



Dear Sisters,

Today, March 14, 2019, at 7.30 pm, in the community of Mumbai DM, the Lord called to eternal life our sister

SR. M. THECLA STELLA BAPTISTA
born on August 14, 1935, in Vile parle Mumbai (India).

Stella entered the Congregation in Allahabad (India) on June 28, 1956, barely two years after the foundation of our presence in India. In "*Divin Maestro*", January 1954, it is written: *«In 1954 the the Congregation and the apostolates of the Sister Disciples will be spread more extensively in the world. May the Divine Master find the faith and docility necessary to work as his glory now requires, as the development of our religious family needs. January marks the first offering: India was awaited and reached by our sisters. May each one of these offerings be accompanied and followed by the prayers of all»*. With enthusiasm, the young Stella, educated in a strong faith by the family, accepted the various sacrifices which characterize every new initiative.

Stella was then sent to Rome where, following the regular novitiate, she made her religious profession on March 25, 1960. She would remain there for three years of apostolic experience in the Liturgical Center of Saint Mary Major and attend classes. One expression that often recurs in her requests for admission is: *«I am very happy in my vocation and to be a Sister Disciple. I can say with sincerity that the apostolate of the Sister Disciples is very beautiful, with the particular aim to honor Jesus Master present in the Eucharist, in the Priesthood and in the Church»* (Rome, January 8, 1963). Throughout her life she would radiate and transmit this joy. She returned to India, where she continued her formation and apostolate, making her perpetual profession in Allahabad on March 25, 1965. In her studies she obtained a *Degree in Arts*, completed a short program in music, and received a diploma as a catechist. In 1967, after some years in the Liturgical Apostolate Center and the sewing workroom in Mumbai, she was asked to go as a missionary to the United States, where she would remain until 1979. Sr M. Thecla alternated her services between the Liturgical Apostolate Center and the sewing workroom in various communities; first in Fresno: (1967-1973; 1974-1975; 1978-1979); then in Dearborn DM from 1973 to 1974, and in Staten Island from 1975 until 1978. In 1979 she returned to India where she dedicated her time to ongoing formation and painting. Then, for two years, from 1984 to 1986, she offered her collaboration in the souvenir shop at Saint Peter's in Rome. In 1986 she returned to India definitively and remained in the community of Mumbai, where she would be able to care for her health, as well as teaching catechism and participating in the community life.

This is the remembrance of Sr. M. Theclas offered to us by the sisters of the Province of India:

«The Lord took up to heaven our dear sister, Sr. M. Thecla Baptista, in the Divine Master house Prarthnalaya Bandra, Mumbai, India - at the age of 83. Stella was born into a large family with a strong Christian faith. She was the youngest of 11 children.

She was one of the pioneers among the Sister Disciples [in India]. She offered her service with fidelity and diligence, always keeping alive the flame of faith, even in the midst of suffering. She demonstrated a profound love for each one, like a mother, sharing and making herself available to both the young and the elderly. She lived her consecration to God in its fullness, for his glory and for the salvation of humanity. She was a good writer and offered her contribution to various magazines

in India, especially on the topics of Mary Queen of the Apostles and of Saint Paul. Sr. M. Thecla taught catechism for many years in the parish of St Andrews, in Bandra Mumbai. With love and dedication, she offered her service to the young in initial formation.

Sr M. Thecla was diagnosed with a 90% cardiac blockage, and in 2015 she recovered from a difficult open-heart surgery. In the last years she also suffered from breast cancer and the subsequent therapy. She was always serene and faced her situation with fidelity to the community life. During these last two months she was joyful and prepared herself to meet the Bridegroom.

The life of Sr Mary Thecla Baptista is like a lamp that enlightens through her luminous personality; may she continue to shine forever in the presence of the heavenly Bridegroom».

To Sr. M. Thecla we can apply the words of Jesus: *«By this is my heavenly Father glorified, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples» (Jn 15:8)*. From heaven may she obtain this gift for each Sister Disciple, for the Province of India, greatly challenged in the specific mission, and for the entire Congregation!

S. H. Paolo Mancini