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But the souls of the just are in the hand of God, and no torment shall touch them. They seemed, in the view of the foolish, to be dead; and their passing away was thought an affliction and their going forth from us, utter destruction. But they are in peace. Wisdom 3: 1

Dearest Sisters,

On 21st September at 2.45 p.m. Sr. M. Ines Tirkey gently and graciously surrendered her soul in the hands of God, her loving Father in the presence of Sr. Pacifica and some of our Sisters of Martin de Porres Hospital, Isanagar.

Sr. M. Ines (Margaret Tirkey) was born in Gholeng, Ranchi, on 4th August 1930. She is the second among 7 children having five sisters and one brother. Her doting and devout parents, Mr. Julius and Mrs. Elizabeth Tirkey were privileged to offer three of their daughters to our Congregation – Sr. M. Evelyn, Sr. M. Ines, and Sr. M. Andrea – saintly Sisters who now enjoy the fruit of their labour in heaven. Sr. Ines considered it a great blessing that the three Sisters should belong to the same batch.

On completing her basic studies Sr. Ines expressed her desire to go for nursing but her parents remained firm regarding her pursuing higher studies. However, after completing B.T.C. the three sisters one after another joined the Sisters of St. Ann, who during these years had opened a house in Gholeng. She entered the Postulancy on 6th January 1953 in Secunderabad, made her First Profession on 1st January 1956 and the Perpetual Profession on 1st January 1962. After the First Profession, Mother Clemenza asked her to do her College studies. Once again Sr. Ines expressed her desire to go for nursing giving the best of excuses for not wanting to go for college studies. Mother Clemenza encouraged her saying: **“Obedience, God will bless you.”** She then accepted it as God’s will for her. Thus began her teaching ministry. Right from the beginning of her religious life she learnt to place the needs of the Congregation before her personal desires and needs.

When I think of Sr. Ines, Proverbs 21:1 comes to my mind: *“Like a stream is the king’s heart in the hand of the Lord; wherever it pleases Him, he directs it.”* The stream is flexible, defined yet open to new shapes. Nothing about it is rigid or hard. Flowing calmly at one moment then rushing forcefully, always inching forward. So also Sr. Ines allowed the Lord to form something new and unique in her life. She began her mission as a Hindi Teacher; served as the headmistress of the school in Duldula (1963-81) and Roorkee (1981-92); accepted the responsibility of being the Provincial Councilor from 1991-94; blessed the Community of Jamnagar with her gracious presence for two years as a teacher (1992-94) and animated the Community of Isanagar (1994-2000). Having completed her term as Superior, she was sent to Adampur as in-charge of the Hostel for girls, in June, 2000; and finally docile to the ‘Call within a Call’ – she once again

bowed down to God's will joyfully to be an ashramite in Vardan Vatika (2004-2014). For this courageous act and sacrifice, the Province will always remain grateful to her. Her life then took on a new direction.

Sr. Ines was an excellent teacher and headmistress. Long after she had left the place on transfer, students and their parents having experienced her goodness and compassion came in search of her. A frail looking woman, soft and gentle, always serene with a great capacity to wield authority! Sr. Blanche Thomas in her condolence message writes: "I knew Sr. Ines from the time we were in Bhagalpur. A very fine person to whom you will be drawn to because of her gentle, loving, caring and affectionate nature. She could win the unruly hostel girls at Adampur with her motherly affection combined with strictness. All the priests of the Diocese of Bhagalpur were happy with her for this." Sr. Ines loved the Congregation and was loyal to it. She valued her consecrated life above everything else. An unassuming person, she went about doing small things with great love.

She led a simple and self-disciplined life, depending on the Providence of God. Her deep faith and childlike trust in God was evident in her daily life and prayer. Her longing for God is clearly noted in her autobiographical sketches: "After crossing all kinds of bridges, ups and downs of my religious life, by the help of God's grace, at last safe and sound, successfully I have arrived at Ramnagar (Vardan) to spend my old age in prayer; to thank God for His merciful love and abundance of graces showered on me throughout my life." She remained in an attitude of gratitude to God in all circumstances of life. In fact she was grateful for the smallest deed of kindness shown to her. She spread the fragrance of Christ by spending much time in prayer, praying with the people (mainly non-Christians), sharing her God experiences, inculcating values in those who visited the Ashram and talking about Christ to them. Her presence in the Ashram was a strong support to Sr. Julia Victor Pais. Sr. Ines believed in doing her best in whatever was entrusted to her. Her work was perfect and up to date! Her Community describes her thus: 'A pleasant person with a winning smile. She had a good word for all those who encountered her, which won the hearts of people. Her hospitality was much appreciated by Bishops, priests, sisters, people and religious leaders who frequented the place.'

On 14th of August, 2014 Sr. Ines had a fall which resulted in air-line fracture on the thigh and was advised by the doctor to have bed rest for three months. Hence she was taken to our hospital at Isanagar. Thereafter Sr. Ines was confined to bed. She suffered much silently, without a word of complain. On 30th August her dear sisters, Mrs. Claudia and Mrs. Alexia along with other relatives came to see her and stayed with her for about 5 days. Her condition worsened day by day gradually leading to death on 21st September. The Sisters of Isanagar served her with love and dedication throughout her illness.

The funeral Service was held on 24th September at 11.30 a.m. at Holy family Church, Isanagar. Rt. Rev. Bishop Francis Kalist, Bishop of Meerut presided over the Eucharistic celebration. Rt. Rev. Bishop Anthony Fernandes, Bishop of Bareilly concelebrated the Eucharist along with other 12 priests. During the homily, Rt. Rev. Bishop Kalist shared his personal experience of Sr. Ines whom he had the good fortune of knowing at his very first appointment as an assistant Parish priest at Roorkee. He appreciated the values of simplicity, sensitivity and generosity which were so dominant in the life of Sr. Ines. Her relationships were marked with gentleness and humility. She loved the Church and worked hard to bring back the lapsed Catholics of the place. He stated that today it is difficult to find a Sister like Sr. Ines and exhorted the gathering to

emulate her. Rt. Rev. Bishop Anthony Fernandes affirming what was said by Bishop Francis Kalist emphasized the involvement of Sr. Ines in direct Evangelization. She was always available to the many people who came to the ashram, instructing, counseling and leading them to God.

About 80 Sisters, belonging to different Congregations, including our own Sisters from Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh were present to bid farewell to our dear Sr. Ines. The Church was packed with our school children and parishioners. The two sisters of Sr. Ines along with other relatives were present to pay their last respects to the one they loved. The mortal remains of Sr. Ines were laid to rest in the cemetery grounds of Martin de Porres Hospital, Isanagar.

I take this opportunity to thank Rt. Rev. Bishop Francis Kalist and Rt. Rev. Bishop Anthony Fernandes for making the Eucharistic Celebration so meaningful and giving it a homely touch. They postponed/cancelled important meetings in order to bid farewell to Sr. Ines. We remain grateful to them. I wish to express my heart-felt thanks to Sr. Helen D'Souza, Sr. Jyothi Serrao and all the Sisters of the Community of Martin de Porres Hospital, Isanagar who lovingly served and tried their level best to restore Sr. Ines back to health. A special mention must be made of our Junior Sister, Sr. Amarbeli who waited on Sr. Ines and took care of her during her illness. Sr. Catherine Tirkey and the Community of Moradabad have been always ready to help the Sisters at Ramnagar in any kind of need. May God bless you for all that you have done for Sr. Ines. I thank the two Communities of Isanagar for the liturgical and other arrangements made on this occasion. While in Ramnagar for the past 10 years, Sr. Julia Victor Pais and the Sisters have lavished their care and affection on Sr. Ines. Thanks ever so much. We are indebted to the family of Sr. Ines for the three beautiful gifts they offered to our Congregation. May God grant them the comfort and consolation they need in this moment of grief.

We can with confidence say that Sr. Ines has aimed at being Christ-like, lived her life in total service to the poor and that she now enjoys eternal bliss. Let us through the intercession of Sr. Ines along with the many Sisters of our Province who have recently passed away implore the gift of living our consecration joyfully and being at the service of the Poor.

Affectionately Yours,

Provincial Superior