



Sr. M. Mirabelle B.S.

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THE BETHANY CONNECTION



A Newsletter of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Little Flower of Bethany- Northern Province

Volume X No.1

January - June 2019

From the Provincial Superior

For the Bethany Congregation, every year, the spring season is the time of renewal of the commitment and celebration of Jubilees. The spring of year 2019 was much the same depicting a season of renewal of one's dedication to Jesus and the ministry of service to the people.



"You did not choose me. I chose you", says Jesus, our Guru (John 15:16). That is where the Vocation of a Bethany Sister began- this venture into the unknown, following an unheard voice, an unseen face, into an unfathomable future. We had a mysterious attraction to this way of life from a young age, when God suddenly or gradually caught hold of our lives and would not let us go!

I am glad that this issue of Bethany Connection covers the commitment of our sisters- the Golden commitment, the Silver, the Final and the First. Our Founder, RFC Mascarenhas says that the greatest gift that God has given us is our Religious Vocation. We are blessed because God has called us to dwell in His own house.

I congratulate the sisters for their life of dedication. They have lived a life of renunciation and in turn committed themselves for the welfare of others to bring 'Fullness of life for all.' They have stood by the underprivileged, the trafficked, children and youth, young and the old to live by the vision and values that inspired our Founder. Bethany has reached out to the corners of the world with this mission.

Our sisters have gone extra miles, sacrificing much that cannot be described within the confines of language. In this path of service they have encountered numerous difficulties and obstacles. 1 Corinthians 15:58 says, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as you know your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

John 12:24 says "Verily, verily, I say unto you, unless a corn of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone: but if it dies, it brings forth much fruit." The strength of religious life is living the Gospel and making the Kingdom of heaven present on this earth.

May the life and ministry of our sisters bear abundant fruit.

Sister Erasma BS

From The Editor

The *Bethany Connection* is one decade old and many a reader has expressed their appreciation for this newsletter. Throughout these ten years it has covered the various ways through which the Bethany Sisters render service in the northern parts of our country.



This issue comes with an inspirational limelight on the 100th birthday celebrations of Sr Mirabelle. The other peaks are the Golden Jubilarians- Sr Jyoti and Sr Clarice; Silver Jubilarians – Sr Ophilia Lobo and Sr Anita Mendonca, besides Sr Nirmala Kujur, Sr Sukesini Minj, and Sr Preetiwanti, who showed tremendous courage in making their final commitment to Jesus. With the new entrants to Religious life Sr Amita Paik and Sr Sangeeta Dung Dung the canvas has a wide chronological time-span. But all of them convey the same message, namely living a life of commitment, to become the instruments of God's merciful love.

The way of living this path is to seek and receive a fullness which is emptied out on the cross by Jesus and to follow that path. This is not easy. In the words of Pope Francis, God revealed his love not through power but by loving and caring for others. Religious life is all about carrying on God's own works of caring by feeding the hungry, quenching the thirsty, visiting the sick, standing by the poor, teaching the illiterate and so on. Works of mercy is the path of love. The more we observe the commandment of love, the more we become the presence of God to others. Let love permeate us and let God find a home in us.

The Jubilee celebrations are just a reminder to renew this path of love. May the Bethanites be the lights that Jesus intended us to be.

Wish you a happy reading as you leaf through the pages of this *Bethany Connection*.

Sister Grace Maria BS

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CELEBRATING THE CENTENARY

Sr Grace Maria, Ludhiana, Punjab

Our life span lasts seventy years or if we are strong enough eighty years, yet most of them are sorrow and pain, says the Bible in Psalm 90, verse 10. But, Nature takes a special course for noble souls like Sister Mirabelle who turned hundred on 7 April 2019. In His constant and great love, God poured grace upon grace on Sr Mirabelle bringing her to this moment of her Centenary Celebration.

Owing to the Lenten Season in April, the celebrations were anticipated to 9 February 2019. Thirty priests from Jalandhar diocese concelebrated the Holy Eucharist along with Rt Rev Agnelo Gracias, the Apostolic Administrator of Jalandhar Diocese, in the RFC Auditorium of Sacred Heart Convent School, Ludhiana, on 9 February at 10:30 am. Glittering decorations, inspiring quotes loaded with sentiments of gratitude and praise and soothing winter breeze created the best environ possible for such a celebration. The prayers of hundreds of well wishers, sisters and friends of Sr Mirabelle mingled with the prayers of the Bishop and the priests as tears of joy and thankfulness trickled down silently from many an eye.

Affectionate greetings and felicitations loaded her with heaps of flowers as the echoes of Centenary greetings vibrated all around the campus. The fellowship meal provided an occasion for further interactions and greetings.

The celebrations failed to cease as once again on the real date 7 April 2019, prayers and greetings were offered for Sr Mirabelle in the Holy Cross parish church. The Christian community numbering above 400, lovingly and gratefully joined the Parish priest Fr Sunny in the Holy Eucharist, thanking God for the person of Sr Mirabelle, the miracle of her life, for the perfect sight, hearing, movement and overall health God has bestowed on her in this advanced age of 100. The deepest level of worship indeed is praising, thanking and trusting God at all times. Sr Mirabelle reached the church exactly at 9:30 am and with devotion participated in the Holy Eucharist, the felicitations and fellowship meal that lasted three hours. Fr Sunny, in his moving sermon, validated that he was the luckiest Parish Priest privileged to offer the Eucharist on Sr Mirabelle's 100th birthday which is a rare chance. The fellowship meal that followed for almost 500 people was a manifestation of Christian camaraderie.

The magic wand that Sr Mirabelle used is to live joyfully one day at a time trusting in God and



loving others. This special gift from God was thus celebrated with fervor, much fanfare and humility.

The name 'Mirabelle' stems from the Latin word, 'Mirabilis' meaning wondrous. Sr Mirabelle lives up to her name. This wondrous person, young and strong, daring and caring, noble and kind, served with love and commitment for 25 years in the remotest areas of Karnataka State.

Noting her noble qualities of wisdom, understanding, intuitive knowledge, planning and organization abilities, she was chosen in 1965 to be one of the pioneers of Sacred Heart Convent, Ludhiana, Punjab, our third foundation in North India. 54 years of her precious life have been spent here, being a part of Sacred Heart Convent and School. Sr Mirabelle says: "Punjab is my home, Punjabis are my people, I love them."

Her service was bountiful; involvement, substantial; and management, impressive in whatever responsibilities were entrusted to her such as: caring for hostel children like a mother, friend and guide; providing healthy food for sisters, hostel children and school children through school canteen for several years; extending hospitality to outstation sisters, guests and visitors; supervising the study of hostel children and that of school children in the absence of teachers; visiting, interacting and rendering service to the people of villages adopted by the Sacred Heart Convent at Halwara, Ladhian and Nurpur and inspiring and motivating the slow learners to be winners.

Even at the age of 100 Sr Mirabelle refuses to retire. She interacts with dignitaries with ease; answers queries of TV interviewers with confidence; voraciously reads newspapers, periodicals and books and is punctual for all community activities. Sr Mirabelle says, "I have been reading my favourite newspaper, The Tribune, for the last five decades."

Unlike people of her age who are confined to wheel chairs, Sr Mirabelle recognizes people, remembers their names, recalls happy memories and shares experiences especially of our Founder, Servant of God RFC Mascarenhas, and Founding members.

The Punjab Government honoured Sr Mirabelle with the Lifetime Achievement Award on the Teachers' Day in 2016 at the age of 98. Today, Sr Mirabelle's only prayer is "Thank You God for being with me all these years."



PRAYER NURTURES HER

Mr Chander Mohan, teacher, Sacred Heart Convent School, Ludhiana, from 1973-2011.



Sr Mirabelle was one among the four founding Sisters of Sacred Heart Convent and School, Ludhiana, established in 1965. The school was in its infancy when I joined the school in July 1973 as a chemistry teacher. I clearly remember the young and energetic Sr Mirabelle assisted by Ms Dotty, managing the school canteen in a make shift room. The selflessness and humility that radiated from her then still adorns her today when she turns 100.

She believes very strongly in the power of prayer. Thirty years back a fete was announced in the school. Everyone was excited for this big show and was looking forward to the day. But just three days before the due date it started pouring and the rain was expected to continue. Everyone was worried. It so happened that I were to meet Sr Mirabelle for some reason. I was told she was in the chapel from morning till evening praying for a good weather. Amazingly, it was a bright sunny weather on the stipulated day and the fete was a grand success!

In the year 2000, my younger brother was admitted to the hospital and was in coma. Sr Mirabelle along with a few sisters visited us in the hospital. She assured me, "We will pray for the speedy recovery of

your brother." Incredibly, he was out of coma after a few days.

Last year when Sister Mirabelle had crossed the 99th birthday she got quite sick and had to be admitted to ICU in DMC. When I visited her in the hospital, I saw her usual self- peaceful and composed. She told me, "The whole community is praying for me. I will get alright and definitely go home and celebrate my 100th birthday." And yes! She did celebrate it on 7th April 2019 with the community members in the Holy Cross Church at Sarabha Nagar and on 9 February with the general public of Ludhiana. Her active and energetic participation surprised everyone.

Sr Mirabelle is much pained and feels greatly concerned about the young married couples parting ways and getting divorced, specially those who have been her students. She feels disturbed about the lack of adjustment and understanding among the youngsters these days. While discussing all these once she said, "We sisters come from different family backgrounds, states and varied culture, still we adjust with each other. We even obey our superiors, otherwise how will the community move forward and progress?" How very true are her words!

She has been a silent spiritual guide to everyone by praying for the well being of all those who come in contact with her. I offer my humble wishes to her on the completion of hundred years. May she live long to spread peace and serenity to the people around through her powerful prayers.

BOUNDLESS LOVE

Sr Diana Serrao, Ludhiana, Punjab

The service that a Bethany Sister renders flows from the compassion within her and it is a 'Service Born out of Love'. This service in the Northern Province is done through various centres located in different states of India organized under the umbrella of Bethany Social Service Society, Punjab. One such Centre Jeevan Jyoti is located in Ludhiana. The Community Centre which imparts non formal education up to Std V, manages an ITI and conducts numerous Vocational Courses, celebrated their Annual Day on 16 March 2019 on the occasion of the International Women's Day. It was a unique and first baby step to bring together 10 NGO's of Ludhiana city in the Ruby Jubilee Auditorium of Sacred Heart Convent School, Ludhiana. Our sisters, dedicated staff and students of Community Centre, friends and well wishers joined hands with this new insight- an onward journey towards empowerment and transformation to experience FULLNESS OF LIFE.

Ashriwad, Har Hath Kalam, Divine Heart, Miracle, Jugnoo, Ekjot, Samarpan, Rehabilitation Centre School for Blind, School for Deaf and Dumb and Red Cross -the 10 NGO's- joined Missionaries of Charity and Bethany Sisters to celebrate this occasion. Fr. Shine Scaria Thomas, advocate and the Parish Priest of Ramdas, and Dr. Shibba Takkar, a renowned cardiologist serving at DMC and an alumni of Sacred Heart Convent School, Ludhiana, were the speakers of the day.

A cultural programme was staged by the migrant children under the banner 'Programme for Promising Children', along with Tailoring and Beauty Culture students of NIOS and Computer Programming Assistance (COPA) of ITI at Community Centre. Various messages on drug abuse, care of the elderly, an appeal by the girl child and the ill effects of social media such as Face book, Twitter, Google, Whatsapp, Instagram and Chrome were enacted to awaken the



audience. Differently abled children of Ashriwad NGO performed Bhangra, while Har Hath Kalam NGOs enacted how begging has become a profession.

Dr. Shibba Takkar captured the attention of audience narrating about Anadhi Joshi, (1865 –1887) a victim of early marriage, married at the age of 9, the first woman of Indian origin to study and graduate with a degree in medicine in the United States, with the support of her husband, who was a progressive thinker. Dr. Shibba, a compassionate doctor herself, invited everyone to join in the new move begun by Bethany Sisters to make Ludhiana an abode of boundless love.

Fr. Shine remarked that the NGOs have a big role in the society. There are nearly 2 million registered NGOs in India and 86 NGOs in Ludhiana alone apart from the religious men and women serving the people. This means there is one NGO working for every 600 people.



In a gesture of generosity, Gurudwara Singh Sabha of Sarabha Nagar, Ludhiana, provided Langar for all. I remain indebted to God for the opportunity given to me to be a part of this inspirational mission of sharing Boundless Love.

FOUNDATION STONE LAID

Sr Helen D' Costa, Karnal, Haryana

The foundation stone for the K G Block and Convent at Pakhal Faridabad, was laid on 19 March 2019 at 11:30 am. Rev Fr Anshu Vibhor, the Asst Parish Priest of Faridabad, blessed the Foundation stone and Sr Erasma, the Provincial Superior laid it. The Provincial team comprising of Sr Helima, Sr Helen, Sr Stella D Souza, Sr Gracy D' Souza and a few members of Bethany Lay association witnessed the simple ceremony and prayed for Mr Ranjit John, the architect, Mr Ved Prakash, the contractor and the members of the community consisting of Sr Molly, Sr Eugene, Sr Amrita and Sr Madhuri.



LIVE LIFE ABUNDANTLY

Sr Helima, Karnal, Haryana

Knowledge is power and information is liberating. Keeping in tune with this thought, six of our leaders in the field of education- Sr Reshmi, Sr Lyra, Sr Veena, Sr Natal Patil and Sr Jeevan Latha- along with Sr Helima, the Coordinator of Education, attended a seminar on Ethics of POCSO organized by Rev. Fr. Conrad SJ in Pune in March 2019.

Understanding the trauma of the victims of rape cases, diagnostic criteria, spinning feelings, canon law and false allegations, internet safety, addiction and pornography, media literacy and POCSO Act were the topics covered.

We realized how vigilant and careful we have to be in the school environment. Indeed an investment in knowledge really pays the best interest. Passion for learning is a way of abundant living.



Congratulations

Golden Jubilarians

Sr Jyoti BS

During these 50 years, Sr Jyoti has served as Superior General, Provincial Superior, General Councillor, Principal of schools and President of AMRIT. May God reward her commitment and special love for the poor. We thank her for the inspirational and innovative role she has played in Bethany Congregation at the national and international levels.



Sr Clarice BS

With the motto 'Always available for Service' Sr Clarice has served in Rome, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Delhi and Rajasthan through education and social service. Her compassionate and gentle manners are admired by all. The poor occupy a special place in her heart.

Silver Jubilarians

Sr Ophelia Lobo and Sr Anita Mendonca



The strength of God piloted you; the wisdom of God instructed you; the hand of God protected and guided you; the Word of God directed you during these 25 years. Every time you served others, you made a difference. May the Lord bless you continually. May you be a blessing for everyone.



NEW RESIDENCE

Sr J Nancy, Delhi

A new flat at Green Park Extension, New Delhi, was blessed on 25 March 2019 by Fr James Peter Raj, the Parish Priest of Good Shepherd Church, Hauz Khas, and inaugurated by Sr Erasma, the Provincial Superior. The presence of the Assistant Parish Priest Fr. Balraj, the Provincial Councillors and Bethany Sisters from various communities rendered an air of rejoicing and excitement. For the members of the community Sr Suda, the Superior, Sr J Nancy, Sr Reshma, Sr Precilla Kerketta and Sr Preeti Margaret the shift from Haus Khas to this spacious flat was a welcome change. They expressed their gratitude to Sr Rose Celine, the Superior General, Sr Erasma and her Councillors, particularly to Sr Helima who pursued the purchase of the flat. Sr Jyoti, the former Provincial Superior and her team were gratefully remembered.



HEALTH CAMP

Sr Malaya Manjiri, Karnal, Haryana

The City Care Hospital, Karnal, built with the vision of providing better medical services at an affordable cost, conducted a Medical Camp on 13 April 2019 in sector 32 where the sisters of St. Theresa's Community, render regular service. Dr. Nandan Matta and Dr. Ruchi Matta, the directors of the hospital, led the team of medical experts comprising of Dental Care Specialist Dr. Ruchi Matta and Dr. Sadhvi Marwah; Spine and Joint Specialist Dr. Mohammed Aslam; Advanced Laparoscopic Surgeon Dr. Arshdeep Singh; Chest and TB specialist Dr. S L Arora and Gynecologist Dr. Preeti Kahlon. The free check up and medicines administered was a boon to the 150 people who attended this camp.



SPIRITUAL ORIENTATION

Sr Jaquiline Stella, Ramdas, Punjab

An update in spiritual life and personality development was an additional opportunity received by the hostel students of Ludhiana, Barnala, Ramdas, Bhatinda and Karnal. A two day programme conducted by Sr Helima, the Assistant Provincial Superior, along with Fr Deepak IMS and Sr Diana Serrao at Sacred Heart Convent, Barnala, was indeed a very useful one, quipped the hostel girls unanimously. The sessions gave them sufficient tips to start the new academic session in a better way. The hospitality extended by Barnala community was more than ordinary.



AUSPICIOUS MOVE

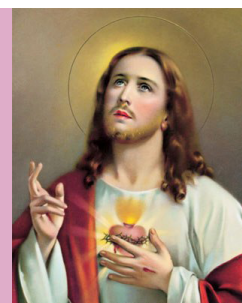
Sr Jhancy and Sr Archana, Prabhatara, Mangalore, Karnataka

The passers by on the road in front of Prabhatara gate at Nanthoor, Mangalore, stop, whisper a prayer and then proceed with much satisfaction and assurance to their destination. This action draws the curiosity of every one to a beautiful statue of Mother Mary, constructed and erected by Rev. Msgr Leslie Shenoy. Leslie Shenoy is a well wisher of Bethany. On 9 March 2019, Msgr Leslie Shenoy blessed and Sr Smithanjali, the superior of the convent inaugurated the Grotto at Prabhatara campus. Sr Lillis, the Assistant Superior General, present on the occasion positioned before the group the devotion our Founder held for Mother Mary and subsequently the group prayed the Rosary with much devotion.

During the Eucharistic celebration Msgr. Shenoy invited us to face the temptations of life with the weapon of Rosary and deepen our relationship and devotion to Mother Mary. There are umpteen incidents that manifest the power of Rosary. The ceremony culminated in a fellowship meal. The soothing presence of Mother Mary in the campus is a source of positive vibration all around.



On 28 June 2019 we celebrated the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. This feast emphasizes the unmitigated and unconditional love, compassion and long suffering of the heart of Jesus towards humanity. It is an eloquent commentary on how God values us- the human being. May we be able to love one another as God loves us. The Provincial Superior and her team greet all of you on this occasion.



LOVING WELCOME

Bethany family of Northern Province offers an affectionate welcome to Sr Amita Paik and Sr Sangeeta Dung Dung. They made their first commitment at Barasat, Kolkata, on 25 April 2019. On 12 May they were accorded a warm welcome to Ish Kripa, Bethany Provincial House. Best wishes to you, dear Sr Amita and Sr Sangeeta, as you start your spiritual journey.



COURAGEOUS STEP

The Bethany Connection extends our warmest wishes to Sr Nirmala Kujur, Sr Sukesini Minj and Sr Preetiwanti Bodre, who promised their final commitment to Jesus through Bethany Congregation on 27 April at Badibahal in Odisha. It indeed takes courage to answer a Call and give up all for the sake of Jesus, to serve humanity.



HAPPY VIBES

Province correspondent, Karnal

Echoes of Happy Birthday vibrated at Ish Kripa, the Provincial House, on 11 May 2019 as sisters from Northern Province gathered to greet Sr Erasma, the Provincial Superior, on her birthday. It all started on the eve of 11 May at 6:30 pm with an hour of prayer for Sr Erasma, followed by dinner, cultural programme and games. The celebration overflowed to the next day once again greeting Sr Erasma on her day and carving the cake in festive mood. The culmination was the con-celebration of the Holy Eucharist by Fr Vishal, Fr Kiran and Fr Deepak from IMS community, Karnal. The lunch that followed saw the young and old interacting and rejoicing over the exotic dishes prepared by the sisters themselves. The Provincial team comprising of Sr Helima, Sr Violet, Sr Helen D' Costa, Sr Stella D' Souza and Sr Gracy were the force behind the entire programme. The celebration provided an opportunity for all to appreciate the beautiful, generous, virtuous and person oriented- Sr Erasma. We pray that she remains an effective instrument of God.



APPROBATION UNLIMITED

The Corporate Manager and her team members are happy to shower lavish praises for the excellent Board result of our both city and rural schools all over the Northern Province. Well done Principals, staff and students!



HATS OFF

Hats off to Parth Saini Std. XII, St Luke's Sr Sec. School, Solan, HP, for securing All India Rank 3 in CBSE 2019 examination. Congrats Sr Isabella Agnes, the Principal and Staff.

