



Sr. Mary Thomas

15th September 2024

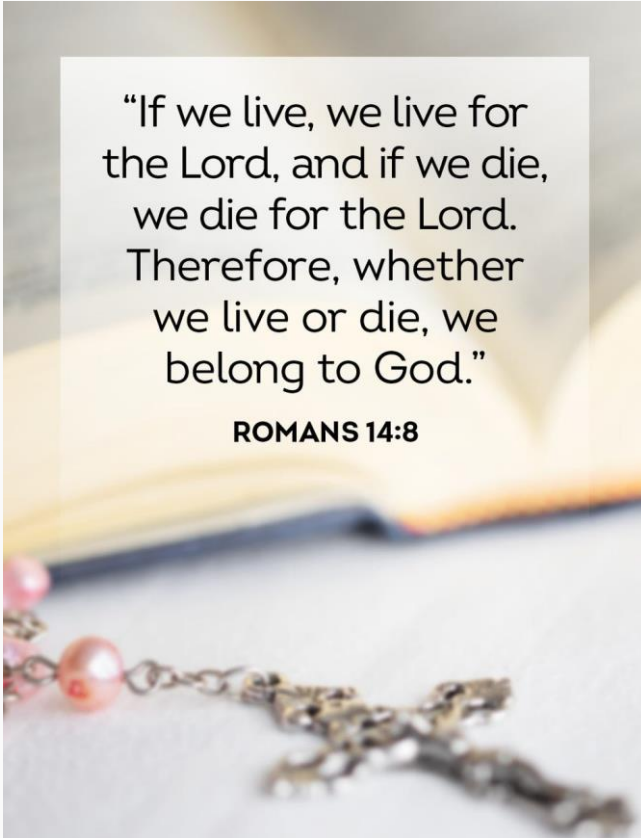
**“Whatever you do to the least of my people,
that you do unto me!” — Mt. 25: 40**

**Province of St. Francis Xavier
India Centre**



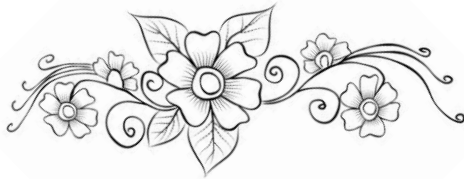
"If we live, we live for
the Lord, and if we die,
we die for the Lord.
Therefore, whether
we live or die, we
belong to God."

ROMANS 14:8



Contents

- **Sr. Mary Thomas, a model of simplicity and humility.**
- **A Versatile Missionary**
- **Reminiscences**
- **Focused**
- **The Last Lap**
- **A wreath from Shankerpura**
- **A gifted person**
- **A Tribute of Love & Gratitude**
- **A Sisterly Sister!**
- **Sr. Mary Thomas – Beauty of Simplicity and Humility.**





Sr. Mary Thomas, a model of simplicity and humility.

Sister Mary Thomas, a devoted Canossian Sister, left an indelible mark on the lives of many sisters as well as people, especially the orphans whom she loved and cared for.

We pay our respects to Sister M. Mary Thomas who lived a life of Selfless Love and dedicated Service*

Her passing leaves a void, but the legacy she left us is indeed enlightenment for us and an inspiration to follow in her footsteps.

A Life of Simplicity, Humility and Compassion, the Charism lived

Sister Mary Thomas lived a life of simplicity and humility.

- Her compassionate heart beat for the marginalized, and she dedicated herself to their care.

A Passionate Educator and Caregiver

- As an educator, she nurtured young minds with patience and kindness.

- Her love for orphans knew no bounds; she provided a motherly embrace.

A Shining Example of Faith

- Sister Mary Thomas's deep faith guided every step. of hers.

- Her trust in Divine Providence inspired hope in those around her.

Remembering Her Legacy

- We honor her by remembering her legacy of love, she leaves us.
- May her selflessness and love inspire generations to come.

In Gratitude

We thank God for the gift of Sister Mary Thomas's life. May her soul rest in eternal peace, and may her love, kindness and dedication continue to inspire and transform lives.

Lord, we pray for the soul of Sister M. Mary Thomas. May her love and smiling simplicity inspire us to follow the Divine path of love and sacrifice. Grant us the courage to serve the marginalized with humility and compassion.

May her soul rest in God's embrace! †

Sr. Audrey D'Souza (Province Leader)

A Versatile Missionary

Dear Sr. Mary Thomas, I appreciate the way in which you lived your life to the full! Your youthful enthusiasm and adventurous spirit unfolded at the mission of Deshnur where you incarnated yourself so readily into the culture of the people and learnt Kannada to proclaim the Word of God to them. You were my English teacher who taught me the English alphabet at Deshnur.

Your contribution to Shankerpura mission was commendable. Your humble, simple and hard work for the

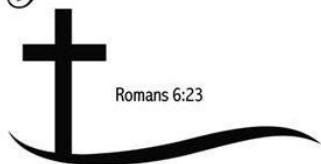
beginning of our community was great. Your contribution to the communities of St. Joseph's, Divine Providence was remarkable both within the house for the accounts as well as the Apostolate where you went visiting families and the sick in the hospitals. Your zeal for souls was spelt out in teaching catechism to the little ones and following them up in their families.

My experience with you in Goa: you showed your earnestness for the apostolate by learning Konkani to carry out your mission effectively. We were edified to see your zeal and youthful spirit.

Dear Sr. Mary, here at Divine Providence you were our praying Moses interceding for the many needs almost throughout the day, praying aloud, we could hear your whispers to the Lord. We miss your presence very much. We are sure you are enjoying the beatific vision. Do intercede for us that we may enjoy the same!!!

Sr. Nataline Lobo

...the **gift** of God is
eternal life through
Jesus Christ our **LORD.**



Reminiscences

It all looked as if it was a well calculated awaiting another ‘ Pentecost period’ of exact 50 days, to be filled with the Holy Spirit , prior to the ‘ Home going’ of our dear Sr. Mary Thomas, as she prepared herself for her solemn Heavenly entry .

Having begun on 26th July 2024 , the joy filled feast of Our Lady’s parents Saints Joachim and Ann when Mother church gives them due veneration it culminated exactly after 50 days, on the solemn Institute feast of Our Lady of Sorrows. On the first day our dear Sr. Mary Thomas gave us a distant signal of her nearing end. After 50 days of enduring purification accompanied by intense anguish which in spite of hospitalization and medication did not ease her much we could only helplessly look at and empathize with her. She silently and patiently entered Eternity in the early hours of 15th Sept. Indeed an enviable day to jump into the arms of our beloved Mother. One only can conclude that it was an apt Tribute from our Mother whose tender name she lovingly bore and whose footsteps she meticulously followed. Sr. Mary Thomas had a very tender devotion to our Blessed Mother. The number of rosaries she prayed daily, only our Lady could keep the count.

By her instinctive silent nature she portrayed Mother Mary’s characteristic virtue of humble silence as she ‘kept her days’ journey in her heart and pondered over them’.(Lk:2.18) On any occasion when a spontaneous prayer had to be said on a

Marian Feast Sr. Mary had unending thanks to offer and petitions to make to the extent that the rest of us had to wait patiently to add one of our own prayer to Mamma Mary. Her spontaneous love and devotion to our Mother was so very obvious.

What an inspiring sight it was to see her glued to her chair in the chapel for hours on end, intimately dialoguing with her Beloved, her innermost secrets!

A saintly priest shared with us: “the greatest gift one can claim from above specially as we advance in age is to be able to cherish the company of the Lord before the Blessed Sacrament, free from all unnecessary preoccupations and anxieties of a life time”. Indeed Sr. Mary was blessed with this envious and gratuitous gift.

Towards the evening of her life, though unable to be actively involved in the apostolate, especially in the teaching of catechism which she enjoyed almost till the last, the little ones flocked to her whenever they spotted her, so too the orphans. The numerous orphans that flocked from all over for the funeral mass, to have a last glimpse of their ‘Mother’ who cared for them, spoke for itself.

We deeply cherish the legacy you, Sr. Mary, have left behind as a true Canossian and as we await our ‘Homecoming’ whisper a prayer for us ‘to live a life worthy of our calling.’

A co- traveler

Sr. Marie .K.

Focused

“Sr. Mary Thomas, How is that you have the name of the great Woman of Faith as well as the name of the famous Doubting Man, in your name?”

Sr. Mary Thomas laughed a hearty merry laugh

It was one of her bright moments during the last lap of her agony which started on 26th July around 4am, when she started gasping for breath due to an asthmatic attack, and after much treatment and struggle, ended mercifully at 3 O’ clock in the morning, on 15th September, Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows, patron of our Institute.

During this period Sr. Mary Thomas revealed much of herself to us. Mainly that her favourite Gospel passage was:

“WHATEVER YOU DO TO THE LEAST OF MY PEOPLE,

(MY LITTLE ONES), THAT YOU DO UNTO ME!” –

Mt. 25: 45

As a young lady, Mary Thomas had set out to follow the Lord with this vision-mission statement inscribed in her. She realized her dream by joining our Canossian Family in the year 1956, and following the Lord steadfastly and devotedly during her 64 years of Religious life.

Here is a brief narration of her life.

Born in Cochin, as the youngest child of her parents, Thomas and Elizabeth, little Mary learned the first lessons of relationship with society and God. It was a pious and caring family that taught Mary to reach beyond herself to the Lord and vulnerable humanity. Her elder sister, Theresina was also a Canossian sister.

Sr. Mary started her Religious life at Cherukunnu, Kerala. After that she was sent to St. Joseph's convent Aleppey for her studies.

As a young sister-student Sr. Mary Thomas was deeply impressed by her then principal, M. Fernando Riva, a zealous Canossian Italian missionary whose cause for canonization is presently underway.

Sr. Mary was then sent to St. Joseph's Training Institute, Belgaum to do her Teachers' Training.

As a teacher, she spent most of her time in Karnataka, working in mission places like Deshnur and at Shankerpura as teacher and superior. Later on she served at St. Joseph's School office and as superior at Divine Providence, Tilakwadi. She rendered her service in the communities of Arambol and Arpora, in Goa. To cope with the requirements of these missions, Sr. Mary equipped herself with the regional languages like Kannada, Konkani and Marathi. She spent her life especially educating and empowering the disadvantaged and poor children of each place.

Thus she nourished and let flourish the precious seed of the Word of God sown in her “ **WHATEVER YOU DO TO THE LEAST OF MY PEOPLE, (MY LITTLE ONES) THAT YOU DO UNTO ME!** “ - Mt. 25: 45

Dear Sr. Mary, we cherish you as a praying Moses who took the prayer apostolate entrusted to you very seriously and zealously, supporting the warriors of the Lord. May Mary Mother of Sorrows who stood by Jesus as He fought His final battle against the foe, and who was your Inspiration and

support along the way, lead you unto the glory prepared for you in eternity.

Dear Sr. Mary do continue to remember us in the presence of the Lord. Thank you, and see you some day!

Sr. Rose Abraham

The Last Lap

It was 4.30 in the morning, on 26th July, when our community nurse, Sr. Nita Kantela called me. “Sister Mary is breathless, can you please come down?” she asked urgently. “Of course!” I replied, and flew down as fast as I could.

That was the beginning of the last lap of the life of our dear Sr. Mary Thomas. It was an asthmatic attack that was taking a serious turn. So she was hospitalized that day. But the week long experience at the hospital turned out to be a nightmare for her. Sr. Nataline, in consultation with the community, had her discharged and brought home.

With great courage, Sr. Nita put up a brave battle for her life! Our orphan girl, Roseline D’Lima was a pillar of strength; Mr. Satish lent his nursing expertise despite his own mother being in the ICU those days; St. Joseph’s lent their oxygen generating machine. Thus with community support and prayer, Sr. Mary seemed to tide it over. Soon she seemed stronger, and was brought to the chapel for a visit in a wheel

chair. However, there was a slump in energies once again, and she had to be room-bound.

Sr. Mary's moods vacillated as she came to grips with what was actually happening to her. "Am I dying?" she asked me one day. I hope she saw the tenderness of Christ in my eyes as I looked at her, unable to say a word.

Days passed. Sr. Mary kept generally cheerful specially as sisters visited her.

I took to spending the nights with her in order to spare the nurse, so she wouldn't get stressed out. Sr. Mary looked forward to my coming. We would converse a while and then say the Night prayer of the Church together. Generally, after that she would be silent. But some nights she would sing or pray loudly the whole night long as though wooing her Bridegroom!

It was during our nocturnal conversations that I got to know Sr. Mary so much more intimately: her family background, her vocation story, her favourite Bible verse, her missionary thrust, the languages she had learnt, the lion and the lamb in her...!!! Above all, I saw how her favourite Bible verse had governed her life and made it fruitful for God's pleasure, earning her a direct entry into His Kingdom: ***'Whatsoever you do to the least of my peopleyou do unto Me... Now enter into the Home of my Father!'***

I would make her conscious of her great contribution to the Lord's Kingdom. She would clap happily with great delight!

In the mornings, when it was time to go, we would recite the morning prayers. She would correct me if I went wrong! Then she would ask to bring communion, and waited in a prayerful mood and posture.

Then Sr. Mary entered the next phase when it became more and more necessary to help her breathe with the help of the machine. Her food in-take minimal, she grew weak. She needed constant attention specially to watch over her breathing and keep her hydrated. She began to grow silent. I let it be, simply repeating, Jesus, I trust in Thee.

The night the Bridegroom came for her, I was off duty. Sr. Nita woke me from my slumber. It was 3am on 15 September 2024, Feast of our Lady of Sorrows!

All was prepared for the feast, but the BANQUET was prepared for her!

As we dressed The Bride that morning, we suddenly became aware that we were of varied linguistic backgrounds: Kanada, Marathi and Konkani! The Lord of the harvest, the noble Bridegroom had honoured his bride with this detail – an intercultural moment! The chapel was superbly decorated! None of her family members could be present, but the chapel was overflowing with Wedding guests...all His people...His little ones! And what's more, the presiding celebrant was the Bishop himself who hurried back to town to be in time for the occasion on hearing the news!

Thus, Mary Thomas (how wonderful her name) who had started her life saying “Behold the handmaid of the Lord” was enabled to say in sweet surrender, “My Lord and my God!”

And as the earth received her so graciously that day, and covered her from our view, the skies poured down torrents of rain! We knew then that the flower that bloomed for Canossa had come to be reformed into a ‘gem’, and was finally transformed into a seed to bear much fruit! In fact, that very day, at the Provincial House in Bombay, three young novices professed their first vows.

Thank you Lord!

Sr. Berlinda D’Cruz

A wreath from Shankerpura

Oh Mother Mary Thomas! You were a guiding light **in my life!** You brought me to the Canossian Family. You were a teacher for me in Std. II. Indeed, you were more than a teacher; you were a mother to me! You brought me to the convent when I was 9 years old! You looked after me, cared for me and educated me. You had a great love for my family members. You often visited us and took interest in us.

You were the first pioneer sister in **Shankerpura** convent. People loved you so much! Though you were from Kerala, your learned Kannada and taught in School. You learned

Konkani, Tulu and Marathi too! You were a great **missionary**, removing barriers, overcoming obstacles, to pave the way for Jesus to reach us! So many poor and needy people found shelter under your wings! You touched the lives of sisters and people wherever you went. You were a great model for us! You took interest in every sister of the community. We admired **your zeal**, courage, enthusiasm, self-sacrifice, commitment and dedication to the Lord and His Poor, especially the orphans. You have left an indelible mark upon them! How they flocked to pay you their last tribute! I am sure their prayers have lifted you up to the Lord unto eternal bliss!

Yes, dear mother Mary, your memory lingers in my heart. I owe a lot to you. Please do intercede for me as you rest in the Father's bosom, that I may live as a true Canossian Daughter of Charity, Servant of the Poor!

Sr. Maggie Martis

A gifted person

In Praise and thanksgiving to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit
I write these lines about our dearest

Sr. Mary Thomas who lived among us with humility,
patience, love and great sacrifice.....

My first memory of her is when I was 21 years old and was
sent to be part of the new community just begun at

Shankerpura, Mangalore. The Superior was Sr. Philomena Pereira, the Vice Superior was

Sr. Mary Thomas and I went to join that community.

I marveled at her flare for languages a real gift of the Holy Spirit to her together with her hard work.

She learnt the Kannada language at the most challenging mission at Deshnur..... For me she was a true

missionary and an obedient one, loving without measure and ready to sacrifice herself in all those trying situations..... That is what I fondly remember of her....

In the new mission then at Shankerpura she was a teacher in the Parish school teaching in the Kannada medium, visiting the families, speaking the Konkani language and also teaching catechism.

In the Parish at Shankerpura where she could communicate both in Kannada and Konkani..... I could see that she was a true missionary according to the heart of St. Magdalene of Canossa....

I enjoyed her simplicity in sharing with the community the jokes she experienced with the mistakes she made during her use of the new language she picked up either Konkani or Kannada.....

Her faith and her obedience led her to follow Jesus in very different communities and in all capacities....

I appreciate her simplicity and faith with which she shared herself with all that she is, her strengths, failures, successes, weaknesses, faith experiences, and the marvels God worked in her life.

I always enjoyed her capacity and humility to laugh at herself and be God's instrument of His presence, His mercy, His compassion, His self gift, His unconditional love.

As she enjoys the Bliss Our Father has prepared for all His faithful servants may our dearest Sr. Mary Thomas share all the joy in the heavenly court and receive her loving reward from our Heavenly Father.

May she enjoy the presence of Mary our beloved Mother whose name she bears and may our Mother St. Magdalene of Canossa welcome her to her Father's House whose Crucified Son she loved without measure in the strength of the Holy Spirit. AMEN.

Sr. Clemy Mascarenhas

A Tribute of Love & Gratitude

Cast your cares on the LORD and He will sustain you; He will never let the righteous fall. Psalms 55:22. This is was the life of Sr. Mary Thomas.

I describe her as follows:

A person of few words but fluent in many languages,

**A person of sharp mind but humility was her hall mark
A person of deep faith and was always accompanied by
good works**

**A person of hard work and a person for others without
counting the cost.**

Yes dear Sr. Mary, I want to thank God and you for the impact and influence you had on me as we lived together for many years in Belgaum- at St. Joseph's as Secretary of the society, clerk in the school office, vice superior and in Divine Providence as my superior. You shouldered many responsibilities with integrity and genuineness.

True to the Canossian calling, you always lived as a true Daughter of Charity bearing the name of Mary. That's why the Lord took you to Himself on the **Feast day of our Institute**. You were simple and austere in your living. You carved a niche for yourself with deeds of love, kindness and understanding for the poor and down trodden. Many people remember you as you have lifted them up from their misery with your generosity. Your willingness to learn and adapt to the changing world was commendable.

Thank you, dear Sr. Mary, for adding colour to my life with your edifying examples. Many times I have been the recipient of your special love and concern. You taught me the value of punctuality, silence in moments of trials and troubles, your letting go attitude, and prayerfulness, great devotion to Mary our Mother and the Eucharistic Lord and great respect for authority and priests are worth mentioning.

I pray that God may reward you a hundred-fold for your loving service to Him. Intercede for me to live a life of holiness. I hope to see you again someday.

Good bye dear Sr. Mary.

In loving memory

Sr. Thankam

A Sisterly Sister!

I had the opportunity of living with Sr. Mary Thomas for six years, at St. Joseph's Convent, Belgaum, from 1992 – 1998. Being a young Superior, sent to a big Community of twenty-two members, with a diversity of age, culture and apostolate, I felt a bit uneasy and had my apprehensions!

Amid all these feelings, there was a person who stood by me like a pillar of strength, loyalty and trust – it was Sr. Mary, whom the Lord gave me, as my 'earthly Guardian Angel' for the six years ahead as the Vice Superior.

She welcomed me whole heartedly and with such an assuring smile, that I seemed to forget all my anxieties. In the days that followed she personally introduced me to the various sectors of the Apostolate carried out in the Community – The Teacher Training Institute, The Kannada School, The High School, the Primary and Kindergarten Sections, The Hostel for the Trainees, and made the necessary arrangements to

introduce me to the Teaching and Non-Teaching Staff as well. She kept me abreast of the Social Work Services undertaken at the Diocesan Level by a Sister of the Community and the involvement of the Community in the Pastoral outreach programmes at the Parish and inter-Parish levels.

I felt at peace as the days passed by, because I felt I could rely on her for guidance. Besides, she also had the additional mandates of Secretary of the Belgaum Society, Bursar of the Community and working in the High School Office. Sr. Mary carried out these multi-tasking duties lovingly, faithfully, honestly and dutifully.

Several times she would advise or alert me, as to how to handle situations and challenges that cropped up. This sisterly care and concern for me, helped me overcome some of my personal problems too. She encouraged and supported me in the planning for and maintenance of the House and the campus, the Finances and also the needs of the Community and the Apostolate. In other words, she instilled in me, qualities expected of a Community Leader, with her own example and experiences.

She was a ‘Woman of Prayer’! She gave top priority to her Spiritual Life, and held Community living close to her heart. The qualities that I admired most in her were her availability, gentleness, sound advice, justice and a genuine interest for the ‘common good’.

When I was over enthusiastic, she cautioned me, when I was hesitant, she encouraged and supported me and when I felt diffident, she stood by me!

Thank You Dear Sister and Friend, may The Lord enfold you in His love, is my prayer for you. Please intercede to the Lord, for us, your sisters!

Sr. Rose D'Souza

Canossa Niketan

Sr. Mary Thomas – Beauty of Simplicity and Humility.

My first encounter with Sr. Mary was in 1992 when I joined the Postulancy at St. Joseph's Convent, Belgaum

Sr. Mary was the image of simplicity, a beautiful soul who moved through life with grace, humility, and a quiet strength. She had a smile on her face always, contented and a person of few words. Her life was an unspoken testament to the power of humility, radiating kindness and compassion in ways that left an impact on everyone around her.

She never sought recognition or praise. Her unassuming nature was her strength and love, understanding, and compassion flowed freely from heart.

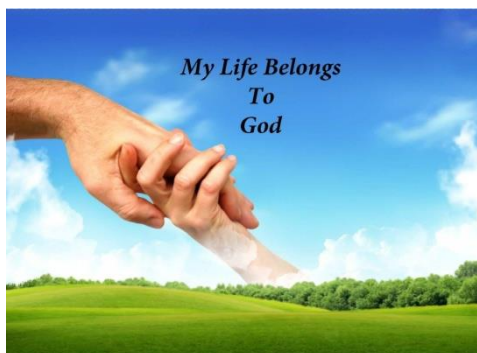
Her presence taught us that simplicity is not about having less, but about living with enough, and finding joy in every single moment.

She inspired everyone who knew her, not through great gestures, but through small, consistent acts of love and grace.

Her life will always be a cherished reminder that true beauty lies in living genuinely, simply, and with an open heart.

Thank you Sr. Mary for the message of life. Pray for us.

Sr. Neeta Lopes
Nirmalashram, Andheri



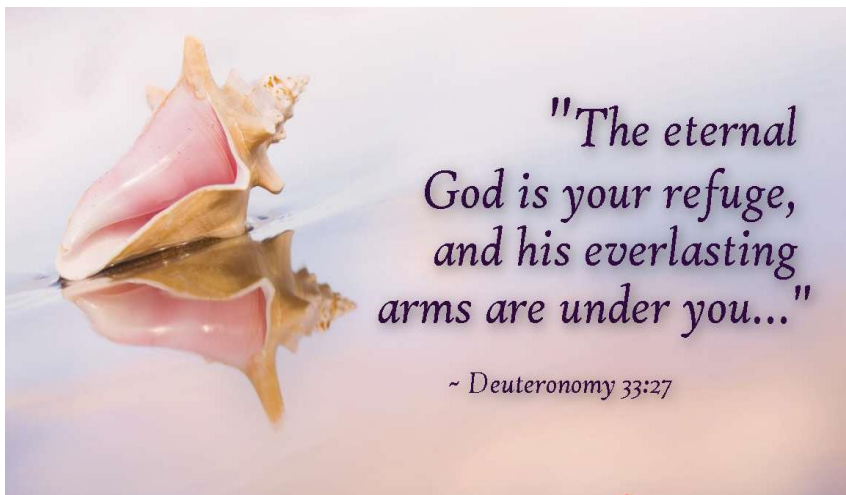


002



003





*"The eternal
God is your refuge,
and his everlasting
arms are under you..."*

~ Deuteronomy 33:27

