

Province of St. Joseph, Western India
St. Ann's Provincialate
Simon Lane, Angelore
Mangalore



4th September, 2020

*“Death is not extinguishing the light; it is only putting out the lamp
because the dawn has come.” (Rabindranath Tagore)*

Though it seems that the lamp has been put out for Sr. Onorina Gonsalves from this world the dawn has entered her life for all eternity as she meets the Lord face to face.

Sr. Onorina (Magdelene) Gonsalves was gifted to her loving and devout parents Mr. Joseph Gonsalves and Mrs. Santamma Serra on 23rd January 1932 at Madantyar in Mangalore. Right from her childhood her parents instilled into her the Love of God and the desire to follow Him closely. She responded to the call of God at a very tender age and decided to dedicate her entire life to Him.

Sr. Onorina entered the Novitiate on 21st June 1949 and received the Holy Habit on 1st January 1950, made her Religious Profession on 1st January 1952 and pronounced her Perpetual Vows 1st January 1958. She had the joy of celebrating her Silver, Golden and Diamond Jubilees.

She became a blessing in the following communities and the people assigned to her care:

- 1952 – Sacred Heart Convent, Vijayawada
- 1953 – St. Ann's Convent. Jawalgira
- 1954 – Sent to do Compounder's training in K.E.M. Hospital, Secunderabad
- 1955 - Mithapur to help in the crèche
- 1973 - Animator of St. Ann's Home for the Aged, Angelore
- 1979 - Our Lady of Perpetual Help Convent, Sanquelim
- 1981 - Mithapur to work with TB patients at Varvala an extension of Mithapur Community
- 1982 - Animator of St. Ann's Home for the Aged, Angelore
- 1988 - Maria Bhavan Convent, Derebail.
- 1989 - St. Ann's Convent, Fatimapura
- 1990 - Animator of St. Ann's Convent, Mudgal
- 1993 - St. Ann's Convent, Fatimapura to teach nursery children
- 1995 - St. Ann's Convent, Mehmedabad as boarding in-charge
- 2009 - St. Ann's Convent, Sabarmati
- 2017 – St. Ann's Convent, Talegaon

In these Communities Sr. Onorina distinguished herself for her regular observance of rules, spirit of prayer and poverty, goodness and docility, a sense of responsibility and availability in fulfilling her mission in any type of work entrusted to her may it be great or small she performed it with great diligence and to the best of her ability.

“How beautiful are the feet of those who carry the good news”..... these are the very feet that have walked from village to village carrying the good news of God's love to the sick, poor, lonely, needy and to all whom she encountered. She never left a stone unturned in the sphere of her life as she never counted the cost of time & energy. She would walk an extra mile to uplift the poor. Being a person of commitment and dedication she worked zealously for the welfare of the society. As an Animator of the communities she carried out this delicate task with great care, keeping alive the Charism of the Congregation through the community Mission. She had great Love for the elderly inmates of the Angelore, visiting as often as she could and seeing to their needs, comforting them in the evening of

their lives. She was an Angel of Peace and comfort, listening to their problems. Sr. Onorina imbibed herself totally in the culture of the people, took interest in learning the languages and was one with the simple village people visiting them and through her gentle ways helping them to come closer to God.

Her exemplary way of life was followed by her Nephews Fr. Archi Gonsalves OCD, Fr. Jerome Gonsalves of Montfort Fathers who are priests and the three of her Nieces who chose to be religious of whom Srs. Nora and Magdelene belong to our Province and Sr. Leena in the Congregation of Mission Sisters of Ajmer. She had the joy of seeing many of her cousins who followed the religious life.

In the past sixty eight years of her Religious Life, Sr. Onorina was ever joyful. Her sacrificial life cost her much struggle all through. She had been valiant to face them with humility and acceptance. In her youthful years she had been a very active servant of the Lord and has built the Communities where she lived with her sacrificing spirit coupled with hard work. She had a magnanimous heart one that overflowed with gratitude for small or big favours received.

Sr. Nora Gonsalves her niece writing about her Aunt says, "While she was in Talegaon Sr. Onorina lived a disciplinary life with a fixed time table. She spent most of the time with the Lord praying for different intentions of the Church, Congregation, and family. She was a lover of reading books, Magazines and Newspaper. Daily news she read faithfully and sometimes shared it with the sisters whenever possible. She had lot of patience, never made demands, to attend to her needs, instead waited patiently. She could hear only from the right ear. Many times she was not able to hear all the announcements made in the community yet made no complaints. I was edified the way she lived her Religious life".

Sr. Kathreena recalling her experience with Sr. Onorina says, "Sr. Onorina is an exemplary Sister. She loved our Congregation very dearly. She was very enthusiastic whenever we talked about vocations and getting candidates to our Congregation. She made it a point to encourage and appreciate everyone specially the young Sisters. Children and boarding girls were very close to her heart and she loved them as a mother, quick to excuse others' faults and gave another chance to improve. She used to be exuberant and innovative towards changes and newness. She always appreciated risk taking and found happiness in achieving it. She was a positive thinker and was a free person, very sociable and jovial. She found happiness in doing small things in an extraordinary way. Being an experienced person in religious life she was a light and guide for the other Sisters in the Community. She was an extrovert person and spoke the mind out without any inhibition. She restricted herself from speaking ill of others. She prayed constantly for our Congregation and Mother General for her good health".

"Gone from our sight but never from our hearts. Yes our dear Sr. Onorina will always remain in our hearts. The sisters of Sabarmati community and the people who had a privilege of having met Sr. Onorina fondly remember her as a motherly figure who made us feel loved immensely. She grew in age gracefully, flashing a sweet smile all around her and creating a peaceful environment for all to live. She was a person of few words but enormous care and concern for her sisters. One outstanding quality which upheld the person of Sr. Onorina was that whenever sisters were held up with some work and returned home late, Sr. Onorina with a bright smile and an embracing heart would wait near the door. The glow on her face pumped energy into us. At any part of the day and even late at night sister would wait near the door till we return. Indeed Sr. Onorina has left a great example for us to follow. May she rest in peace and smile from above on each one of us. We really miss you dear Sr. Onorina and good bye Sister till we meet in the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Wait

for us near the gate of heaven to welcome as you did on earth. Thank you Sister and we Love you". - Sr. Rita Pinto from Sabarmati

Sr. Jaya Macwan who experienced her witnessing life says "Sr. Onorina was a magnanimous person through her kind heart. Her nobility reached out to everyone with motherly affection. During my boarding life in Mehendabad as a young girl I witnessed her missionary spirit. Sister was very good to the poor in our locality. She was very supportive in our growth, in studies and in spiritual life. As a religious my encounter with Sr. Onorina was memorable. She was happy to see me as a religious sister. She used to tell others '*she is my child (dikri)*'. She always inquired about the families of my village specially the youth".

Her students from Sabarmati remember Sr. Onorina and one of them Simerdeep Chawla says "Sr. Onorina was a very warm hearted, ever smiling and a very charming personality. We will miss her. We have very sweet memories with her".

Sr. Onorina was a known case of diabetic Mellitus and hypertension. In 2017 while travelling from Mangalore on the way she had a severe heart attack. She was admitted to Rajagiri Victor Hospital at Margaon. She was in a critical state and on Ventilator. After she improved in her health she was brought to Talegaon and follow up treatment was continued from MIMER hospital. She had a fall on 17th March 2020 sustained the fracture of femur bone and was hospitalized. To make her fit for surgery she had to be treated for a week by the Physician. The operation was done on 24th March 2020. Her recovery from convalescence was rather quick. She was discharged after a week.

Though there was no complication from the surgical point of view she had recurrent urinary tract infection. On 31st May 2020 her condition grew serious with the decline of vital signs. She revived that state and kept rather well except for on and off fever. On 24th August once again with severe rigors of fever vital signs declined. Doctor was called and treated at home. Blood and urine investigations were done which showed very severe UTI. Treatment was carried out as per the order of the doctor but condition continued to decline and she breathed her last on 30th August at 9.30 PM.

The funeral service was held on 31st August at 10.00 am in Talegaon. Fr. Daniel Christian the Parish Priest presided over the Holy Eucharist concelebrated by Fr. Peter. In his homily Fr. Peter referred to the three sacraments namely Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation. In Baptism mission was entrusted to her. She received the gift of life and wore a white cloth that shows sign of purity and the lighted candle was her guide all through. On her first Holy Communion day she carried the same lighted candle and embraced the crucified Christ and with the words of St. Paul she acclaimed "it is not I but Christ who lives in me". In and through Confirmation she was guided and directed by the Holy Spirit. She assimilated the Word of God and shared with others. She had the great opportunity to receive the Sacrament of Anointing to prepare herself for eternal journey. She is the role model to lead a virtuous life. She joyfully accomplished the mission entrusted to her for 88 years of her life. We take her as our inspiration and accomplish the mission of Christ entrusted to each one of us. Her mortal remains were laid to rest in Talegaon Cemetery.

"The song is ended but the melody Lingers on" (Irving Berlin). Sr. Onorina has left an indelible mark of her life on everyone whom she met and the lasting memories of her good deeds still linger in the hearts of many people whom she served. The priests, sisters and people fondly remember her and cherish her deep love and concern towards them. These memories will still echo in the minds and hearts of many.

I could not be present to bid farewell to Sr. Onorina due to the pandemic COVID-19. I have a great admiration for her as a person who gave prophetic witness to the Trinitarian Love by constantly living in the presence of God, desiring to do good as the Trinitarian Love is genuine, mutual and self-giving. I thank God for the gift of our dear Sr. Onorina who enriched our Congregation and was an asset to the Church and a source of blessing to the people with whom she lived and worked for.

I express my words of sympathy to her dear nieces Srs. Nora & Magdalene Gonsalves and all her family members specially her priests-nephews who could not be present for the funeral service due to travel restrictions. I am grateful to Sr. Magline Gomes the Animator and the community of Talegaon for their constant assistance to Sr. Onorina during the days of her illness. I am indebted to the Sister-nurses for taking care of Sr. Onorina, the communities of Formation House and Karunanjali for their support and the entire Province and the Congregation especially Mother General and her Council for the prayers offered for Sr. Onorina.

We continue to offer our prayers of suffrage for Sr. Onorina that she may enjoy heavenly bliss eternally and seek her intercession for the family of St. Ann and its mission.

Affectionately,



Sr. Charlotte Sequeira

Provincial Superior