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“The souls of the virtuous are in the hands of God, no torment shall ever touch them. In the eyes of the unwise they did appear to die, their going looked like a disaster, their leaving us, like annihilation; but they are in peace”. (Wis. 3:1)

Dearest Sisters,

On 7th September, after the completion of my Canonical visit to Chattisgarh, Sr. Leelamma Palakuzhy and myself accompanied by Sr. Catherine Turkey the Superior of Duldula, started our journey back to Raigarh in order to return to Delhi. After having prayed, we were happily relating incidents that had recently occurred in the three communities that we had visited when our conversation was cut short abruptly by the ringing of the mobile and the words: **Sr. Tommasa is no more**. This shocking news rendered us speechless and numb. It was just a week ago that we had met her – happily and energetically performing her daily duties with love and dedication.

On 29th August, **Sr. Tommasa** had fever, high blood pressure and mumps. She found difficult to swallow food. She was taken to the doctor and on medication seemed to recover. She resumed her duties in the school. However intermittently she complained of fever and vomiting and so the doctor advised that she goes for a thorough check up. On the 5th evening she was taken to ‘Morning Star’ Hospital at Raigarh, run by J.M.J. Sisters and was admitted there. She was supposed to be discharged on the 6th evening but the Sisters of the Community requested to keep her there for the night. On the 7th at 5.30 a.m. she got up. She felt giddy and so called for Sr. Pushpa who gave her water, put her in bed and at once rushed to call the doctor. Unfortunately before the doctor arrived she breathed her last. The doctor declared that **Sr. Tommasa** died of cardiac arrest and cardio respiratory failure at 5.50 a.m. on 7th September, 2009.

The funeral mass was held at 4.30 p. m. on 7th September at St. Francis Xavier’s Church, Tamnar. The Holy mass was celebrated by Rt. Rev. Bishop Paul Toppo and 13 other Priests including her Cousin Fr. Ranjit Kerketta belonging to the diocese of Raigarh. It was attended by the Sisters of the neighboring Communities and many Sisters of other Congregations. Her dear younger Sister, relatives, children, teachers and parishioners were present to pay their last tributes to the one they loved. The Bishop in his homily said that death is not the end but a door to new life and our dear Sister has entered into this new life with the Lord.

Romani Panna, daughter of Late Mr. Pius and Mrs. Maria was born on 12th December, 1942 at Muttujakba, Madhya Pradesh. Of the four children she was the third (two elder brothers and one younger sister). She joined the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Ann on 14th December, 1965. She entered into the Postulancy in July, 1966 and received the Holy Habit on 1st May 1967. She said her first ‘Yes’ to the Lord on 9th June, 1969.

After her first Profession she continued to stay in the Novitiate House and taught Hindi at the Convent School in Bolarum. She was transferred to Moradabad as a teacher in June 1970. On 3rd January, 1976 at Secunderabad, she made her Final Profession. Soon after her Final Profession she was transferred to Duldula and in June 1982 she went to Isanagar as a teacher. In June, 1989 she was sent to Roorkee and in June, 1992 to Mohanlalganj. In 1997 she was transferred to Rajnikhand and thereafter in July, 2003 to Tamnar.

A deeply spiritual person, **Sr.Tommasa** drew strength for her daily living from God. Prayer was her priority. She was regular for her visits to the Blessed Sacrament and encouraged others to do the same. She was like the Martha of the Gospel always ready to serve but it must be highlighted that she knew how to be the Mary of the gospel too: she spend long time sitting at the feet of the lord. A true contemplative in action!

Sr. Tommasa was very simple, spontaneous, jovial and free. She was child-like! Always jolly and merry, she kept on moving along life's road with an ever-present smile to lighten up another's load. She was an affable sort of person and got on well with all. In fact everybody enjoyed her company.

In the Community she was always sensitive to the needs of the others and available to all. Hardworking, sacrifices aplenty she hid her aches and pains in order to bring joy to others. She would make the recreations lively and relaxing too! Her hospitality had no frontiers. Whoever came to the Community was welcomed cordially and served joyfully. She had the rare gift of making others feel at home. She was a solicitous host. A priest remarked: We will miss her (**Sr.Tommasa**) when we come over here. She had a special love for the Junior Sisters, took keen interest in them and made them feel at ease in the Community. She had a wide range of hobbies among which cooking and gardening are worth mentioning. She had a strong will power and was determined to complete whatever she planned.

Sr. Tommasa led a simple and austere life. We were highly edified on visiting her room after the funeral service. Nothing superfluous was found, just the basic and necessary things. Her heart was set on the things of heaven!

She played a significant role in the life of the children, especially the poor ones taking keen interest in their all round development. Children loved her and would wait for her arrival in the school. On 5th September (Teacher's day) though sick, she expressed her desire to be with the children for she knew how they would feel without their class teacher especially on such a day. A true mother indeed! Around her mortal remains were found little children offering their prayers and singing hymns amidst sobs and tears.... She spent most of her life with the little ones, preparing them for the First Holy Communion, Confirmation and Crusaders gatherings. She worked hard for them until the end.

The Lord used her very much to bring His love to his people not only by her words but also by her friendly nature. She had very good rapport with the villagers. She visited the poor families of the village regularly and gave them advice and guidance. She was one with them sharing their sorrows and joys. Many of them (non-Christians too!) flocked to pay their last respects and bid farewell to the one who had been their guide and friend. Her commitment to the poor is praiseworthy.

Sr.Tommasa offered herself hundred percent to the Lord. **I wish to summarize her life as follows: Joyful service to all, at all times without counting the cost.** Dear **Sr.Tommasa** you were a unique sign of God's love. We treasure the happy memory of having shared life with you.

I take this opportunity to express my heartfelt gratitude to Sr.Kamala and all the Sisters at Tamnar for their prompt and loving service to **Sr.Tommasa** during her brief illness. I can well imagine your loss at the sudden passing away of **Sr.Tommasa** for you truly were a very closely knit family. May God be your strength in this moment of trial.

While we know that **Sr.Tommasa** will intercede for us, let us be generous in offering suffrages for her.

Yours affectionately,

Sr. Eulazia Fernandes
Provincial Superior