her angelic smile which will never be erased from our memories.

Sr. Anita was admitted in the hospital on 21st July at about 8.00p.m. in the ICU as she was suffering from high fever and breathlessness. Her condition deteriorated day by day and on 26th July, in the presence of all her dear ones, some members of the two communities of Talegaon, Sr. Rosily Paul and myself, she yielded her spirit to the Lord.

The Funeral Mass was officiated by Fr. George D'Souza, the vicar General of the Pune Diocese, and concelebrated by 12 priests. In his Homily, Fr. Kenneth Misquita, a close friend of the Coutinho family brought out beautifully the virtuous life of Sr. Anita. Quoting John Milton's poem on His Blindness Fr. Kenneth said: Anita your talents have not really lain useless for "They also serve who only stand". He emphasized the meaning and value of suffering: You have worn your radiant smile right through your illness up to the last day. That smile will keep many

of your Sisters and many of us encouraged through our own times of trials and struggles as we continue our pilgrimage in this life...”

I take this opportunity to thank Sr. Ida and every Sister of the two communities of Talegaon for taking great care of Sr. Anita during her long illness. A special thanks to our sister nurses: Sr. Maggie, Sr. Ida, Sr. Alyosia, Sr. Hedwig and Sr. Mary Sebastian for their untiring and loving service. May God reward you abundantly. I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to Sr. Anita's family members for having given to our Congregation this great and beautiful gift in the person of Sr. Anita. I am indebted to Fr. Lawrence and Fr. Joy for their tireless service and self sacrifice especially on the day of the funeral.

Sr. Anita has been a blessing to us. In her, we have an angel interceding for all of us. May she from the heavenly court continue to shower blessings upon blessings on all of us.

United in Love and Prayers,
Yours affectionately,

(Sr. Eulazia Fernandes)
Provincial Superior

Here are some excerpts taken from the condolence messages and eulogies at prayer services held in homage of our dear departed Sr. Anita Coutinho.

My mother expired last year and she was of 58 and today my second loving mother expired at the age of 58!!! What a coincidence of God!!!!!!!

Ex-Student of Sr. Anita

Most school going children idolize someone. If you ask them for a role model they'll have a prompt answer. Some idolize beauty, some brains, some persons, some kindness.... But if you happen to meet any girl of St Ann's Jamnagar who has been in school in the period from 1999 to 2003 the uncontested answer to that question would be Sister Anita. When I heard that she has left this world, I felt a deep void within, as if something inside me just vanished. But then the fact that she was no more did not sink in. How much ever I tried, I couldn't cry. And slowly over these days I realized that the reason I couldn't feel her absence was that she was still there... deep within... and she will always be there. Because like a thread woven into a cloth, her teachings, her thoughts, her ideas have become such an integral part of myself that the life I am living today is driven majorly by what I have imbibed from her. It may sound fanciful, it may even sound unreal but I know it to be the truth. There hasn't been a person in my life, not even a family member who has had a greater hand in moulding my life.

Ambasana – Ex – Student, Jamnagar

I have to start by mentioning that I have a lot to be grateful to Sr Anita for, in shaping my life, in making me what I am today. She was a good teacher and an even better listener and hence a very good friend. I had shared things with her which I have never shared with the best of my friends, knowing she would guide me best and also knowing that what I tell her will stay with her only,

and once I had spoken to her, my heart felt so much at ease, so much lighter. This in one reason I had always kept in touch with her, especially after I left India and took my wife and son to see her in Jamnagar and also came to see her in Talegaon, while speaking to her on telephone on several occasions.

Taufik Ex-Student, Bharuch

What I vividly remember of Sr. Anita is that radiant smile with which she greeted us at the assembly, the pious aura of Sr. Anita made us all unite with God. Her soft voice was an endearing habit and now a cherished one. She brought out the best in her students and her teachers. Her love made us all feel like one family. She made us to feel at home away from home. I am proud and thankful to the Almighty for giving an opportunity to get acquainted with her.

The last years of her life were difficult for her and she passed away in pain. How ironical, ... the messenger of peace, joy and love had met such a painful end and so soon.

Deepti Venogopal, Ex-Student, Jamnagar.

Allow me to share some special memory that I hold so dear about Sr. Anita. In my earliest memories of school like most children I too was afraid of leaving home and going to school. But it was her presence that gave me comfort and warmth. As time went by school became my second home.

She was a devoted Principal, a strong pillar of support to many students and parents who approached her with their academic as well as personal problems. She touched many peoples' lives so positively. She leaves an amazing legacy behind. Sr. Anita left the world a better place than when we had found it and for that we will be always grateful to her. Sr. Anita we will miss you but we will remember you fondly always.

Shah Tanvi.

Following was the floral tribute sent by **Taufik** (Ex-Student, Bharuch):

**“May your soul rest in peace.
We were always in your prayers.
You will always be in our hearts.”**