



St. Ann's Provincialate,
Melamaiyur,
18th March 2018.

“ Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, “ Yes”, says the Spirit, they will rest from their labours, for their deeds follow them.” (Rev 14/13).

Dearest Sisters,

If there was ever a person so content and happy, gentle and loving, humble and obedient, it was our dearest Sr. Metilde Thomas. Her cheery Smile, warm affection, human concern, understanding gestures and prayerful spirit, made others feel special and comfortable in her presence. Sr. Metilde lived the Spiritual and human aspects of religious life in deep faith and firm conviction. Having done all the good that she could, in every place and to everyone, she was well prepared to receive her eternal reward, from her heavenly Father who blesses everyone with just reward.

Sr. Metilde Thomas was born on 12th January 1931, to Mr. Thomas and Mrs. Ann, at Changanassery, Kerala. Christened as Theresa, the babe grew up in an environment of deep in faith and Christian values. Such family atmosphere instilled in her, the deep yearning for Spiritual life, leading her to say ‘YES’ to the call to be “LOVE” in the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Ann.

Sr. Metilde Thomas made her first profession on 1st January 1953 and Perpetual profession on the same date of 1959. After her first profession, she was entrusted with her first mission at St. Joseph's Orphanage, Secunderabad. Here she did experience the paternal love and protection of St. Joseph, who helped her to strive through hard times at a tender age. Over the years, this devotion to St. Joseph grew deeper and stronger that Papa Joseph became her undisputed guardian in life.

In 1966, Sister was transferred to Jamnagar to teach in the School and to take charge of the Boarding. In 1970, was transferred to St. Ann's Convent, Kazipet, as Sister-in-Charge. And in 1977, was sent to St. Ann's Convent, Eluru as the College Hostel Warden. In 1980, Sister was sent to Aloor, Kerala, as pioneer to establish a Convent and School. In 1982, posted back to St. Joseph's Boarding, Secunderabad and in 1984 was appointed Sister-in-Charge of St. Ann's convent, Tarnaka.

Obedience was her hallmark and Sr. Metilde accepted every transfer in total surrender. Yet there always remained a strong yearning deep within her, to proclaim the love of Christ in a distant mission land. In a personal letter to the then Provincial superior, she shared her vision and call received from the Holy Spirit, to expand our mission in Africa. She also made known her availability to render service there, if found worthy and consonant with God's Will. In the

year 1986, the Lord looked with favour on her humble and honest desire through the decision of the General Council, to establish our presence in Africa. Sr. Metilde was chosen to accompany the pioneering group to start the mission in Cameroun .

A dream fulfilled, she expended all her strength and capabilities, braving many challenges, worked with single-minded devotion to give a firm foundation to the mission in Africa. Her burning zeal to spread the gospel message, genuine interest to support the weak , selfless generosity and heart-warming smile, made her unforgettable among the people of Cameroun. With her indomitable spirit, she carried on her work as missionary for 24 long years. She would have loved to spend her entire life in Cameroun, but her delicate health began to deteriorate drastically. Thus under obedience , in 2012, she had to return to India for treatment and a well-deserved rest, though her heart beat kept repeating, “Cameroun...Cameroun...”

Back in India, Sister stayed at the juniorate, Mangadu, and was subjected to medical tests. The venous ulcer on her leg had already started spreading to other parts of the body and she also suffered from general fatigue, that made operation impossible. At her request, she was treated with Ayurveda medicine (a treatment with herbal medicines) which is very popular in Kerala for curing different kinds of diseases. This treatment worked well in the initial stages, In 2015, Sister was shifted to Madonna Villa, Melamaiyur, where she could enjoy the company of other elderly Sisters and continued the treatment. In 2016, she suffered the fracture of her hip bone from which she recovered after six months and was able to walk with the support of the walker.

In September 2017, Sister complained of pain in the abdomen and lack of appetite and was diagnosed with wall thickening of Antrum and Pylorus of stomach, and also with Necrotic Lymph node causing compression of Bile duct. Operation would be the only remedy for which she was unfit due to advanced age and frail health. Hence, the doctors advised supportive care at local place, which was extended to her at Palliative Clinic, Chengalpattu. In the following months, her health condition remained unstable all through her illness, Sr. Metilde proved herself to be an epitome of patience and endurance. To those who came to meet her, she would smilingly say “ I am enjoying life; I lack nothing”. Sister was well prepared to meet her Lord face to face, was evident from the naturalness and serenity with which she would repeat “ I am ready to go up”

From the 1st of March 2018, Sister was on liquid diet as she could not swallow any solid food. She requested for the anointing of the sick which was administered to her. From her bed she would attend the daily mass and receive holy communion without fail.

On March ,11th at 5:00 p.m., her breathing became heavy and irregular. Sr. Lissy who always remained at her bed side, alerted the Sisters, who gathered around her bed and prayed the Divine Mercy Rosary. At 6:00 p.m. even as the invocations ascended to the presence of God, Sister Metilde, holding the picture of St. Joseph in her hand, offered up her soul to her Lord and Creator. She lived solely for the Lord, so did she die in the Lord.

The funeral Mass was held on 13th March at 10:30 a.m. in the Chapel of Animation Centre, Melamiyur. The main Celebrant, Rev. Fr. John Bosco, the Parish Priest of St. Joseph’s Cathedral, Chengalpattu, in his homily said that Sr. Metilde could be compared to the woman, Veronica at the 6th Station, who braved the screaming crowd to wipe away the sweat and dirt off the face of Jesus. Hailing her as a great missionary in Africa, Father exclaimed that Sr.

Metilde was indeed a woman of courage and conviction, an inspiration to the younger generation to trust in God and brave obstacles.

Sr. Valsa Alex, at the introductory, shared her experiences of living with Sr. Metilde and said “ Sister lived simple, humble and joyful with a rare grace of being able to enjoy life even in her sickness. Never a word of complaint escaped from her mouth. Her life was a splendid torch which she held up for the moment and made it burn brightly before handing it on to the future generations”.

Rev. Fr. Gerald Obasi (Sch. Piarist Fathers Cameroun) wrote about Sr. Matilde ,
“ Oh the inevitable hands of death have snatched my mother.. the humble, the pious, the carer, the worker. She was full of insight, living always in the realm of the spiritual, the fear of the Lord being her catalyst. An angel behind me, an angel behind many. May the angels of the Lord welcome her and present her to God the most high... because she's one of them. Rest in peace mother”.

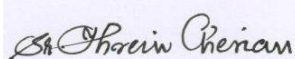
On hearing about the passing away of Sr. Metilde, Mother Francesca Sarcia, the Superior General, Sr. Letitia D’Souza the Delegate Superior of Cameroun, Sr. Anetta Saldanha, Sr. Sheila D’Mello and many other Sisters from the various communities of Cameroun Delegation, paid glorious tributes to Sr. Metilde, reminiscing their unforgettable experiences. (the tributes and testimonies, sent by the Sisters are attached to this Circular).

There were a good number of Sisters, faithful, and relatives of Sr. Metilde at the funeral mass. I express my heartfelt condolences to the family members and dear ones of Sr. Metilde, particularly her younger brother Mathew, who is now the only survivor of the 9 siblings, her nieces and nephews, 11 of whom were present for the funeral. We thank them for the gift of a holy Sister to our Congregation, whose virtues are to be emulated.

After the Holy Mass, the mortal remains of Sr. Metilde was taken in procession to the Sisters’ Cemetery at Chengalpattu, and was laid to rest along with 10 others who had gone before her. Sister Metilde lived a holy life and had a peaceful death. We entrust her spirit in to the hands of the Almighty, accompanied by our prayerful supplication that she be granted her eternal reward and rejoice with all the angels and saints in heaven.

My sincere thanks to the Sisters of Madonna Villa, Sr. Fathima Philip, the animator, who was specially concerned about the needs spiritual assistance for Sr. Metilde. I express my deep sense of gratitude to Sr. Lissy and Sr. Sathya, the Sister nurses who attended on Sr. Metilde, day and night and looked after her with utmost care and attention. I thank all the Sisters of the nearby communities and the Provinces, who rendered their prayerful support and solidarity during these moments of loss & pain. The happy soul of Sr. Metilde is sure to obtain abundant blessings for all of us from her heavenly abode.

Yours lovingly,



Sr. Theresa Cherian
Provincial Superior.