

St. Ann's Provincialate,  
Melamiyur  
13<sup>th</sup> October, 2021



*“Therefore choose life that you and your offspring may live, loving the Lord your God, obeying His voice and holding fast to Him, for He is your life and length of days.”  
(Deut. 30/19)*

**Dearest Sisters,**

Length of days, and years of life are considered blessings from the Lord. A life lived for 97 plus years, with alert mind and perfect memory, heart free of grievances, filled with love and contentment is indeed a unique blessing from the Lord, granted to our dearest Sr. Alice Gnanamuthu. Sr. Alice was self-reliant, carrying out her personal work and could walk around with the assistance of someone till the day she accidentally fell incurring multiple fracture of the hip bone, on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2021. Though Sister was rushed to the hospital, considering her advanced age, weak physique and chronic problem of pneumonia, the doctors declined to perform operation. She was put on traction, which the doctors found, was the only alternative remedy. But the acute pain and discomfort caused by the traction was too much for her feeble and delicate body to bear and she kept repeating, “I am ready to go; please ask Mother Mary to take me soon”. After two days in the hospital, Sister Alice was brought to her Community at Chengalpattu and was nursed by the Sisters round the clock. As her health condition was deteriorating day by day, she was administered the anointing of the sick on 6<sup>th</sup> October. Even at this time Sister was conscious and was able to recognise persons, answer questions and swallow liquid food. On 9<sup>th</sup> October, her pulse rate began to slow down and breathing became difficult. The Sisters of the Community kept watch, praying constantly. At 12.25 pm, amidst the chanting of prayers and invocations, our dearest Sr. Alice surrendered her spirit to the Lord. Her departure was peaceful, without much struggle or pain.

Sr. Alice Gnanamuthu was a unique person, well endowed with spiritual qualities of simplicity, gentleness, generosity, affection and prudence. Within her was a motherly heart that could empathise with those suffering and ready to offer comfort and solace. Her closeness with the Church and the poor enabled her to live her life of consecration authentically and fruitfully. As we recount the meritorious service that Sr. Alice has rendered to the Congregation, we thank God for her witnessing and edifying life that did attract many young girls to embrace religious life. Sr. Alice has left indelible mark in the lives of thousands of young and old, through her life of intense prayer and deep faith. It would be appropriate to listen to few of them as they recount with reverence and devotion their experiences with Sr. Alice.

Sr. Mildred Thambuswamy, recounts, “Sr. Alice was the personification of a saintly religious in my life. I owe my immense gratitude to her for being my Vocation promoter for she recruited many girls including me. In 1961 obliging to the request of my father I was readily admitted in St Mary's Girls' High School and boarding, Chengalpattu. The then provincial superior Mother Clemenza of happy memories visited the boarders of St. Mary's

convent on her canonical visit and her visionary eyes fell on me. Calling me closer Mother predicted to Sr. Alice that I will be a sister of St Ann very soon. From then on Sr. Alice nurtured my Vocation, guided me and encouraged me to choose religious life. I was edified and inspired by her religiosity and commitment and willingly became a Sister of St Ann. I praise and thank God for Sr. Alice, a saintly, motherly and a devoted Sister of St Ann.”

Sr. Eleanor Alphonsa recalls, “Our beloved Sr. Alice would turn the classroom situation into extending Christ’s Kingdom! Example, she would make the children go round in a circle singing mulberry bush... here we go round our Lord Jesus Christ... let’s all bow down before Him! Here all the girls irrespective of religions bow down to Jesus. Sr. Alice inculcated the piety of Mary and Joseph and encouraged the girls to offer every step they take for the conversion of sinners. She stressed the benefits of frequent visit to the Blessed Sacrament. She would prepare the girls for the Triduum, before the feast of St. Ann and catch number of girls to follow Christ in our Congregation. Our Convent, at Nerur, a substation, where Sr. Alice imprinted her long stay in Capital Letters attended to the spiritual needs of the faithful, celebrated dry Mass and prayed Rosary with the villagers. Besides, she was a lover of Eco Spirituality and her prayer life and punctuality to Community activities were an inspiration to the young Sisters. May her memories in us live long and continue to inspire.”

Sr. Nirmala Joris shares, “My experience with Sr. Alice in St. Mary’s Convent, Chengalpattu, touched me deeply as she was my next door neighbor for 14 years but close to my heart in her affectionate ways. She taught me the meaning of motherhood, whom I tenderly called as ALICE AMMA and illustrated in full colour what it means to live one’s life totally and fully for God and for humanity. She was a trusted person that people would confide in. Whenever I happened to meet her, I found her eyes and heart were always fixed on what is beyond our understanding - the Face of God. We are all witnesses to this! Volumes can be spoken about her goodness and dedication. She worked hard to obtain the land for the Congregation from Madras Diocese in order to bring the Word of God in that soil. And now that one sprout, branched into many, bearing fruits in abundance. Living with her in the Community was one of the most formative experiences of my life. She dearly loved our Congregation! She will stay with us forever as our beloved intercessor in heaven.”

Sr. Mini Antony writes, “Sr. Alice is the best role model who taught me to be myself and always come forward to learn more in my first years of religious life. I rarely saw her without smiling or laughing or having a prayer book in her hand. I recall the days when I lost my beloved mother and my Sr. Dolly, she used to keep their souvenirs in her prayer book and utter some prayers daily for both of them. Her smile, warmth and care strengthened me and I never missed a chance to visit her whenever I went to Chengalpattu. Sr. Alice’s life was rich with God and in God. She shared her spiritual riches without any reservation and I am lucky to say that I am a part of that riches. May God be praised for our dear Sr. Alice”.

Sr. Thelma Putti remembers; “Loving and lovable Sr. Alice Amma! Thank you very much for guiding me in all the ways to answer God’s call, to serve God and His people. You were a teacher, a guide, a leader and a loving mother to me. I have imbibed from you many good qualities, like love for the poor and needy, simplicity, kindness and generosity. You are woman of prayer too. Your smile attracts every one. I am sure; you’ll be interceding for the needs of our Congregation and our Province and for all you loved. I miss you very much Alice Amma. We love you dearly.”

Sr. Jebamalai Chenchetty speaks, “Dearest Alicemma, I have witnessed your zeal for the souls as you taught catechism to the children, Word of God to the youth and charity towards the poor in Nerur. I have heard people lovingly called you, “Our Mother Theresa.” Everyday sharp at 5.00 pm the Church bell rings, people used to wait with eager longing to listen to your Bible stories and songs and you used to distribute sweets to young and old alike and sent them away as Jesus fed the multitude and sent them away. You had been a channel for many people attracting them to God in worship of praise and thanks. So, Sr. Alice, you will live in the hearts of people for generations!”

Mrs. Suja Mary, LASA member recalls, “Rev. Sr. Alice was an exemplary role model to anyone who decides to become a nun. Her whole life was full of love and care for everyone around her. Her ever smiling face inspired me a lot. She was dedicated to her profession and never ever failed to support all priests by her sincere prayers. As a Sister she led many young souls towards God and worked hard to enhance God’s mission. The trail of footsteps she had left behind is sure the right path for everyone to follow and serve humanity as well as eternity. Her prayers in Heaven will be a great support to all the sisters of St. Ann’s Providence and all others. With much love and tears we will always remember you dear sister.”

Sr. M. Alice Gnanamuthu was born in the historic town of Tanjore, in Tamil Nadu, on 11<sup>th</sup> May, 1924, to Mr. M. Gnanamuthu and Mrs. Alice Arokiasamy. She was the second of nine children. After completing her studies, while working as a Higher Grade teacher, Alice responded to the call to religious life. In her autograph, Sr. Alice has recorded her vocation story, that she was inspired by Sr. Judith and Mother Clemenza, who invited her to join the Sisters of St. Ann. In 1949, she joined the Postulancy in Secunderabad and after completing the stages of formation, made her First Profession in 1952. Filled with youthful fervour and apostolic zeal, Sr. Alice lent her service in the following Communities;

1952-01-06	Chengalpet as a Clerk
1954-05-01	Chhattisgarh, Gholeng - Teacher and Boarding in-charge
1957-01-06	Sacred Heart Convent, Vijayawada, teacher
1958-01-06	St. Ann’s Convent, Wellington, teacher
1959-01-06	St. Mary’s Convent, Chengalpattu as teacher and boarding in-charge
1961-01-12	St. Mary’s Convent, Chengalpattu as Superior
1970-01-01	Secunderabad, St. Ann's boarding in-charge
1974-06-01	Hutti, Karnataka, as Sister in-charge
1980-06-01	Talegaon, member
1981-06-01	Bolarum, member
1983-06-01	Bhagalpur, teacher in the Diocesan School
1986-06-01	Aruvankadu, Headmistress of St. Ann's English Primary School.
1987-05-01	"Seva Nilaya", Teganare, teacher
1988-06-01	St. Mary's Convent, Chengalpattu, teacher
1992-05-01	Mambakkam, Pastoral work
1995-06-01	Nerur, Evangelization
2005-06-01	till date, St. Mary's Convent, Chengalpattu, Prayer and rest

Sr. Alice had a large collection of Saint’s pictures and would intercede for all the Sisters and priests on their Feast Days. Life of Saints, prayer of the Church and the rosary were her constant companions. She was ready and anxious to join the company of saints.

The funeral Mass was celebrated by His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. Neethinathan, Bishop of Chengalpattu Diocese, along with 30 other priests of the Diocese who had known her closely. His Lordship Bishop Neethinathan, before blessing the body, pointed out some of the qualities of Sr. Alice and said, "Sr. Alice was uniquely gifted. Her religious life was filled with beauty, depth and joy. A woman of deep faith, she spent her long years of life, discovering and re-discovering the nectar of Religious life". Fr. Tony Antony, the Chancellor of the Diocese, in his homily enumerated three main characteristics that made Sr. Alice, special; her prayer life, practice of poverty and patience. Through her adherence to prayer, she gained freedom from many physical or mental ailments and remained a shining example of faith and charity. Through her remarkable patience, she could forgive others and accept situations in good faith build relationships and inculcate values in others.

I wish to express my profound gratitude to Mother Francesca Sarcia, Superior General for accompanying Sr. Alice through her maternal concern during the past years, especially during the final moments of her life. On hearing the news of her demise, Mother sent us a rare photo of Sr. Alice as an Aspirant, a cute little girl standing with Sr. Veronica Almeida, Sr. Marcia's great Aunt. My sincere thanks to His Lordship Neethinathan, Bishop of Chengalpattu for officiating the Holy Mass and paying tribute to our dearest Sr. Alice. I offer my condolences to the family members of Sr. Alice, specially her younger Sisters, Mrs. Susheela and Mrs. Stella, who were present for the funeral along with their families. I thank them for the blessings that Sr. Alice has brought for our Congregation. My special thanks are due to Sr. Nambikai Rayappan, Superior and all the Sisters of St. Mary's Convent, Chengalpattu for love and attention bestowed on Sr. Alice for the past 16 years, meticulously taking care of all her needs. I make special mention of the service of Sr. Christina Gali, who took care of Sr. Alice with total dedication for the past three years. Sr. Alice will rain down blessings on you from heaven. I am obliged to the Sisters of the three Communities in Melamiyur, for their generous help and support. Particularly, I thank Sr. Mercy Sebastian for making the necessary arrangements for the burial with the help of other Sisters.

After the Holy Mass, at 11.30 am, the mortal remains of our dearest Sr. Alice was taken in procession to the cemetery at Thimmavaram and laid to rest beside our Sisters, who have gone before her.

*Dearest Sr. Alice, You lived as a beacon light, loving all and loved by all,  
Now, you remain beloved forever, in the heavenly abode.*

Yours Lovingly,

*Sr. Theresa Cherian*

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Provincial Superior