

St. Ann's Provincialate,
Gollapudi P.O
Krishna District
Andhra Pradesh - 521 225
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23 aprile 2020



“Give thanks to the Lord for He is good, His mercy endures forever.” (Psalm 118:1)

Dearest Sisters,

On 19th April, at the early dawn of Divine Mercy Sunday, at 4.15 am to be precise, Jesus our Merciful Saviour visited Sr. Philomena Lakra His beloved spouse at Holy Family Hospital, Bandra and took her home to himself. In His goodness and mercy he relieved her of her bed of pain and long suffering. But for us it was something unbelievable as she showed signs of improvement and was to be discharged in a day or two. We bow down to His merciful designs in faith, convinced that He knows what is best for us.

Sr. Philomena Lakra was born in Madhya Pradesh on 15th December 1955 to devout God fearing and loving parents Mr. Francis Lakra and Mrs. Makdoli Turkey. She was the sixth of eight siblings. Her elder sister, Sr. Amitha is a Holy Cross nun. Right from a tender age she showed signs of being a very prayerful, kind and affectionate child. As she grew up she nurtured the desire to give her life to Jesus and to belong totally to Him alone. While in Duldula she completed her twelfth class and was very impressed by the life of the Sisters especially Sr. Venanzia John whom she greatly admired and whose life inspired her to join the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Ann.

She entered the Postulancy at Raichur on 1st June, 1982 and made her First Profession on 1st May, 1985 at Talegaon. She pronounced her Perpetual Vows on 1st May, 1991 and made her Silver Jubilee in 2010.

In 1986 she was sent to Duldula to do her Grihini Teachers Training and remained there till 1990 when she was sent as one of the pioneers to the new house in Tamnar with the assignment of village apostolate. From 1991 to 1993 she spent a year each in Trilokpuri, Rampur and Isanagar.

Once again in 1995 she went to Tamnar for a year, to Duldula for two years (1996 and 1997) and to Milak Khanam for 3 years. (1998 – 2000). She had a break from the teaching profession and in 2001 was transferred to Mohanlalgunj to pursue a tailoring course in cutting and embroidery from the Don Bosco Training Institute.

In June 2002 she was transferred to Mithapur where she remained till June 2010 after which she was asked to take charge of the Boarding at Mehmedabad. For the third time she was sent as a Teacher to Tamnar in 2012, to Arambhada in 2013 and to Rampur in 2016. Her final assignment was to Ghargoda in June 2018 as a Teacher and Boarding Mistress.

Sr. Philomena Lakra was very faithful to the commitments of her Religious life and always sought God's Holy will in everything. She was hard working, prayerful, simple, duty conscious, humorous and was also an efficient teacher. She took keen interest in the overall growth of the students especially the weaker ones. She was more interested in the faith formation of the children. She was very creative and prepared altar linen and different vestments with beautiful symbols.

Sr. Philomena Lakra had a great desire to see our Mother House in Italy. She was overjoyed when finally her dream was fulfilled. She went about showing everyone all the photos and videos and never stopped sharing about the International Seminar programmes. She was often heard saying in her simplicity "I have seen the Heavenly Jerusalem, my desire is fulfilled".

Some of the testimonies given below by her companions and those who lived with her throw more light on the life of this simple soul.

Sr. Agnes Thomas: "She was very simple, childlike, ever ready to help anyone in need, very spontaneous in her way of talking with Jesus and talking about Jesus. She knew to maintain healthy relationships".

Sr. Vilma Menezes: "Sr. Philomena was dedicated to her Church duty and carried it out with much love. She was always very clean, neat and tidy, very gentle in talking to the people and they liked her. In the Community she was very co-operative, she was good at culinary skills— she would prepare tasty food. She was strict with the children in School. Well prepared for the classes to impart knowledge to the children. She was a pioneer in Tamnar. She, along with Sr. Eugene would go cycling to meet the people in the villages. She always appreciated others. She was good at needle-art and handwork. She was in-charge of the women's cell in the Church and besides imparting to them matters of faith, she also taught them different methods of preparing garlands, rosaries etc and organized competitions for them. She would conduct meaningful prayer services. She was a jovial person. She would take utmost care of the sick."

Sr. Kathreena Joseph: "Sr. Philomena Lakra was a person who carried out the given responsibilities with utmost dedication and commitment, a person who worked sincerely to attain the goal. The Poor were her priority and her main concern and she volunteered to walk an extra mile to ensure justice is done to them. She was a perfectionist I would say with regard to decorating the Church and Community Chapels. Always with a smile on her face and a song on her lips she manifested her joy to her Creator. She was generous to make use of her talents and was a unique person in her teaching career. She spent extra time with the slow learners and brought out hidden talents in the students. Her presence made the Community more lively and active. She made her life a lived experience of God's mercy and love. She was friendly and tried to cherish friendship, though at times had to take risk".

Sr. Leelamma Mathew –"Sr. Philo was very sensitive to the needs of others. She was ever ready to do any work. She never said 'NO' to others when she was asked to do anything. She was prayerful, hardworking, kind, compassionate, loving and caring, always jovial making others happy".

Sr. Philomena Lakra, except for a few minor ailments normally enjoyed good health. But suddenly on 16th February 2020, at 2.00 o'clock in the night she took very bad and complained about severe stomach pain and nausea. She was rushed to J.M.J, Morning Star Hospital at Raigarh. The various tests showed it was a problem of appendicitis and she was immediately operated for the same. She was hospitalized for thirteen days from 16.02.2020 to 28.02.2020 when she was discharged. She continued to have some discomfort during the period of recuperation and once again on 09.03.2020 she was taken to the Hospital. Investigations showed her situation was grave and she had to be rushed to Holy Family Hospital, Bandra, Bombay on 12-3-2020 accompanied by Sister Teresa Kindo and Hemlata Dhanson. Sr. Hemlata returned on 15.3.2020 while Sister Teresa Kindo stayed back to take care of Sr. Philomena Lakra.

Sr. Philomena Lakra was admitted to the ICU on 16-3 2020 as a high-risk case due to post operative complications. The diagnosis revealed old perforated peritonitis with intra-abdominal sepsis with septicemia. On 20.3.2020 the complicated surgery done was Exploratory Laparotomy with drainage of intra-abdominal collection and closure of perforation. Though it was a complicated operation it was

successful. She was kept in I.C.U. for a month after the operation as being a delicate situation, she needed constant medical attention. On 17.04.2020 she was shifted to the private ward and was to be discharged in a couple of days. On 19.04.2020 April at around 3.30 am she told Sr. Tresa who was with her, that she wanted to urinate. She did not complain of anything. So both lay down again. But after a short while she gave a loud cry which made Sr. Tresa jump to her bedside and call out to her and try to wake her, but alas no response, she had breathed her last. It was a cardiac arrest.

Given the present lockdown situation we find ourselves in, there was no other option left but to request the priests of St. Andrews Parish to bless and lay to rest the mortal remains of our dear Sister Philomena in the Parish Cemetery besides our other Sisters who are buried there. The burial took place the same day at 10.30 am in the presence of Sr. Tresa Kindo, Sr. Jane Fernandez, Sr. Cassilda Pinto and Sr. Sophia Eugene Lemos of the Bandra Community.

At the very outset, on behalf of all the Sisters of the Eastern Province, I wish to thank very profoundly dearest Sr. Charlotte Sequeira, the Provincial Superior of the Western Province for permitting us to take Sr. Philomena Lakra to the Bandra Community for treatment at Holy Family Hospital, Bandra. In a more particular way, our thanks are due to her, for permitting us to use the vacant grave they had, that made the burial possible. This was indeed a great blessing. At this juncture, I also express my thanks to Sr. Shoba A and Community for all the help and support they rendered to Sr. Tresa Kindo in caring for Sr. Philomena.

While I thank most sincerely, our dearest Sr. Tresa Kindo, Superior of Tamnar Community for staying with the ailing Sister for over a month taking care of her tenderly. I also remain grateful to her Community for offering the sacrifices of their Superior whom they truly missed, for the well being of Sr. Philomena. Thank you dear Sisters.

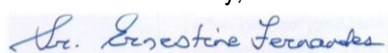
I extend my heartfelt condolences to the Community of Ghargoda - Sr. Francesca Tirkey and Sisters who have lost their loved one. Thanks are due to you also for the care you have taken of her during her stay at the Hospital at Raigarh and her period of recovery after the operation. She will I am sure, intercede for the needs of your Community and for all of you and your intentions.

My sentiments of gratitude go to our beloved Mother Francesca Sarciã who would on and off make enquiries of the progress of Sr. Philomena's health assuring her of her closeness in prayer and affection. Thanks to dearest Sr. Jacintha Saldanha, the point of reference of our province who would constantly be in touch with Sr. Tresa Kindo to find out how she was.

Dearest Sisters, while we thank God for the beautiful person of Sr. Philomena Lakra and for making her a blessing to so many people let us offer up our suffrages for her, asking her to intercede for the many needs of our Congregation and for the gift of many good and genuine vocations. Let us also remember in prayer the bereaved members of her family that the Risen Lord be their comfort, their courage and confidence.

In the certainty that we continue to pray for all those affected by the Corona pandemic, I cut short invoking for you the rich blessings of Eastertide.

Yours affectionately,



Sr. Ernestine Fernandes

Provincial Superior.