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“Having been disciplined a little, they will receive a great good, because God tested them and found them worthy of Himself; like gold in the furnace he tried them, and like a sacrificial burnt offering he accepted them” Wis. 3:5-6

Dearest Sisters,

The period of intense, anxious waiting is now over; we had relentlessly stormed Heavens, hoping against hope. But God proved himself, the Lord and Giver of Life. To His will we all bowed down, as on the 26th of March, 2012 the feast of Annunciation, our dear Sr. Anita Leena Lobo, having been tested in the crucible of suffering for 10 long years, said her **Final Yes** to the gentle, loving and irresistible voice beckoning her to enter into His Kingdom.

Sr. Anita Leena Lobo daughter of Mr. Louis Lobo and Mrs. Justine Lobo was born on 11th April 1974 at Agrar, Mangalore. She is the 6th Child in a closely-knit family of 8 children. She entered the Postulancy on 14th May 1992 at Jamnagar. On 8th March 1993 she commenced her Novitiate at Talegaon. I had the good fortune of having Sr. Anita as my novice. It was a joy to see her bubbling with life – creative prayer services, merry dancing, hearty singing, hard working and active participation in all the activities. She was thoughtful and sensitive to the needs of others especially to the weaker ones. She took seriously the talks on ‘Awareness’ by Tony D’Mello and tried to make it her pattern of living. An interiorly liberated person who dared to do the unconventional! Honest to the core, she had the courage to say what she felt; Frank and straightforward. She was jovial, spontaneous and fearless.

She made her First Profession on 21st February 1995 at Talegaon. In June 1995 she was transferred to Bharuch for her Juniorate. She happily carried out her duties in our Ashram at Ramnagar for two years. She was then transferred to Gharghoda and in the next year to Rudrapur as a teacher. She made her Perpetual Profession on 21st February 2001 at Talegaon. In June 2001 she was transferred to Ajgaon as a teacher but unfortunately in February 2002 she fell ill and was sent to Bandra for treatment. It was diagnosed that she was suffering from infiltrating ductal Carcinoma of the left breast (third stage) and was operated. The entire Province together with her dear ones pleaded on bended knees and God in His goodness deigned to restore her back to health. In November 2002 she was transferred to Jamnagar as in-charge of the aspirants. She helped in the school office and was in charge of the Youth group, too. Once again in 2006 she took seriously ill and was rushed back to Bandra for treatment and thereafter she remained in this Community. An extract from her letter written to me in 2007 is very revealing: ***“I am keeping quite well, some more years to live. The year 2006 began with one strike after the other, to make me bend down. It’s all to purify me. I do not know what is ahead of me in 2007. As it comes! Sometimes I feel so helpless: I know how to do things but I can’t. All will not understand and I don’t want to tell. I get irritated sometimes; sit and cry alone sometimes, I have become more emotional; I try to hide it from others. Oh, that’s part of life....”***

Sr. Anita’s struggle to come to terms with the dreadful sickness and its consequences are clearly noted. She overcame such moments with the gift of faith which she inherited from her parents. She converted her loneliness into solitude through conscious and wise choices. The love of Christ was the dominant force in her life. She believed in the Wisdom of God and knew she could glorify him through her

suffering. Most of us will remember that Sr. Anita was operated for Cerebral Metastasis in January 2006 and little later, again hospitalized as a branch of a tree fell on her head. Was she having a premonition when she wrote this letter? In July 2007 she was operated for recurrent Carcinoma of the right breast. And as though the above noted operations were not enough she was once again operated for benign ovarian Cyst in 2009 and in October 2010 for a major operation namely, ovarian cystectomy, hysterectomy and omentectomy (benign). By now the Holy family Hospital had become her second home. Suffering was her teacher who moulded and shaped her enabling her to live life more intensely, deliberately and joyfully. She lived by choice rather than by chance. That is why her brief life is so beautiful!

She was loveable and the prayers and love of those who were close to her strengthened her in walking her 'Via Crucis'. In prayer she built up unyielding Hope that changed the course of her life: transforming difficulties into opportunities and suffering into rejoicing. Her flame of enthusiasm never died out. In an age where young people have a tendency to run away from trials of all kinds, Sr. Anita leaves a legacy: **'Suffering is a part of life. Face it with a smile. Life is worth living!'** Her words of encouragement have made an impact on many young Sisters whom she would guide and gently challenge to persevere in Religious life.

An affable sort of person who gets on well with people, she had a flair for conversation. Communicating and interacting were her special gifts. Blessed with an affectionate nature she radiated warmth and goodness, making people feel at home. Optimistic thinking was her forte, helping others was her plus point. She walked the path of our Founder Carlo Tancredi, doing Good - as much as possible and to as many people as possible. With limited energies she knew she could not do great acts but concentrated on small acts done with great love. She was committed and dedicated to any work entrusted to her. Once her goal was set, she could go endlessly till she achieved it, no matter what the cost.

During the last five years of her life, Sr. Anita worked at the Centre for Community Organization at St. Andrews Parish, Bandra and was a very active member of the parish; a great and dynamic PRO. She was a source of inspiration to many cancer patients. She visited and helped them to accept their sufferings. The elderly people of the parish merited her special attention. For fighting out the deadly sickness (cancer) courageously and pleasantly the parishioners of Bandra lovingly called her the **'Living miracle'**.

Mid February 2012 found Sr. Anita suffering from Lymphangitis and later the MRI revealed Metastasis brain (medulla). On the 9th of March she was admitted in Holy Family Hospital. Doctors expressed their inability to do anything more to save her. As her condition deteriorated she was shifted to the ICU on 15th of March where she slowly slipped into a semiconscious state. In the morning, on 26th of March she was admitted in Shanti Avedana, Bandra, a place where the terminally ill cancer patients are admitted. Sr. Anita's family members remained close to her persistently imploring God for a miracle. Sisters from far and wide and the parishioners visited her in great numbers during her illness. We journeyed with Sr. Anita almost all through the Lenten season as she participated in the sufferings of Christ. On 26th March, at 7.15 p.m. surrounded by her family members (mother, brother, sister and brother-in-law) praying, she opened her eyes, looked around and passed away peacefully.

Her mortal remains were kept in the morgue and brought to our Convent at Bandra on 28th March at 1.30 p.m. At 4.20 p.m. after the blessing, the Sisters bade farewell to dear Sr. Anita. Her mortal remains were kept in the Church for the final tributes and the Eucharistic celebration. The church was packed to capacity - parishioners, well-wishers, Sisters from different Congregations, our Sisters from other Communities and some of her companions from the other two Provinces.

14 priests concelebrated the Holy Eucharist, the main celebrant being Sr. Anita's own cousin Fr. Vincent D'Souza who came from Delhi, 2 CMI priests from the diocese of Rajkot and others from different parts of Mumbai who knew Sr. Anita and had worked with her. In his homily, Fr. Vincent said: "Sr. Anita Lobo lived a life of love. She was blessed because she had the opportunity to unite her sufferings with the sufferings of Christ during the season of Lent. Sr. Anita has run the race, fought the good fight and now

she is waiting for the crown of glory". Her mortal remains were laid to rest at St. Andrew's cemetery, Bandra amid touching scenes of weeping friends, family members and Sisters.

I thank Sr. Ida, the Provincial Councillor for being with our Sisters at Bandra in their hour of need and being a great support to Sr. Hedwig, Superior of the Community of Bandra, at the crucial moments of the sickness of Sr. Anita as well as for her presence during the funeral service. My heart-felt gratitude to Sr. Hedwig who stood by Sr. Anita in all her trials and with care and diligence served her till the end. A Big Thanks to the Community of Bandra for their loving and dedicated service to Sr. Anita. I thank the entire Province for the prayers offered for Sr. Anita and the concern expressed in various ways. A special word of thanks to the family members of Sr. Anita for having gifted our Congregation with such a precious gift who has made a difference in the lives of many. We remain indebted to the Parish priest and all the priests at St. Andrew's Church, Bandra for having given Sr. Anita the privilege of helping in the parish and for the care and love bestowed on her. The parishioners have shown in their own little ways their love and appreciation for Sr. Anita and our Sisters at Bandra. Thanks. Finally, I thank our dear Mother Ernestine and Sr. Marcia, the Vicar General for following up regularly the precarious condition of Sr. Anita with keen interest and for their prayerful support.

Loved by all Sr. Anita will ever be a joy to recall. We are certain that as she enters the heavenly Kingdom our Father declares: "Here is my servant whom I uphold. My chosen one in whom my soul delights." Is.42:1 Dearest Sisters let us be generous in offering our prayers and suffrages for Sr. Anita who continuously intercedes for us all.

Yours affectionately,
Sr. Eulazia Fernandes

Provincial Superior

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Here are some brief notes of appreciation that express the impact that Sr. Anita has made on the lives of people she has touched.

AN ELEGY ON THE DEATH OF SR. ANITA:

"God loves a cheerful giver..." and cheerfully did Sr. Anita keep giving and giving...till she gave her all: her very life! The best thing a person can give to another is his/her time, for, when you give him/her your time, you are giving a part of your life, which you can never get back. I came to know Sr. Anita when she was in Ajgaon parish for a little more than a year. She was an icon of Joy; there was always a smile on her face that made the other person feel at home with her. Even the sufferings could not rob her smile. With always a smile on her young face she kept welcoming people and sharing her time - her life - with them. She did not despair; she didn't close in on herself. She went round cheerfully giving her helping hand for those in need: She didn't know how little or how much - and I wonder she even cared - HER LIFE! Sr. Anita was much loved and appreciated by the people of Ajgaon. They still remember the Cheerful Giver. After the many operations she underwent, after her cup of earthly life was emptied out, she passed away. May she rest in the arms of Him who has said, "Be of good cheer, I have conquered the world." **Bishop Alwyn Barreto, Bishop of Sindhudurg Diocese**

Saint Anita Lobo

Don't be amused at the strange title... but that's how best I can describe someone who was so dear to me. There never was a dull moment when Anita was around. Her presence brought life and laughter in any situation. Her vibrancy, enthusiasm and energy were remarkable. If one can smile through suffering it

means one has already embraced the suffering Christ on the Cross. And Anita bore her pain and suffering with grace.

Not only have I lost a friend but a spiritual guide, a counsellor, an inspiration! There's one more angel in Heaven. God simply takes the best... and Anita was no exception. Sr.Anita, you will have a special place in my heart. Until we meet again ... Goodbye!! **Fr. Savio D'Sales**

PLUCKED AT HER PRIME, SHE BLOOMED AT HER BEST:

"...Those of you who have shared lifestyle with this "people-friendly" person in her different postings, worked with her, or even just watched the remarkable way she cheerfully lived even the last twelve years of her life – defying the odds that often torture a cancer-stricken person, Sister Anita Lobo stands out as a role model to all who seek to live life to the full, despite time's limits and excruciating pains.

In the course of my two decades of retreats and renewal courses countrywide and in parts of South and S-E Asia, I have met several talented and devout nuns – content with their calling, committed to their mission. Even so, Sr. Anita is a rare find, strikingly different in being wholesomely lovable. No small wonder therefore, why the youth group she animated in Jamnagar, was adjudged the Diocese's best. Of that, I myself happily stand witness...." **Br. Mark Barco**, Retreat House, Bandra

"Sr.Anita was a friend and confidant. She was always supportive and untiringly helpful in assisting me with any task I undertook at the CCO (Centre for Community Organization) and the evergreen Senior Citizens projects. She was a 'SISTER' more than just Sr. Anita to me." **Mohan Roche**

"Sr.Anita was a model and source of inspiration to me in my illness, especially her encouraging prayers when she brought communion to me when I was ill. Her good humour kept up my spirit." **Lancy - neighbour**

"Sr.Anita was a very dear & faithful friend to me to the extent of accompanying me to hospital, at 8 pm, when I was seriously ill, in spite of her own ailments. Her courage & trust in the Lord was unshakable as also her zeal to work for Him. She brought joy to me every time she brought Jesus (Communion) to me when I was ill." **Gaye- neighbour**

"Sr.Anita was a very close friend of mine as we had a lot to do in the CCO and the Senior Citizen group. She had very good rapport with my daughter in Singapore and my son in U.K. they felt very sad at her demise. Thank you Sr. Anita for being so helpful to me." **Mervyn**

"I have known Sr.Anita for the past 6 to 7 years, and I must say she has been a real source of inspiration to me and my family. Sr. Anita was extremely active in Parish activities, Community affairs and functions. She meticulously compiled liturgical prayers. She sang beautifully, with a lovely voice still echoing in my ears. She was very active in our CCO, at St. Andrews. Her smiling face and witty answers will always remain in our hearts. 26th March 2012, gave all of us a terrible blow, knowing she was suffering with terrible pain for the past few weeks, yet this did not give us courage to accept the loss of our dear Sr.Anita. The Lord has taken her to his Heavenly Kingdom, given her new life forever. Dear God, may her soul rest in peace." **Gail**

"Sr.Anita was a caring, cheerful, compassionate, loving, kind and generous person. Her greatness lay in her immense love and trust in God. She was like a younger sister to me. She was the type of person who put her heart and soul in whatever she undertook to do. She willingly gave help to all those who approached her, consoled those who lost a loved one, welcomed a new born and the list can go on.... She lived in her short span of 37 years as Jesus said "whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine you did it for me." I know that she is now with her Lord and Master, free from pain and suffering and looking after us. I will always miss her smiling and cheerful face." **Alice D'souza**