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Date: 15 /06/2014

*Then I heard a voice from heaven say, "Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on."
"Yes," says the Spirit, "they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them." Rev. 14:13*

Dearest Sisters,

Sr. Cyrilla Ekka having been well prepared and tested by life especially through suffering and sickness, said her Final Yes to God, surrendering her last breath to Him amidst the praying of the rosary along with Sr. Hedwig, her Superior and Sr. Rosaria at 16.00 on 19th May, 2014 at Holy Family Hospital, Bandra. A beautiful death indeed! She died of Carcinoma breast with metastasis causing portal hypertension and ascitis.

Cyrilla Ekka was the daughter of Mr. Paulus and Mrs. Sabina Ekka, born on 1/3/1961 at Parkartoli, Duldula, Raigarh district, the then state of Madhya Pradesh. She was the youngest of the 7 children in the family (4 sisters and three brothers). Two of her brothers died when they were very small. Her family, a truly religious one, nurtured the seed of faith in her and enabled her to walk according to the Gospel values. She bloomed and blossomed in the Parish and our own St. Mary's Higher Secondary School at Duldula, excelling in curricular and co-curricular (especially sports) activities with her talents, character and qualities of leadership right up to school prefect. After completing her graduation at JMJ, Raigarh and teaching in the alma mater, she joined our Congregation as a Postulant on 12/8/1986 at Raichur. She commenced her Novitiate on 7/5/1987 at Talegaon and made her First Profession on 21/2/1989. Thereafter she was transferred to Bharuch to do her Juniorate. In June 1992 she was sent to Roorkee where she completed her B.Ed. She made her Perpetual Profession on 2/2/1995 at Talegaon.

After her Juniorate she was actively engaged in the apostolate of teaching as a teacher and head mistress in various Communities: Mohanlalganj, Tivim, Sabarmati, Ghargoda, Khera Khurd, Arambhada, Isanagar, and Milak-khanam. As one will observe, almost all of these Communities are located in villages. For her the place did not matter. She saw her transfers in the light of faith and moved there without any question. In fact she loved to work in the villages. The poor and the weak were always close to her heart. She had the knack of collaborating in the Diocesan Schools and with other Congregations. She believed in giving her best wherever she was placed. As a teacher she had the zeal to teach the students not just book-work but something solid and useful for life. She was well planned and systematic in her work.

She had a magnanimous heart – one that overflowed with gratitude for small or big favours received. It was a pleasure to ask Sr. Cyrilla for a favour, because we could be sure to get it done perfectly. And the smile would be there to crown it all. The young Sisters of the Community found a true friend in her, who restored their confidence through comforting words and exemplary life.

Nobody ever thought that the healthy, energetic looking Sr. Cyrilla was carrying in her body, life threatening cancerous cells. In November, 2010 she was diagnosed with invasive ductal carcinoma and was treated with three cycles of chemotherapy at Holy Family Hospital, Delhi. In January, 2011 she was taken to Holy Family Hospital, Bandra for further treatment and surgery.

The Community of Bandra has the following to say about Sr. Cyrilla: "In February, 2012 an enlarged gland was found on her neck which tested positive on biopsy. From then onwards she was treated continuously with chemotherapy and immunotherapy of different kinds and other medications. The PET

scan of February, 2013 showed signs of progressive disease to other parts of the body i.e. bones, lungs and liver in a small scale. In spite of all this Sr. Cyrilla had a strong desire to celebrate her Silver jubilee with her companions. God fulfilled her desire. She attended the entire preparatory course in Bangalore and celebrated her Silver Jubilee on 12th November, 2013 in Bolarum. The subsequent PET scans showed that the disease was spreading fast with less chances of a cure.

Amidst all these illnesses and treatment Sr. Cyrilla continued a normal life doing whatever she could, taking lot of interest in the affairs of the house. The student Sisters benefited from her presence to prepare lesson plans and teaching aids till the end. She generously and selflessly used her talents and resourcefulness in all kinds of arts: tailoring, drawing, painting, calligraphy and décor of walls. Her fingers were adept at all kinds of flower making even out of waste materials. She was simple, sensitive and pleasant with an ability to relate easily. Her availability and patience in listening to and comforting others made her a 'missionary with a smile' gaining others to Christ. God blessed her with inner strength to take life positively and to endure her sickness/trials peacefully with a radiant smile."

I would describe her as a happy and contented religious who loved to reach out to others in loving service even at the cost of sacrifice. She was not deterred by the overwhelming symptoms of cancer. Her faith led her to believe that she was in good hands, so she had nothing to fear. She derived strength to face all that came her way from her personal prayer and moments of deep reflection on suffering which became a part of her life. From day one, she graciously and serenely accepted her cancer and was convinced that if God wanted her to continue the mission entrusted to her, He would cure her or else she was ready to embrace God's plan for her.

Sr. Cyrilla was due for her home holidays in the month of May and eagerly awaited the moment to be with her dear ones. Unfortunately, on 26th April, 2014 at about 4.15 p.m. she had haematemesis (vomiting blood) and was admitted in the I.C.U., Holy Family Hospital, Bandra. Sr. Hedwig, intuitive as she always is, made arrangements for her dear ones to stay with her and they spent a week with her.

On 19th May by 11.30 a.m. Sr. Cyrilla started becoming very restless. At about 14.00 the Sacrament of anointing was administered to her. She repeated all the prayers that were being prayed, though not very clear. Amidst the recital of Rosary at 16.00, she breathed her last.

Her mortal remains were brought to the Convent to bid her farewell and were then placed in the morgue awaiting the arrival of her people. Her brother-in-law, nephew and nephew-in-law arrived on 21st morning. The requiem mass was held on 21st May at St. Andrew's Church, Bandra at 9.00 a.m. Five priests concelebrated the Holy Eucharist. The main celebrant was Fr. Michael, the Parish Priest. In his homily Fr. Michael said that "those who are faithful to God in suffering will live with Him happily hereafter, because the souls of the virtuous are in the hands of God." He highlighted the fact that Sr. Cyrilla endured everything patiently, without complaining. Her mortal remains were laid to rest at St. Andrew's cemetery, Bandra. Our Sisters from Talegaon, Mithapur, Sabarmati, Mehmedabad and Bharuch were present for the funeral.

Words are not sufficient to thank Sr. Hedwig, the Superior of the Community of Bandra for her selfless and committed nursing care given to Sr. Cyrilla all through her long suffering. The Community of Bandra has done its best to offer solace, support and service to Sr. Cyrilla. Thanks ever so much. Thanks to the doctors, nurses and nursing aids who looked after Sr. Cyrilla especially during the last one month. My sincere thanks to Rev. Fr. Michael and all the priests of St. Andrew's Church for the cooperation and support offered to our Sisters in this moment of grief. I offer my heartfelt gratitude to Sr. Ida Fernandes (Provincial Councillor) for being there as a strong support for the Community.

Having been purified by suffering we are sure that Sr. Cyrilla now enjoys the beatific vision, seeing God face to face. She walked with faith in her heart, believing the unseen and hoped with a Spirit that is keen. May we through her intercession learn to walk with faith, relying on the Providence and Mercy of God. Let us pray for her family members for the gift of fortitude to accept this great loss.

Yours affectionately,

Sr. Eulazia Fernandes

Provincial Superior