



Dear Sisters,

Today, February 2, 2016, at 4:00 AM (local time) in St. Philomena Hospital (Bangalore), the Lord called to eternal life our sister,

SR. M. ALFONSA THERESA D'SOUZA
born on October 1, 1939, in Bondel (Mangalor) – India

The life of Sr. M. Alfonsa, like a burning lamp, manifested all of its brilliance today, as she is called to shine forever before her heavenly Spouse. In the celebration of the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, the conclusion of the Year of Consecrated Life, we journeyed with our lamps lit as an expression of our offering to God, and also symbolizing the encounter of our sister with the Lord who is coming.

Theresa entered in Allahabad on May 27, 1958, barely 4 years after our foundation in that immense country. Theresa arrived from the South of India through the vocational contact of the first sisters, who dedicated themselves to collaborating with the Lord who never ceases to call others to follow him! She went to Rome for the novitiate, and made her first profession there on March 25, 1962. She made her perpetual profession, instead, in Bombay (now Mumbai) on March 25, 1967. Sr. M. Alfonsa had a brother priest, who later became a bishop, to whom she was very united spiritually: *“I was so happy to think that my brother and I both chose the same day to make our offering to the Lord. As he celebrated 15 years of priesthood, I made my perpetual profession. He was ordained on March 25”* (To M. M. Lucia Ricci, March 28, 1967).

She spent the first year of her religious life in the priestly apostolate in Alba (CN), then in 1963 she was in India, first in Allahabad, at the Society of Saint Paul, and then in 1971, in Mumbai. Responsible and enterprising, she was introduced to ecclesiastical tailoring: an activity she continued in Bangalore. In 1973, she returned to Mumbai. Born into a profoundly Catholic family, she was imbued with the spirit of faith by her family, which always sustained her in her journey as a consecrated woman. In 1973, in response to a transfer from Bangalore to Mumbai: *“When my father heard that I was transferring to Bombay, it was clear that he was disappointed, but he only told me: now going here or there is the same for you, that is God’s will. Ask for the grace to do his will voluntarily until death. I am disappointed, but I will make the offering as well”* (To M. M. Lucia Ricci, October 5, 1973). In 1975 she was asked to go to Rome, where she temporarily offered her collaboration at the souvenir shop in the Vatican. In 1978 she departed for her mission in the United States. *“My brother wrote to me not to worry and to remain wherever I was sent, whether in Italy or in America, it does not matter. The Lord does everything well and as he wishes, therefore, be content where you are”* (To M. M. Lucia Ricci, Albano, January 7, 1977). She remained in the USA for about a decade, at the Liturgical Apostolate Center in Staten Island, and then in ecclesiastical tailoring in Dearborn. In 1984 she returned to Italy for a period of time and then returned definitively to India in 1986. Her return was motivated by a form of rheumatoid arthritis that would cause her to suffer for many years, until the end of her life. She faced this painful disease with dignity, tenacity, and an apostolic spirit, seeking to maintain her autonomy and committing herself to be present for prayers and the community life. She offered her sufferings especially for priests. In one of her more recent letters, she wrote to Sr. M. Regina Cesarato to express her joy at the fulfillment of a dream: *“Namastè! Shalom! Greetings! I write willingly to send you my greetings and to thank you because I travelled to the Holy Land in October. I was able to go to all the places the group visited. Oh! What joy! It seems like a dream, I was able to find and to greet our sisters in Jerusalem”* (Christmas 2010). She then assured her of her prayer and the offering of her sacrifices for the 8th General Chapter.

Sr. M. Rose Mary Muttasseril, the Provincial Superior, visited her recently and affirmed that Sr. M. Alfonsa asked forgiveness of all; of anyone she may have offended in the Province or in the Congregation. She also asked permission to distribute the few things she had to the poor, to the needy persons who work in the community. Her health had worsened due to an acute form of pneumonia, which led the conclusion of her earthly pilgrimage. The sisters in India assisted and accompanied her with great love and dedication.

Sr. M. Alfonsa, from Heaven shine your light upon all the consecrated members of the Pauline Family, especially in Asia. Obtain for all the gift of perseverance, and through the mercy of God, the gift of new vocations!

Sr. H. Paolo Haucaim