

St. Ann's Provincialate
Gollapudi P.O
Krishna District
Andhra Pradesh - 521 225
0866 - 2970933/ 2975033

16th March, 2021



“Happy the man who has placed his trust in the Lord”. (Proverbs 16: 20)

Dearest Sisters,

Truly happy was our dearest Sr. Serapia who had always placed her trust in God alone and none other. So certainly, she must have been happy to return to her heavenly homeland when her beloved spouse Jesus, in whom she placed her trust, beckoned her on 10th March, to come and receive the crown he had prepared for her.

Sr. Seraphia, whose maiden name was Gertrude Bartholomew, was the fourth of six children, two boys and four girls born to Mr. Bartholomew and Mrs Gnanapragasi. She saw the light of day on 15th May 1935 at a place called Poovar, located in Trivandrum District of Kerala State. Her arrival brought great joy to her God- fearing parents and siblings who cared for her and nurtured her with tender affection and attention.

At the age of five her father admitted her in St. Andrews School Karumkulam near to her home town. As fate would have it, little Gertrude lost her father at the tender age of eight and was totally heartbroken. Circumstances led her to discontinue her studies after completing her fifth class. A couple of years later her sister Angelina by then married and settled in Bangalore took Gertrude with her to Bangalore. Her stay there was short, as her mother with her cousin went to Bangalore and brought Gertrude back home.

While at home, she frequented the Convent of the FMM Sisters to learn Needle Work and Embroidery at their Tailoring Centre and completed the Course successfully in three years. It was round about this time that her cousin Daisy who was working at Raichur as a teacher decided to take Gertrude with her to Raichur. She was happy to go, little knowing that this decision taken in 1950, would mark the turn of events that would shape her future life. Here she continued her studies in English which she found difficult and could not proceed beyond the eighth class.

The then Superior at Raichur, Sr. Fidenza, found in Gertrude a suitable travelling companion when she used to go to Wellington in the Nilgiris for her holidays. Living closely with the Sisters, watching them pray, helping them in their activities and edified by their life of service and sacrifice, Gertrude began to experience the tug at her heart and so expressed her desire to Sr. Fidenza. Opportunity knocked at her door when she chanced to meet Mother Clemenza, the Provincial Superior, at Wellington who was more than glad to accept her into the Religious Family of St. Ann.

Thus it was, that she entered the Congregation at Secunderabad in January 1957, proceeded to do her Postulancy at Raichur in June 1957, made her Vestition on 3rd January 1958, her First Profession on 3rd January 1960 and on the same date in 1966 pronounced her Final Vows at Secunderabad. She

celebrated her Silver Jubilee in 1985, her Golden Jubilee in 2010 and her Diamond Jubilee in 2020, unfortunately which could not be celebrated due to her ill health.

After her First Profession and the years that followed, the assignments entrusted to her are as given below:

- Jun 1960 - May 1969 St. Ann's Convent, Secunderabad- Kitchen In-charge.
- June 1969 - May 1975 St. Mary's Convent, Raichur- Kitchen In-charge.
- Jun 1975 - June 1984 St. Ann's Convent, Secunderabad- Kitchen In-charge
- July 1984 - May 1992 St. Ann's Convent, Eluru, Asst. Warden, Inter-Campus- Mess In-charge
- June 1992 - May 1993 St. Ann's Home, Bolarum, Kitchen in Charge
- June 1993 - May 1994 St. Ann's Convent, Secunderabad Boarding and Canteen In-charge
- June 1994 - May 2005 St. Ann's Convent, Mangalapalem, Boarding and Housework
- Jun 2005 - May 2012 Clemenza Villa, Eluru, Asst. Warden, - Mess In-charge
- Jun 2012 to date St. Anthony's Convent, Gollapudi for rest

Her memorable years of service in the various places she was sent to are a sign of God's love and faithfulness to her and of her love and faithfulness to God.

Sr. Seraphia was a prayerful, soft-spoken, simple, humble, joyful and jovial Sister. She was lovable and approachable and with her pleasant smile endeared herself to the Sisters, staff and students whom she encountered in the carrying out of her apostolate. She had a great love for the poor and was ever willing to help those in need. Sharing her deep God experiences, she led many to the love and knowledge of the Divine. She had a beautiful voice and would spontaneously break into song.

Richly blessed with culinary skills and creative in the art of cooking, she held the responsibility of the Chef in different places for the greater part of her life, with the exception of a decade as Boarding Mistress in Mangalapalem. She found great joy in making the Sisters happy with her varied dishes and delicacies, sweets and savouries and was happy in teaching this art to interested candidates and grading their performance.

On the whole Sr. Serapia, enjoyed good health all through her life with no major health complications, except for a short period of treatment at Fatimanagar, in 1984, while she was posted at Secunderabad. It was while she was at Mangalapalem, towards the end of her stay there, that she began to experience pain in her knees and legs, an aging ailment that accompanied her for the rest of her life, hindering her from walking or standing for long periods.

It was only in the last two months that her health began to deteriorate rapidly. To be precise it was on the 18th of January that she began to vomit blood. (Haematemesis). This lasted for about two days after which she showed signs of being better. Covid and other tests conducted proved negative. However, the second episode of blood vomiting and first episode of blood stools took place on January 24th. I informed her niece Sr. Anita Francis who is in the South Province, about her Aunt's health and by the end of the month she came down to spend a couple of days with her. Sr. Serapia was cheerful and truly happy in the good company of her beloved niece. From then on she once again showed signs of

recovering but since she could not be given solid food, was put on liquids. From 20th February she refused to take oral feeds and was put on tube feeds. She was getting weaker each day and could not respond to anyone. She was administered the Sacrament of Anointing of the sick. From 23rd February she stopped opening her eyes, gradually became unconscious and remained thus till her end came on 10th March at 11.21 am. In the company of the Sisters of her Community at Gollapudi, who surrounded her death-bed she breathed her last peacefully. I was on visitation to the Formative Community at Eluru, when I got the news and rushed back after lunch to make arrangements for the funeral mass at 10.30 am the next day.

The main celebrant for the funeral Mass at St. Anthony's Convent, Chapel, Gollapudi, was Most Rev. Joseph Raja Rao, Bishop of Vijayawada Diocese. He was assisted by three other priests. Also present at the Eucharistic celebration to pay their last respects to the departed soul were Sisters from the neighbouring Communities of Eluru, Nidadavolu and Vijayawada and a few parishioners. Sr. Serapia's favourite hymn was "Jesus name above all names". She loved to sing it for us and we loved listening to her singing it for us. The assembly, as our last tribute to dear Sr. Serapia sang this hymn for her with much love and gratitude. After the Mass and the funeral rituals her mortal remains were laid to rest in our Cemetery at Gollapudi.

It is a happy coincidence that at exactly the same time that we had the funeral mass at Gollapudi, her dear family members, who could not be present for the same due to Covid and other restrictions had the good fortune to celebrate the Mass at Poovar her hometown at exactly the same time to be spiritually united. This is what her niece Sr. Anita has to say:

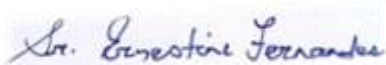
"I feel really sad that I can't be present for the funeral and so too the others from my family. I will be joining my family for the Eucharistic celebration for the repose of her soul in my parish at Poovar at 10.30 am to be united with you all at the same time of the funeral....."

.....We had a beautiful celebration. We four sisters could participate with all the family members and parishioners. After mass some refreshments were given to those who came. The touching thing was that a group of people came to my parish as pilgrims just after mass and were happy to receive something to eat and drink. May be Sr. Serapia's love to feed the poor and needy was seen even in this little act which was not foreseen by us"

Dearest Sisters, I take this opportunity to express my sincere condolences and thanks to Sr. Rosy Kidengeth and every Sister of the Hospital Community, very specially our dear nurses for their care and concern extended to dearest Sr. Serapia. I also express my sincere condolences to her dear niece Sr. Anita and to all the bereaved members of her family.

While we thank God for the exemplary life of love and service of Sr. Serapia and offer her our suffrages, we also pray for our dearest Mother Francesca and her Councillors and for every Capitular as they earnestly prepare for the forthcoming Chapter that they be guided and empowered by the light of the Holy Spirit.

Yours affectionately,



Sr. Ernestine Fernandes
Provincial Superior.