

***St. Ann's Provincialate
B – 43, Cariappa Road
Bolarum – 500 010
Secunderabad
Telangana***

24th May, 2020

*“But our citizenship/commonwealth is in heaven,
and from it we await a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ,
who will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body...”*
(Phil. 3, 20-21)



Dearest Sisters,

Motivated by the Word of God, Sr. Zaveria lived a life of radical Poverty in following Christ, the Poor. Though she handled a very large amount of money as a Province or Local Finance Administrator for many years, she remained always transparent, accountable and loyal to the Congregation. She was an embodiment of commitment and conviction with no compromise. Her *wealth* was *God and service to humanity!* On the Feast of Our Lady of Fatima, the 13th May, 2020 at 6.10 a.m., Sr. Zaveria breathed her last peacefully in the presence of the Sisters, as she waited for the *Lord who would change her lowly body into His glorious body.*

Since 2015 Sister was suffering from Coronary Artery Disease, Cerebral Atrophy and Type – 2 Diabetes. She had been treated with regular tests and checkups. A few muscle-strengthening exercises helped her to be present for Community prayer and other activities. From 9th May, 2020 onwards, she found it difficult to participate in the Community prayers and Holy Mass as she was almost bed-ridden. On 11th May, in consultation with her physician, treatment started and intravenous fluids were given. On 12th evening she was not responding to the treatment and on 13th May at 6.10 a.m. she breathed her last.

Sr. Zaveria (THERESA) Alphonso was born in Suratkal, Mangalore, on 29th May, 1932 to a pious couple, Marian Alphonso and Seraphine. She was the third child in the family, with two elder sisters, a younger brother and sister. Sr. Clementina, her youngest sister, served the Lord in our Congregation. Theresa, as a girl, came in contact with our Sisters at St. Ann's Convent, Home for the Aged, Angelore, Mangalore, where she assisted in serving the elderly people for more than a year. Witnessing the life of the Sisters over there, especially their life of Poverty, she decided to join the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Ann.

Her initial formative journey in Secunderabad:

Entered the Novitiate : 03.01.1952
Religious Clothing : 01.01.1953
First Profession : 01.01.1955
Perpetual Vows : 01.01.1961

In 1951 as a Postulant she was with the inmates in Bansilalpet much to her delight, enthusiasm, hard work and steadfastness. The Sisters at Secunderabad welcomed her in various capacities:-

1955	----	In-charge of School Office (Bill Office)
1965	----	General Supervisor
1968	----	Province Finance Administrator
1973	----	Local Finance Administrator

In 1981 she was transferred to St. Ann's Convent, Eluru, as College Hostel Warden. From 1985 to 2015 she served as Local Finance Administrator in St. Ann's Convent, Secunderabad and took care of the entire campus. In 2015 owing to age-related problems she was brought to St. Ann's Home, Bolarum. In 2016 she was placed in St. Ann's Novitiate, Bolarum. But in the following year, due to her illness, she was back to St. Ann's Home, Bolarum and remained there till date.

I wish to present here some of her vital ingredients which were the key elements to live her life more effectively as a Consecrated person:

1. *Life of communion with God and devotion to Mother Mary:* God was her sole Master which drew her to Himself from the time of her childhood. She personally felt that *Religious Life is the best life that one can choose*. Despite a busy schedule ahead and her physical ailments, she was always faithful to the Community prayers and its life. She also had a great devotion to Mother Mary, having Rosary in her hand always. She was intimately connected to the life of Jesus by reciting the mysteries of the Rosary constantly. She saw the Lord face to face on the *Feast of Our Lady of Fatima – the Lady of the Rosary*.

2. *Her vowed Life:* Her *trust* in God was profound; radically believed in His Providence. Her life was characterized by simplicity, austerity, credibility, hard work, diligence and dedication. Sr. Monica Francis witnessed her life of Poverty, "*Her detachment to all earthly goods was remarkable. She would not keep any extra luggage; but give it away to the needy. She would save up all things for future use be it a pin or a screw. No wastage in the dictionary of Sister. She would use and reuse things so that she can save that little bit for the Congregation.*" She was a person of deep faith, virtuous and very religious minded. She was very loyal to the authority, had deep reverence and respect towards the Superiors.

Her *love* for God was deep. She was a highly composed, pleasant person and very hospitable to everyone who came in contact with her. Her long stay in Secunderabad as the Financial Administrator and her dealings with all the shopkeepers and with people of different departments, rations, electricity etc. made her a historical person.

3. *Her service to the Church, Congregation and Humanity:*

Church: Her pastoral zeal and love for the Church was truly edifying. She was eager to render her time and energy for the spiritual activities of the Church, be it distribution of communion, counting the mite box or any such service to the Church. She would go, by bus or walk, to the different sub-stations for animating the Liturgy, teaching Catechism, Basic Christian Community etc. She was a great missionary at heart.

Congregation: Her love for the Congregation was great. She was always on her feet offering her service to the Community of Secunderabad for 57 long years. She would leave no stone unturned in seeing how best every bank transaction would be advantageous for the Institute. She did not spare herself from hard work and difficulties. Years ago staying together in the same Community, Mother Ernestine observed that, *“She would see to the maintenance and upkeep of the huge buildings with utmost care and concern. This towering personality could be seen walking the length and breadth of the compound looking if anything needed to be done in the campus and pulling up the workers at times for negligence of duty.”* Sister utilized all resources for the betterment of the Sisters and institutions. Asst. Prof. Dr. Diana Jacob, B.Ed. College, who was our Boarder, witnessed this: *“We used to run to the Convent...asking for the ‘Engineer Sister’ to come to the boarding in case of a leak or an overflow, because we couldn't pronounce the name Zaveria...”* Her reply in an interview about ‘the best thing being a Sisters of St. Ann of Providence’ was, *“our dear Italian Sisters gave me the formation, the love and concern they have for the poor. In life, I do not ask for anything and refuse nothing. I did not have much education, but God gave me common sense so that I was able to carry out my duties. I am grateful to God and my Congregation for the trust they placed in me.”* Such was her humility and love for the Congregation!

Humanity: Besides her heavy responsibility in the Community, she was generous to spend her life for the poor and the marginalized. Personal experience of Sr. Marykutty being with Sr. Zaveria in Secunderabad for many years: *“In her contacts there was no difference between the rich or the poor, the literate or illiterate. Our Community was safe in her hands as she was very meticulous in Community matters and affairs...”* She carried herself with elegance, upright and firm and commanded respect from her staff and workers. She would do anything to uplift the marginalized and never turn away the poor who knocked at our door. She got a few of them to be married and settle down in life. One such example is Mrs. Theresa Joseph, who met Sr. Zaveria, in December, 1972: *“I was 23 year old. It was cold and the season of Christmas. I left Bombay with a burdened heart in search of a home and I was praying in St. Mary's Church. Like an angel Sr. Zaveria provided me shelter for a lifetime. I was the first orphan girl to get married from Secunderabad Convent...What I am today I owe to Sister Zaveria.”*

Having a special place in her heart for the prison ministry, she dedicated herself fully by providing the inmates in the prison, comfort and solace. She accompanied their children to complete their studies. Even today people of all walks of life remember her, for her diligence and concern. Mrs. Balaiya, the Former Teacher, shares her experience working with her: *“Sr. Zaveria encouraged me to share the Word of God with prisoners in Telugu. Because I am a convert I didn't have much knowledge about the Sacred Scripture. She helped me a lot to improve myself to share the Word of God with prisoners. Even if she was not well, she never missed visiting the prison on Sundays. We helped so many prisoners in different ways. Some prisoners after their release, with their families believed in Jesus Christ...”*

With great reverence and due respect she used to prepare the graves for the burial of our deceased Sisters and would clean and whitewash the cemetery at Mettuguda, Secunderabad to celebrate ‘All Souls Day’. Lockdown was not a problem to prepare her grave as many workers who used to help her, came forward to dig the grave for her mortal remains.

Many Priests, Sisters and laity known to Sr. Zaveria, witnessed her self-sacrificing, zealous and generous spirit. Mrs. Patty, the Former Teacher in Secunderabad, expresses her inner most

feelings: *“I remember when I joined St Ann's in 1966, earlier and from then onwards she was called the **Engineer Sister of St Ann's**... always on her feet, true to St. Ann's motto. I worked under Sr. Zaveria while conducting the external Bank and other exams from 1972 to 2014, to me and many others she was God sent-Divine Providence in difficult times. She was very efficient, firm, yet kind in her dealings with us... Indeed Sister was one of the strong pillars of St. Ann's and well known in Secunderabad.”*

Sr. Zaveria was a person of dedication and was unshaken by anything. She left behind a legacy to follow Christ radically and to serve Him in the poor. I am grateful to Sr. Arokia Mary, the animator of the Community and the Sisters who gave her utmost care especially in her last agony. I am thankful to all the Sisters from the twin-city and neighbouring Communities and the formees who kept praying the entire day for Sr. Zaveria in the Chapel of St. Ann's Home, Bolarum where her mortal remains laid.

Sr. Zaveria was privileged indeed to receive two Masses, morning and evening, even under lockdown. At 3.00 p.m. a Funeral Mass was officiated by Fr. Swarna Bernard, the Episcopal Vicar of the Archdiocese of Hyderabad and con-celebrated by three more priests. In his sermon, Fr. Bernard highlighted the qualities of Sr. Zaveria and his experience of working together in the Parish of Bowenpally, Secunderabad a sub-station of Mudfort Parish earlier. *“Sister was a true missionary at heart; she would go to any extent to accomplish her commitment. She was very zealous in teaching Catechism to the little ones and spreading the Word of God among the people, accompanied by Sr. Cicily Mathew. They used to visit each family regularly on Sundays both in the morning and evening, encouraging the faithful to participate in the Holy Eucharist. Seeing the huge number of Parishioners present in the Church on First Holy Communion, Archbishop declared it as Parish. It was because of Sr. Zaveria who sowed the seed of faith in the faithful. Today it is one of the best Parishes in the Diocese...”*

Sisters from nearby Communities, formees and some of the Parishioners were present for the Holy Eucharist. Her nephew, who used to visit Sr. Zaveria often, could not be present as he was out of station. Although, due to Covid-19 and social distancing, many people rich or poor, could not be present, some of the poor people known to her, waited patiently in the Cemetery and paid their last homage to her. At 5.00 p.m. her mortal remains were laid to rest in the grave of her sister, Sr. Clementina, at Mettuguda Cemetery.

Let me now bring this to a close with the words of Sr. Raphaela:

*Beloved Sr. Zaveria, no one will forget you
for your great love and charity.
We thank you from the core of our hearts and
from the depths of our being for what you have been to each of us.
Bless and pray for the needs of the Church and the Congregation.
May you be rewarded with eternal bliss!*

Affectionately,



Provincial Superior