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"Happy are those who die in the Lord! Happy indeed, the Spirit says; now they can rest for ever after their work, since their good deeds go with them."

Rev.14:13

Dearest Sisters,

On 2nd December, 2011 at about 3.30 a.m. the angel of the Lord came to meet our dear Sr. Sylvestra to invite her to His Kingdom. She readily said her Final Yes. The cause of her death was diagnosed as Cardio-respiratory arrest. Prior to her death she complained about sleepless nights and chest pain. I was in Tamnar, Chattisgarh when I received this shocking and unexpected news.

The people of Ajgaon flocked to pay their last homage to dear Sr. Sylvestra. At 12.00 noon, Rt.Rev. Alwyn Baretto, Bishop of Sindhudurg, along with 13 other priests of the diocese offered the Holy Eucharist and the Parish Priest, Msgr. Andrew D'Mello performed the last rites. Sisters from the Diocese of Sindhudurg and from the neighbouring Communities (Tivim, Sanquelim, Qualosseum), the parishioners, teachers, students and well wishers participated in the Eucharistic celebration.

The mortal remains of Sr. Sylvestra were taken to Talegaon. The funeral Mass was held on 4th December at 10.30.a.m. presided over by Fr. Stany Machado, a distant relative of Sr. Sylvestra along with Fr. Jacob the assistant Parish Priest of Mt. Carmel Church, Talegaon. In his homily Fr. Stany spoke of Sr. Sylvestra as a wise virgin who knew very well the arrival of her Bridegroom. She had her lamp alight as she awaited her Beloved. Recalling past memories he said that she was a promising girl with many talents; a gentle Sister, loved by everyone; a lover of music. Quoting Rabindranath Tagore **"There are numerous strings in your lute, let me add my own among them"** Fr. Stany stated that the string of Sr. Sylvie is added to the lute in heaven and now she joins the heavenly choir in praising the Lord. Sr. Sylvie was accompanied to her final earthly resting place by the family of St. Ann: Sisters from Gujarat, U.P., Karnataka, Andhra, Goa and Maharashtra; her beloved family members: brothers, sisters, relatives and class mates numbering around forty including her nun Sister, Sr. Daisy (Nirmala Sisters).

Sr.M.Sylvestra whose maiden name was Letitia Lasrado was born on 31st May, 1942 at Shirva, Mangalore. She is the daughter of Joseph and Christine Lasrado, the fourth among ten children (five girls and five boys). She entered the Postulancy on 21st June 1959 and was vested on 3rd January, 1960. She made her First Profession on 3rd January, 1962 and Perpetual Profession on 3rd January, 1968.

Sr.Sylvestra was fondly called Sr. Sylvie. She was a prayerful person and her commitment and faithfulness to her spouse was visible in her deeds. She loved to sing the praises of God through her sweet, melodious voice and music. She was fascinated by Indian classical music and in 1980 completed her graduation through the summer school of music at Pachmari, M.P. In her short autobiography she writes *"It was tough to go through without any holidays for 6 years."* This puts into evidence her self-sacrificing nature and her strong will power. She taught music to the formees as well as to the children. She never lost the 'sense of wonder' of a child. She was spontaneous and very expressive too! Her charming smile, simplicity of heart, transparency in words and deeds were indeed edifying. Her perpetual cheerful disposition made an easy access to her person. She was young at heart and always loved to be in the company of the young. Her availability, sensitivity and the keen interest for the welfare of the Sisters in the Community and the people around, is to be appreciated. Her presence in the Community was a

soothing one. She was all tenderness towards the poor and the suffering. She considered her work for the distant adoptions as an apostolate, a mission. No wonder she was always so punctual in her work and the documentation was done diligently. She always appreciated, encouraged and lifted up those with drooping spirits.

Sr. Sylvie was open to changes and would easily adapt herself to a new environment. God had endowed her with special gifts to be a **Pioneer** in many Communities. In 1964 she was transferred to Kazipet along with Sr. Monica Thomas to open an English medium school. In her autobiography she writes: *“We worked very hard to bring up the school, but I enjoyed the hectic apostolate: teaching, choir, catechism, learning Telugu, visiting houses, village apostolate etc. The prime of my youth was spent in Kazipet. I remained there for ten years.”* Such was her spirit. As a pioneer she faced many trials but she faced them with great faith and a cheerful heart.

She joyfully extended her services in the Communities of Bolarum, Kazipet, Bangalore, Moradabad, Roorkee, Talegaon, Hutti, USA, Bharuch, Rudrapur, Bolinj, Roorkee, Naigaon in Vasai, Rampur and Ajgaon. She worked tirelessly and generously in the capacity of an animator, teacher, boarding mistress, librarian and bursar. She writes: *“In July, 2005 I was transferred to Ajgaon as a bursar, librarian and to work for Distant adoptions and to assist in the parish apostolate, teaching catechism, visiting houses and mission stations, helping the needy and the sick, etc. I thank God for giving me this opportunity to be with the poor and work for the poor.”*

I am indebted to Rt. Rev. Alwyn Barreto, Bishop of Sindhudurg and the priests of his diocese for their moral and spiritual support extended to our Sisters. Once again Bishop Alwyn has proved his closeness to the Sisters of St. Ann. I express my heartfelt gratitude to our dear Mother Ernestine who changed her schedule in order to be present for the funeral service. Her presence was a source of consolation for our Sisters. I take this opportunity to thank Sr. Brenda and all the Sisters at Ajgaon for their loving service to Sr. Sylvestra. Her sudden passing away has left a void which only time can fill. May God be your strength in this moment of trial. We are ever grateful to Sr. Jisy along with the Community Sisters, who shouldered the responsibility of making the arrangements and accompanying the mortal remains of Sr. Sylvestra to Talegaon. A special mention must be made of Sr. Bernice (Superior of Tivim) who in spite of other commitments readily accepted to be with our Sisters in their sorrow. I thank all the Sisters of our Congregation who came to pay their last homage to Sr. Sylvestra and participated in the funeral service.

Sr. Sylvie had been enthusiastically preparing herself to celebrate her Golden Jubilee but God had His own plans for her. She had chosen a Communion hymn to be sung on that great day of jubilation. The Sisters sang it for her:

Though my soul is not worthy / but **I have the desire to be with you**
out of your love you created me / but my sins caused you to die on the cross
You sacrificed and gave yourself for me / in the form of bread and wine
And when I receive you I gain eternal life.

Sr. Sylvestra had a special love and devotion to the Sacred Heart and it is no coincidence that she bid us farewell on a first Friday. Dear Sr. Sylvie you gave your heart to Christ, wise virgin, now you live with him resplendent like the sun in the assembly of the saints. We pray that as you celebrate your Golden jubilee along with the heavenly choirs, bless us and intercede for us. Dearest Sisters let us be generous in offering our prayers and suffrages for Sr. Sylvestra.

I wish to conclude quoting Sr. Sylvestra: *“I love my Community (Ajgaon) and am grateful to my Congregation. May God use me more and more for His honor and glory and keep me always humble and obedient till my last breath.”*

Yours affectionately,

Provincial Superior