



Dear Sisters,

At the first light of day on December 11, 2023, at 6:00 AM (local time), at the St. Philomina Hospital in Bangalore (India), the Lord Jesus, whom we invoke as Savior during Advent, called to himself definitively our sister,

SR. M. THERESA – THERESA D’SOUZA
born on October 15, 1946 in Devlali (Maharashtra - India).

The second of six children, the child was brought to the baptismal font on October 26, a Saturday, and received the name of Theresa in honor of the saint being celebrated on the day of her birth. Thus began her Christian life under the protection of the Virgin Mary, Mother of God, and of Saint Teresa of Avila.

At the age of 21, on June 29, 1968, Theresa left her family to enter the Congregation in the DM community of Mumbai. After completing the regular novitiate, on September 12, 1971 she made her religious profession in Mumbai, and on September 4, 1977, she made her perpetual profession in the same community.

She showed herself to be a young woman who was both practical and with a profound piety. She loved her specific vocation and understood its apostolic and spiritual value. In Eucharistic Adoration she found the source of her daily dedication which enabled her to be available for the mission which, from time to time, the superiors entrusted to her.

During her first years of consecrated life, she was sent to the communities at the service of the Society of Saint Paul in Mumbai (1971 – 1974) and in Allahabad, where there were the young men in formation for the Pauline religious life (1977 – 1979). She then brought her practical gifts to fruition in the sewing workrooms in the various communities of the Province of India: Mumbai, Chennai, Nellore, New Delhi, Guwahathi, Kohima, Pondicherry. For a short time, she also assumed the role of coordinator for the community of the House of Prayer in Kohima. In 2011 she was transferred to the community of Guru Yesu Bhavan in Bangalore.

The sisters testify that, each morning, Sr. M. Theresa was the first to enter the chapel to receive the Lord’s blessing, as the Founder taught the first generations, so as to receive the first spiritual fruits of the day. They appreciated her willpower to be punctual and faithful to the daily adoration, despite the passage of the years and her health problems. She prolonged the time required by the Rule of Life, so that she arrived for her turn of adoration well in advance. Her dedication and commitment to the meditation and other acts of Pauline piety

were evident. With an authentic love for the Congregation, for the sisters of the Province and for the people of God, she understood the power of intercessory prayer and she silently lived it as an efficacious form of apostolate.

For many years she offered her service at the *reception* of the community of Guru Yesu Bhavan in Bangalore, welcoming the guests with kindness and a smile. This community, the seat of the Provincial government and of a large apostolic community, was able to appreciate her service inspired by the friendly hospitality of the house of Bethany.

Despite suffering from some pathologies, among which was diabetes that progressively limited her abilities, Sr. M. Theresa did not make her fragility a burden for the others. She was always grateful, seeking to remain autonomous in her own care as much as possible. Generously she offered her service in the workroom as well as in the *reception* and enjoyed the words of appreciation that she received since, in simplicity, she shared the experience and personal talents she had acquired over time.

In 2021, while celebrating her 50th anniversary of religious profession, she observed: *«My dream is to serve God for as long as I am on this earth. Every day, as I sit and pray before the Blessed Sacrament, I hear the word of God in the silence of my heart that tells me: “Do not be afraid, I am with you. From here I will enlighten you”. These words give me the strength to overcome the difficulties, the fears, and help me to go ahead in my life in the journey of my religious vocation. I love the charism entrusted to us by the Founder, Blessed Alberione: to be at the service of the Eucharist, fulfilling daily the Eucharistic adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, interceding for all of humanity and offering prayers and sacrifices for vocations to the priesthood and for their ministry. The sincere joy that I share with my obedient and devout sisters helps me to grow in peace and to live a happy life. Even in the moments of darkness, I can feel the presence of God among my sisters, a presence that encourages and consoles me in the difficulties of living my life in the service of God».*

On December 11, when the community gathered for morning prayer, she was not in the chapel as usual. Hurrying to her room, the sisters were immediately aware of the seriousness of her situation. She was rushed by ambulance to the hospital, where nothing could be done but to declare that she was deceased. In the suffering and human disorientation of a sudden death, we are consoled by the Word of God which, especially in this Advent season, invites us to be ready and vigilant as we await the coming of the Lord Jesus.

We trust that Sr. M. Theresa will continue to be an intercessory presence in Paradise for the new generations of Sister Disciples of the Divine Master and for the needs of our Congregation, as we approach the completion of the Centennial of Foundation.

Sr. M. Michaela Bonetti