

St. Ann's Provincialate
Simon Lane, Angelore
Mangalore – 575 002
Karnataka



17th May, 2021

“Keep your baggage ready, well prepared, so as to be always disposed to answer the divine call.”
(Blessed Mother Enrichetta, Her Writings IIA, pg. 67)

This wise counsel of Mother Enrichetta seemed to be accepted by our dear Sr. Stella Paul Raj who promptly answered the call of the Beloved and swiftly flew into His embrace leaving all of us utterly dumbfounded.

As the world and in particular, our beloved country continues to suffer under the painful scourge of the pandemic, the death of Sr. Stella became for us an occasion of being in solidarity with our fellow brethren who have, likewise, lost their loved ones under these distressing circumstances. Though everything was so unexpected *“with a filial attitude we interpret every happening within the design of the unfathomable wisdom of God the Father.”* (Constitutions art. 69)

Sr. Stella Paul Raj (SelvaKumari) was born on 15th July 1961 in a God-fearing family of Mr. Paul Raj and Mrs. Mangala Mary at Hutti, Raichur, Karnataka. Being 3rd among 7 children she was brought up in an atmosphere of prayer and faith where she gradually discovered God's call to belong to Him totally and to serve the humanity. She joined the Congregation at her very young age. She made her First Profession on 1st May 1985 and Perpetual Profession on 1st May, 1991.

Her readiness to live for the Lord and to give Christ to others enabled her to avail herself wherever obedience would send her:

1985 she was sent to Bandra as a Student where she continued her academic studies

1989 – 1990: St. Ann's Convent, Talegaon as a Teacher

1990 – 1992: St. Ann's Convent, Jamnagar as a Teacher

1992 – 1993: St. Ann's Home for the Aged, Angelore as a Student

1993 – 1994: St. Ann's Convent, Sabarmati as a Teacher

1994 – 1995: St. Mary's Convent, Raichur as a Teacher

1995 – 1997: St. Ann's Convent, Sabarmati as a Teacher

1997 – 1999: St. Ann's Convent, Mudgal as a Head Mistress of the School

1999 – 2001: St. Ann's Convent, Peddapalli as a Teacher

2001 – 2006: St. Mary's Convent, Raichur as a Teacher

2006 – 2007: Mangalore as a Student

2007 – 2008: St. Ann's Convent, Kundapur as a Head Mistress of the School

2008 – 2014: St. Ann's Convent, Hutti as a Head Mistress of the School

2014 – 2017: St. Ann's Convent, Hutti as an Animator of the Community

2017 to date: St. Mary's Convent, Raichur as an Incharge of P. U. College

As a teacher by profession, Sr. Stella had her unique way of attracting the students to the Lord. Her soothing smile, her word of encouragement, her sincere love for everyone, her zealous desire to make known the love of God to the people and her unshakable faith in God were the hallmarks of Sr. Stella's life. As some sisters of the Province expressed that she was constantly asking them to pray for her during

the period of her illness. Perhaps she wanted the strength and courage to face her life's struggle. Such was her deep faith as prayer was her strong weapon. She always had the habit of thanking the Lord continually. She would express her thanks to God for the miracles that were taken place in her life. She was often found in the presence of God. She would storm the heavens when the community was in dire need of God's intervention. Her fingers were always adorned with the Rosary beads. Her lips would never cease to praise God even in the last days of her life. The highlight of her life is that her heart always moved towards the poor and the needy of the Society. She counselled the depressed, offered friendly hand to the lonely and generously gave her time to the one who needed it. Through her prayers and help she has touched the lives of many, bringing Christ into their lives. However, her poor health often held her back from other charitable works.

The Sisters in the communities of present and past, experienced and cherished the presence and participation of Sr. Stella in a unique way as they express,

Sister Stella, a lyric of God's work

A lover of music, gifted with a melodious voice

With these talents she drew many in closer union with God.

A true moulder of our youth

Using her eloquent speech and kind virtues

She sprang into action, whenever she was called for.

A sincere soul,

Her pains forgetting, selflessly gave off herself

To worthy causes that she did serve

God fearing, humble, sincere and diligent

Such a wonderful being was our dear Sister Stella.

Sense of belonging to our religious family was manifested in her day today life. She enjoyed preparing delicious food for the sisters. No doubt dear Sr. Stella's sudden death leaves a heartache no one can heal, but love leaves a memory no one can steal.

I personally experienced her loyalty to our beloved Congregation. She would work for the development and growth of the Institution without counting the cost of her life. She was a committed religious, straight forward in her thinking and acting. She would always critically analyze the situation and bring a favourable solution to the good of the Institute.

Many of her students have sent their condolences on the demise of Sr. Stella giving her the credit of being an effective teacher and role model in their lives:

"Our dear Principal Sr. Stella, it's like a nightmare to all of us, the college students. We cannot take it or digest that you are no more. How can it be possible dear? ... You left us so early and without any intimation. You are a brave Principal of our college, you taught us to face life as it comes. It is said that God picks up the best flower for Himself from His garden of love. As a Principal you have taught us the basic values of life. We all have come from different areas and regions, following different religions but your way of living has brought us closer to the religion of humanity. With a prayer we would start our classes in the morning and close the day with the same. We were eager to listen to you as you always taught us the morals and ethics of life through parables and life giving stories. You would find our problems by only looking at our faces, for you would say 'face is the index of our mind'. You never behaved like a Principal who is dominating and autocratic instead you were a person down to earth, humble and cordial as a friend. You taught us to become divine by becoming truly human and humane".

The Staff of St. Mary's Institute were also deeply pained and thus they expressed their sorrow:

"Dear Sr. Stella, I am just in a shock to know about your sudden going away from all of us. I was privileged to be your student. You were an awesome teacher, not only because of the lessons that you taught us but also the values that we learnt for life. You were not only a best teacher but a mother, councillor, friend, and also a multi skilled personality. You were friend of the poor and the needy. Very sociable and pious, as you always taught us with the examples of Jesus and the Bible. Dear Sister, you left us very soon. It is truth but very hard to accept. However, the sweet memories of yours will always be with us... Rest in peace dear Sister". Mrs. Teresa Anthony, Teacher.

Her Novitiate batch mates who are deeply grieved with the loss of their dear companion express their sorrow and appreciation to Sr. Stella:

Dearest Stella,

These special memories of you will always make us smile
If only we could have you back for just a little while
Then we could sit and talk again just like we used to do
You always meant so much to us and always will do too
The fact that you're no longer here will always cause us pain
But you're forever in our hearts until we meet again.

Your friendship was a blessing, we shared so many secrets
You brightened up our days, you brought so much happiness
With your kind and loving ways
Through all the ups and downs of life
The good times and the sad
You were loyal and loving throughout
We love you forever and will live in our hearts always.

We began with 13 in number in the Postulancy
And then we were 12 like the apostles of Jesus.
We sailed in the sea of life's journey
You were always so full of fun getting us into peals of laughter
And then the storm snatched away the first in our group
Last year it was Sr. Philomena and this year its you our dearest Stella
May you enjoy the company of Jesus in heaven
Till we all unite again one day.
Adieu Stella. Do pray and intercede for us.

Progress in the spiritual life is a constant concern for all of us even in the dark and grim situations of life. Sr. Stella who attended the Annual Retreat preached by Sr. Letitia D'Souza in October 2020 on the life of Blessed Mother Enrichetta was truly happy with the profound spiritual experience that she had during the Retreat. With immense joy and satisfaction she expressed that she never knew the wealth of the life of our Blessed Mother Enrichetta and with that same breath she exclaimed 'Now I really want to love Mother Enrichetta and want make my own project of life to live like her'. Our beloved Mother Enrichetta took her to be with her Good Daddy in heaven on the very special day of her Beatification. [Ref: Bulletin - St. Joseph's Province - pg. no. 10-14]

Sr. Stella's physical health condition in the past decade was only satisfactory as she was ailing from high diabetes complications and was treated regularly by the competent doctors. She always had the strong will power and braved her sickness. Her ill health did not deter her from continuing her Educative Pastoral Ministry. Till the end she fought the fight against all odds of life and proved herself to be a valiant woman for the Kingdom of God. On 7th May, 2021 Sr. Stella had to be taken to the hospital due to

the critical health condition as she was suffering from weakness and fever. While she was undergoing medical health checkup it was discovered that, she was suffering from acute Interstitial Pneumonia of viral etiology - the symptoms of severe attack of Covid - 19. As there were no beds available in the Hospitals at Raichur she was referred to St. John's Hospital, Bangalore. Immediately With the Life Support instruments she was taken to Bangalore by Ambulance accompanied by Sr. Mable Helen Lobo, the Animator of the Community, Sr. Jyothi Nalamala, Ms. Mahadevi a co-worker and a nurse from the hospital. Her journey to the hospital was to regain her bodily health, but our good God led her to the road of heaven to be with Him forever. She surrendered her spirit to her beloved spouse at 6.30 pm.

On 8th May 2021 at 11.30 a.m., the funeral service commenced with a prayer by Br. Subhash who blessed the mortal remains. She was laid to rest in the cemetery of Kodathi Parish, Sarjapur Road, Bangalore. As per Covid regulations her younger sister Mrs. Mary, her Brother- in -law Mr. Emmanuel Rajaratnam and Nephew Mr. Ratan along with Sr. Pramila Dsouza, Superior of the Nelamangala Community were present for the funeral prayer service. I thank the community of Raichur for their constant care and support during this trying period and very specially Sr. Mable Helen Lobo and Sr. Jyothi Nalamala who accompanied her to the hospital from Raichur to Bangalore. I owe my gratitude to Sr. Pramila D'Souza the Provincial Councillor for her selfless service in seeing to the necessary arrangements and remaining the whole night with the bereaved family of Sr. Stella. They were indeed very brave like our Venerable Founder Carlo Tancredi who offered himself to serve the cholera victims.

I gratefully acknowledge the love and concern of Mother General Sr. Francesca Sarcia, who was continuously with us and enquiring about the well being of Sr. Stella while she was taken to the hospital. I also thank the General council and all the Sisters of our Congregation for their prayerful support. My heartfelt condolences to her younger sisters, Mrs. Mary, Sr. Arogya from the Congregation of the handmaids of Mount Rosary and the grieving family members of Sr. Stella as they are undergoing the loss of their loved one. I extend my condolences to her batch mates of the Novitiate, staff and students of St. Mary's P.U. College, Raichur.

As you rest in the arms of your beloved Son Jesus dear Sr. Stella, pray for us that we too may become worthy of God's service in His Vineyard and live our Consecrated life fully and authentically. Let me end with a prayer which in some measure I think, epitomizes her life: "May God give us all the courage that we need to go the way that He shepherds us. That when He calls, we may go unfrightened. If He bids us to come to Him across the waters, unfrightened we may go, and if He bids us climb the hill may we not notice that it is a hill, mindful only of the happiness of His company. He made us for Himself that we should travel with Him and see Him at last in His unveiled beauty in the abiding City where He is Light and Happiness and Endless Home". (Fr. Bede Jarrett O. P.) As we continue to offer our prayers of suffrages for Sr. Stella, may she soon behold the glory of God and intercede for the living who are terrified and struggling due to this pandemic.

Affectionately,



Sr. Charlotte Sequeira
Provincial Superior