

*St. Ann's Provincialate*  
Simon Lane, Angelore  
Mangalore – 575 002



**10<sup>th</sup> November, 2018**

Dearest Sisters,

*“I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.  
From now on there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness,  
which the Lord, the righteous judge will give me on that day,  
and not only to me but also to all who have longed for his appearing.” (2 Tim 4:7).*

This is fulfilled in the life of our dearest Sr. Benjamin Joseph as she breathed her last on 1<sup>st</sup> November at 11.45 a.m., 2018. Death is not extinguishing the light. It is putting out the lamp because the dawn has come.

Sr. Mary Benjamin Joseph, was born on 14<sup>th</sup> February 1934 at Kootikal, Kottayam Kerala in the diocese of Pala to her pious parents Mr. Joseph and Mrs. Mary, as the second child of ten children. True to her name Sr. Benjamin was indeed Benjamin of her family. She grew up as the apple of their eye, a brilliant and robust child with academic excellence. Her pious parents gave her an excellent faith formation and nurtured her religious vocation and offered her whole heartedly to the service of the Lord and thus she entered the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Ann at Secunderabad. She made her vestition on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1956. Made her religious profession on 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1958.

In January 1958 she was transferred to Mithapur. The superiors who observed in her a deep faith, commitment and joy of dedicating her life totally to the Lord, had a great plan for her. She was sent to USA for her higher studies in September, 1959. She came out brilliantly with an outstanding performance. She pronounced her perpetual vows on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1964 in America.

She took her Master's degree in the Columbia University and there she was appointed as the professor of the school of Business Studies and for a special project in the slum of New York City. Thereafter she pursued her doctorate in the university of Boston College, a prominent Catholic University, where she compared American Economy with that of Indian Economy collecting first hand information from Ratan Tata whom she contacted at the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Mumbai. She was the first scholar to compare the American economy with that of Indian economy to get an outstanding PhD in the University of Boston College. In Boston college, Mother Clemenza entrusted Sr. Benjamin in the hands of Cardinal Chusing who sponsored the entire education including her boarding and lodging.

She was called back to India in 1969 to be the professor of B.Ed. College, Secunderabad and thereafter in 1971 she was transferred to St Teresa's college, Eluru as lecturer.

The condition of the poor haunted her day and night and thus made a request to the then Provincial for a transfer to the poorest of the Community of the Province and thus landed in St. Mary's convent Duldula in June 1975. There she began her service totally for the cause of the poor and the downtrodden. She learnt A,B,C of Hindi and was appointed as the Principal of St. Mary's Higher Secondary School in 1976. She dedicated her time to educate and bring up the tribal children. As a result 35% of pass grade was changed with 100% within a year. She also assisted the Diocese of Raigarh and Ambikapur in all the missionary endeavors. Here, she joined as the associate member of the diocesan team of tribal development under the diocesan director of Raigarh and Ambikapur Rev.Fr. Charles Van Besouw S.J. She worked side by side with the same team under the title “RAHA” (Raigarh Ambikapur Health Association) and “ICDS” (Integrated Child Development Scheme) and lent Sr. Felix and Sr. Annie for the implementation of the scheme and in every Parish the unit of RAHA and ICDS project was implemented under the able leadership of Sr. Benjamin.

In 1978 she was called back to St Theresa's college, Eluru to head the post graduate department of Economics. There, she was elected as the senate member of the Waltair University at Vizag. She would get a first class travelling allowance which she would exchange into a general class and convert the money to construct the houses for the homeless and educate the children of the slum.

In 1979 she was appointed as the first Provincial Superior of the newly formed North-West Province of India with Headquarters in Bandra, Mumbai where she had to start everything from the scratch. In June 1985 she was re-elected as Provincial Superior for a second term. She had the opportunity to attend many General Chapters and Provincial Chapters. During these great events, her contribution was remarkable.

In March 1992 she left for U.S.A to render her missionary service and returned to India in March 1996. In the same year she was appointed as Superior of Community of Roorkee.

In 1997 when the Province was re-organized she became the Provincial Superior of Northern India. In her capacity as Provincial Superior she opened many communities. To name some of them: Agrar (1973), Derebail (1980), Talegaon Novitiate (1981), Mohanlalgunj (1981), Sabarmati (1983), Bharuch (1987), Aijaon(1990), Tamnar (1991), Talegoan Convent (1992), Vikaspuri (1997), Rajanikhand (1998), Kokrajhar (2001), Arambhada (2002), Varanasi (2003).

Having completed her term of office as Provincial in the year 2003 she was transferred to Ramnagar at her request to spend the time with the Lord and for physical and mental relaxation. In 2004 she was appointed as the Animator of the Community at Sabarmati. In the year 2007 she received her transfer order joyfully to the community of Kokrajhar, Assam and in 2009 she was asked to take charge of Kindergarten at Rudrapur. In 2015 she was transferred to Rampur.

She was a woman of deep faith in God, spent time in prayer and discerned the will of God in all trying situations and the good God guided her and gave her courage and strength to face the challenges victoriously. She was an authentic and noble person. By her hard work, commitment, and discipline, she nurtured, built, and developed the North Province adding many new communities, new apostolic ventures and ministries especially in rural areas. The tall standing Mount St. Ann is one such the fruit of her hard labour. She had the capacity to listen patiently to the sisters, guide and animate them. She was a woman with the heart for everyone. Old and young alike have experienced her genuine love. She was a leader with a vision and mission which led her to prepare many young ones to take up the leadership role. Though her look appeared to be stern she possessed a motherly tender heart.

She was a woman of communication and prompt action. When the means of communication were not yet developed she kept in touch with each sister through her own hand written letters and reached out to the place personally without counting the cost. She found her joy in serving the poorest of the poor, which she continued till the last. She found spiritual satisfaction and joy in frontier ministries. She lived an exemplary life. She was a warm and welcoming person. She was very brilliant and genius that she had answers for all our queries. She could associate with persons of all levels. She was a woman who walked the talk. No one could dare to disobey her in any matter. She was a teacher by profession and has touched the hearts of many young. Her words of wisdom and counseling encouraged the disappointed ones. Her contribution to our religious family is truly commendable and to be remembered forever.

"Men of Law lay down constitutions, but history is really made by great minds, large hearts and stout arms" – Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. These words would fit in very well in the context of the life of Sr. Benjamin who herself was a great admirer of Nehru. She led our Congregation in the footsteps of our Founders Carlo and Giulia. Sr. Benjamin was a deeply spiritual person. Her faith in Jesus Christ was genuine and one which was nurtured by imbibing the real meaning of His teaching. Her Christian faith was an all encompassing one with humanity and humanness at its core. Her belief in the tender and loving protection of Mother Mary was what strengthened her as a religious. A humanist to the core, Sr. Benjamin Joseph left her foot prints on the sands of time. A great intellectual, an outstanding teacher, a dedicated sister of St. Ann and a most compassionate human being is how one would encompass the wonderful personality of our beloved Sr. Benjamin, the true follower of Christ.

She suffered from Diabetic Mellitus and Hyper Tension for the last 30 years. She had fractured her hip bone in the year 2015 and was transferred to Mount St. Ann, Talegaon on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2017. She was admitted in Harneshwar hospital- Talegaon for unstable Angina. An expert's opinion was taken from Dr. Durai Raj the cardiologist who diagnosed her to be suffering from Arteriosclerosis (AS) and Diastolic-dysfunction. Due to increasing orthopedic problems and needing better medical care, she was admitted in Holy Family hospital Bandra- Mumbai on 8<sup>th</sup> October 2017. CT scan of the brain showed a lacunar infarction and pre-senile dementia. Left Ventricular Hypertrophy was seen in her ECG and Echo. She was on medication for the above diseases.

On 23<sup>rd</sup> Oct 2018 she was admitted to Harneshwar hospital. Her health gradually deteriorated after hospitalization. She received tender loving care from her brothers Augustine, Sebastine, Joy and other nephews and nieces specially Sr. Ashly and Mr. Jojo who were a great blessing for her. The constant accompaniment of sister nurses and other sisters of the communities was a source of relief for her during the moments of her sickness.

I visited her on 28<sup>th</sup> October and found mentally quite alert and active. She was well aware of all the happenings of the New Province. She expressed her deep concern to start the construction of Provincialate building and enquired about the well being of the sisters of the Province.

On 31<sup>st</sup> night she was put on ventilator. Due to her acute renal failure and left ventricular failure, she breathed her last on the Feast of All Saints on 1<sup>st</sup> November at 11.45 am. On November 2<sup>nd</sup>, All Souls Day, the Funeral Rites were celebrated at 4.00 pm in Mount Carmel Church, Talegaon. The sisters from all the Provinces of India, the Former Provincials, Sr. Rosily Paul, Provincial Superior of North Province, Sr. Benjamin's brothers Augustine and Joe, sister Pennamma, Nephews Jojo, Saju Joby, Jimson, Niece Sr. Ashly Jose, Niece-in-law Leena, grand niece Avelin, the parishioners, well-wishers, benefactors and friends were present. Most Rev. Thomas Dabre, Bishop of Pune Diocese was the main celebrant. Rev. Fr. Joe Abraham, Rev. Fr. Stany, Rev. Fr. Peter Rebello, Assistant Parish Priest concelebrated the Holy Eucharist. Bishop Thomas Dabre spoke about the saintly life of Sr. Benjamin. He was highly appreciative of Sr. Benjamin as he had acquaintance with her for the past many years and expressed that the congregation should be grateful to God for such a rare gift of Sr. Benjamin for she lived the Gospel to the letter and spirit. After the Mass, her body was accompanied and laid in the tomb where she now rests, next to our sisters at Talegaon. Hearty condolences to all the relatives of Sr. Benjamin who accompanied her during her last days.

*Dear sister Benjamin you have given your best to your Master and to the Institute and to each sister and formee without counting the cost till the last moment. May you be richly rewarded by God. Holding on to the anchor you dared to launch into the deep. Pray for us that we may walk in the footsteps of our Founders. Thank you Sr. Benjamin for you are indeed a loyal and a true daughter of St. Ann. Thank you for giving good example for the generations to come. Thank you and goodbye.*

Dearest Sisters, as we thank God for the gift of Sr. Benjamin, we believe that she has lived her life to the full and contributed to the building of the body of Christ. I am pleased to thank Sr. Magline Gomes and all the sisters of Talegaon community, neighbouring communities and the formees for the tender care and affectionate services rendered to Sr. Benjamin during her physical sufferings. I also thank all the sisters for your prayerful support for her. Let us offer our prayers and suffrages and live the values which Sr. Benjamin left behind for us to imitate.

With much love and affection,



Sr. Charlotte Sequeira