

A TRIBUTE TO MY MOTHER

Fr Xavier Vazhuthanappally.

My siblings and I in our childhood days had learned from our mother that she was born in answer to many years of patient prayerful waiting in faith by her parents and her paternal grandmother. They had consecrated their first born child, if a daughter to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and if a son to the protection of St. Joseph. So at baptism they named her Mary. Otherwise she should have been called Bridget. They, with much care, brought her up for family life, and they got her married in due course of time. But it was short lived due to her husband's sudden death. When the days of mourning were over many proposals came up. It happened that in the neighbouring village due to fever a young man with three little sons lost his wife. The third son was just thirty days old then. And she decided to marry that man and to be a mother to those three children. But that new born babe was well looked after by his maternal grandmother who did not want to part with the child. After ninety days of mourning their marriage was blessed in the church. God gifted them with nine more children and I am blessed to be their sixth child. My mother always kept a special place in her heart for those in distress. Once during the early days of my priesthood my mother had shared with me that her daily life was influenced by Mt 5.3, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God", and Lk 1.47, "My spirit rejoices in God my Saviour", and Mt 6.12, "And forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors".

When my twelfth sibling completed seventeen years, my mother guided my father to divide the whole property and handover to the children quoting 1Cor 12.14c, "For children ought not to lay up for their parents, but parents for their children". And my father obliged, and got registered the property deed in 1985, against the prevalent customs of the place, just trusting in God and entrusting themselves to the care of all their God-fearing children without keeping back anything for their upkeep or for later distribution after their death. My father went for his eternal reward on 20th December 2000 peacefully at 14.45 hours (IST).

When I was away in Zambia Jesus prompted me to get back home and be with my mother for some time. On my arrival I spent fifty-one days with my mother relishing old memories and praying together. I gave her Holy Communion whenever she was able to receive. Later I joined the Divine Providence Seminary Community at Mananthavady. On 05th September 2020 at 13.05 hours (IST) she slept in the Lord in the presence of my seventh sibling Thomas

and family. By God's grace these are very memorable moments for me and my siblings. My heart brims over with joy at the very thought of God's most precious gift of my parents!

May God bless St Xavier's Church Mannarappara, my Home Parish Family for its fellowship and the Vicar Rev Fr Abraham Kuppapuzhackal, Assistant Vicars Rev Fr Mathew Ennackapallil and Rev Fr Joseph Thannickapara both the present and past who attended to my mother's Sacramental needs, and the cordial personal care lavished on me.

May God bless my Calabrian Family especially Very Rev Fr Miguel Tofful the Casante and all the PSDP Brothers and Sisters spread over different countries in the world who spiritually supported my mother, particularly Rev Fr Manoj Ethirvelil the Delegate, Rev Fr Nidheesh the Superior cum Rector and Community, Rev Fr Aneesh the Parish Priest of Edayoorkunnu, Rev Fr Jobin Thomas the Administrator of the Community, for their personal and prayerful accompaniment, the honourable MLA Mr Mons Joseph for offering us condolences at home, the Reverend CMC Sisters, Rev Sr Gisella and her DSJ Sisters, Rev Fr Tony Moonnupeedika VC and his companion Priests and Rev Fr Paul Chaleveetil the Parish Priest of Eleckadu who were personally present, and Bishop George Lungu of Chipata Diocese, Bishop Benjamin Phiri of Ndola Diocese both from Zambia, Mr Lloyd and Mrs Nancy Greenhaw and all others who were spiritually united with me and my family on the occasion of my mother's departure and the funeral rites.

May God bless everyone who were good to my parents and stood with them in their ups and downs in life! May God bless us all and keep us in His abiding love everywhere!