

St. Ann's Provincialate,
Melamaiyur,
21st January 2018



“The spiritual process is a movement from the glory of being created in God’s image , towards greater glory of being with Him”. (Gregory of Nyssa)

On 10th January 2018, Wednesday, the day dedicated to St. Joseph, around 7.00 a.m., Sr. Josepha Manickam received the great summon to behold the glory that is to be revealed to those who hope in the Lord. It was a shocking news which came so unexpected, a hard to accept fact for all the Sisters, especially for the Sisters of the Community of Thirumalayampalayam, where Sr. Josepha had been spending her retired life. Though the Sisters were aware of her physical fragility, this sudden end was never calculated. In life she used to gladden others through surprise gifts; in death too she surprised us but left us in sorrow and grief.

A diabetic patient from her young age, Sister was diagnosed with Cardio Vascular Disease (CVD) in 1996. The only remedy for such ailment was “Cardio-Thoracic surgery, which was impossible to be performed on her, due to her delicate health condition. Sr. Josepha was then referred to Dr. Dilip Krishna, a reputed Cardio-Diabetologist of Chennai, who treated her with alternative possibilities of tablets and injections. Sr. Josepha continued her treatment from the same doctor, till the end of her earthly sojourn. She was well aware of the gravity of her ailment and was devotedly co-operative in taking the treatment which is clear from the obituary note sent by Doctor Dilip, on hearing about her sudden demise. He states; **“ Sister Josepha was very meticulous in taking the treatment. I have lost count of the number of visits she had made to my clinic. How many ECG’s, how many Echocardiograms, how many blood tests!! I really don’t remember. Only thing I am able to tell you today is that it was her dedication to the treatment, her will power to keep her God given body and mind sound enough to serve herself and the community and above all, the Power of the Supreme – that pulled her through all these formidable days.”**

Sr. Josepha was born on 29th July 1936, in Wellington, Nilgiris, to Mr. and Mrs. Antony and Arul Manickam, as their 5th child and was christened as Mary Rita. The God fearing parents nurtured their children in good catholic tradition and strong faith, bestowing affection and love in good measure mingled with discipline and firmness. They insisted that their

children be regular for prayers and holy mass and such spiritual formation from a tender age, helped three of their children to offer themselves in service of the Lord. In 1952, her elder brother joined the Jesuit Order to become a priest, which inflamed the spark within Rita to offer herself in God's service. After her High School studies at Coonoor, Nilgiris, in 1954, through the instrumentality of Mother Clemenza and Sr. Margaret Fertning, Mary Rita entered postulancy at Secunderabad and on January 1st 1955, received the religious habit, accepting the name Sr. Josepha. In 1959, her younger sister Theresa, too joined our congregation and was known as Sr. Vincenza, who also met with a sudden end due to heart failure, in 1992, while serving as lecturer in Botany at St. Theresa's college, Eluru .

After completing her B.Sc degree at Mount Carmel College, Bangalore, and B.Ed course at Hyderabad, in 1963, Sister Josepha was transferred to St. Ann's School Wellington as Head Mistress of the school. Gifted with commendable administrative ability coupled with religious values and evoking discipline by her very presence, Sr. Josepha could establish good standard and fine tradition in the school which made administration smooth for her successors. In 1984, Sr. Josepha upgraded the school in to Higher Secondary, raising it to one of the reputed education institutions in Wellington. On 5th September 1988, she received the " Best Teacher Award" from the State Government of Tamil Nadu.

In 1996, Sister was transferred to St. Mary's Convent Chengalpattu as In charge of the Service Centre; 2002--- St. Ann's Convent, Aruvankadu, Sister- In- Charge.

2008 - Administrator, St. Mary's College of Education. 2011--- was transferred to Thirumalayampalayam, a quiet and conducive place for rest and relaxation.

Sr. Josepha is known for her gentle and soft spoken nature. She was a woman of few words and those words would seldom go waste, but produce good fruit in due season. She was not only an able administrator, but also a skillful and creative teacher. She looked calm and dignified in her demeanor, commanded discipline by her very presence. She possessed the rare qualities of wit and wisdom which made others roar with laughter while she remained the most composed. Being a woman of prayer she gave top priority to her personal prayer. She was responsible to the work entrusted to her and would perform them with diligence and dedication. Her kind and compassionate heart always sought to comfort and help those in need.

The Sisters and the local people of TM Palayam offered Holy mass and prayers at the convent chapel and prayed for the departed soul after which the body was brought to St. Mary's Convent Chengalpattu, in an ambulance. The funeral mass was held on 11th January at 10.30 a.m. at St. Joseph's Cathedral, Chengalpattu concelebrated by Rt. Rev. Dr. Amalraj, Bishop of Ooty Diocese and Rt. Rev. Dr. Neethinathan, Bishop of Chengalpattu Diocese along with a good number of priests. Both the Bishops expressed their thankfulness to Sr.

Josepha for her valuable contribution to the church and for her tireless efforts in providing good education to the poor of Aruvankadu. Rev. Fr. Christopher Lawrence, the Vicar General of Ooty Diocese and Sr. Josepha's cousin, in his homily spoke of the triviality of our life on this earth. He said "***of all the things that we achieve in this life, only one thing lasts forever- the good that we do to others, the love that we have share with the other. Those memories will linger even after we depart from this world. I have experienced true love and inspiration from my aunt to live a committed priestly life and I love her and pray for her***". Sr. Mildred offered loving eulogy at the conclusion of the mass thus "**Dearest Sr. Josepha, I consider myself lucky to have known someone like you who is difficult to say good bye to. A great leader of dedication, decorum and inspiration, I thank you from the depth of my heart, for the role you played in my life and in the lives of many Sisters of our congregation. As you move on to the next phase of your life, know that you will be missed. Our best wishes and thoughts go with you as now you walk above, to enjoy your long awaited eternal reward**".

Her mortal remains are placed in the Sister's Cemetery at Thimmavaram.

I offer my deep condolences to Sr. Josepha's cousin Rev. Fr. Lawrence and Niece, Mrs. Hilda Daniel and family, who were present for the funeral.

Dearest Sisters, on behalf of the Province, I thank Sr. Jebamalai and the Sisters of the Community of Thirumalayampalayam who shared in the struggle and pains of Sr. Josepha, for the past 7 years extending to her the needed solace as well as the confidence to go on in life, taking one day at a time. My sincere thanks to Sr. Nambikai Rayappan, Sr. Nirmala Joris and all the Sisters of St. Mary's Convent Chegalpattu, for their willing co-operation and hard work in making the necessary arrangements to conduct the funeral rites in a befitting way. May God send you His blessings and graces in good measure and fill you with His peace and love.

We know that our dearest Sr. Josepha is safe in the hands of God. Let us pray that the unfathomable love of the Almighty envelope her and grant her the bliss of eternal joy.

Yours lovingly,



Sr. Theresa Cherian

Provincial Superior.