

HEROIC VIRTUES OF THE SERVANT OF GOD

THATIPATHRI GNANAMMA

INTRODUCTION

The Servant of God Thatipathri Gnanamma, a faith-filled woman, young widow of catechist Innaiah, devout mother of four priests, crusader of girl education and dynamic foundress of two Congregations responded to the call of God and lived the gospel radically by empowering the poor illiterate girls through education with great missionary zeal. She was deeply prayerful and simple woman embedded with the heroic virtues of piety and charity. She sought the Eucharistic Lord with deep love and had filial devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Though the culture and society deemed widows as helpless and denied them rights during her period in the early 19th century she faced all the hardships finding strength and comfort in the Lord. Even in the desperate situation she raised her five sons in Catholic faith and carved her own legacy as four of her sons joined the seminary. God intervened in the life of Mother Gnanamma enabled her to settle in a small village near Madras where she realised the plight of the girls working in the fields without education. She gained reputation among the people of Kilachery as they saw her regular to the Holy Mass, Adoration and spent much time before the blessed sacrament. Looking at the pious activities of the Servant God the Parish Priest encouraged her to involve in the pastoral mission particularly to teach catechism for the girl children. She fostered faith formation of the children in the Parish Church as well as in the neighbourhood settings by teaching them catechism.

Despite being a widow she endured her pains and problems entrusting her unassailable hope in the Lord. She was ignited by the word of God and strengthened by the Eucharist and could visualize the will of God in her life as a visionary. Her life of sanctity and the prophetic response to the signs of the time empowering the girl children remain a great inspiration to the members of the two Congregations and the women of modernity to withstand all the hurdles in order to imitate Christ and spread the Good News of the Lord to the marginalized.

1 FAITH-FILLED WOMAN OF GOD

The Servant of God understood that the vitality and the primordial source of her life was in the Lord. She believed in the benevolence of God and constantly looked for opportunities to lead others to Christ. She lived as a woman of God and her devotional practices, her faith experiences helped her to discover God's mercy and find the purpose of her life.

1.1 A LIFE OF ADHERENCE TO LIVELY FAITH

“Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1). Though Innaiah her husband was a Hindu convert, Gnanamma who was nurtured all through her life in Catholic faith, was a great support to Innaiah to persevere in his faith till the end of his life both as an ordinary believer and an enthusiastic catechist. Thus Innaiah as the Catechist of Phirangipuram was able to be a powerful instrument for all the missionaries in Guntur district especially to the MEP Fathers with regard to translations and assistance in the pastoral services. He accompanied them in all their missionary journeys. Thomas Anchukandam says that Bonnand makes a mention of the fact that the Catechists who accompanied him on his missionary journeys proved

themselves very helpful because of their facility in the local languages, their knowledge of the Indian mythologies, and their ability to engage in persuasive arguments with the non-Christians. “These committed Catechists would engage in evangelization all on their own as in the case of Nedlibandla Arlappa who was instrumental in the conversion of thirty-two *reddis* of Ratnavaram.” In the same manner Innaiah was also an ardent and talented catechist who committed himself to the mission of evangelization. Innaiah as a catechist experienced the love of God through his ministry and offered himself to the lord. “Innaiah returned soon after to his home town and to his land at Phirangipuram hoping to contribute to the local Church as a lay person. His mastery in languages, his communication skills to interact with missionaries from abroad easily, and his intelligence in translating” was a great help to the missionaries. Like her husband Servant of God also committed herself in the same line of ministry as well as imparting Christian knowledge as a Catechism teacher. She helped him to be a successful catechist. Like her husband Servant of God also wanted to offer whole self with her full intellect and talents to the Lord. She meticulously followed her husband to offer her life of adherence to Faith.

1.2 FAITH AND RESPONSE

Reciprocity generally creates a binding between one another. It calls us for communion and fellowship. We go beyond our sense of sufficiency and privacy to reach out to the other. The early Christians were united in Christ through the Eucharist that brought them together as a single body. “Gnanamma had the knack of discerning the pulse of her times! That is why, a rigid approach that gets tied to particular works, was never hers! “Needs” stood uppermost in front of her eyes! It was Needs that determined the choices of specific ministries!”

“She started off with religious instruction! But when the religious instruction revealed to her the miseries of the society around, she had no hesitation in stepping out of the narrow world of religious instruction! That is how she started a school for girls!”

1.3 FAITH IN THE EUCHARIST

The Servant of God had unfailing faith in the Eucharist. One of the reasons for this faith was that Mr. Innaiah himself a Catechist was constantly doing the works of preparation for Eucharistic celebrations. Not only before his marriage but he also continued the same even after marrying the Servant of God. Servant of God also stood by him in preparation for the Eucharistic celebrations. Therefore, Servant of God was considerably aware of the importance of the Eucharist, and its essential nature of God’s presence, and Jesus in the Holy Host. “Daily Eucharist – the prime reason for Gnanamma’s exit from Eraiyur was indeed the centre and source of strength for Gnanamma at Kilachery. But as she kept nourishing the deep joy of union with the Eucharistic Lord, a small call, a small disturbance, a small insistent demand rose up from her heart! “My journey is still not complete! I have still miles to go” was the thought that began to haunt her, not allowing her to settle down in peace!”

Her ardent love for Eucharist is narrated in the book *Gnanamma Kadhai* as “I remember the stories told by my grandmother and grandfather. Servant of God went to Phirangipuram and sold her land and brass utensils to acquire money. She purchased 14 acres of cultivable land with the money in paiyyedu aka Mayyapedu. She was the first woman farmer to cultivate in the field and remained an outstanding personality. After participating in the Eucharist, Servant of God would meet the sick people and then pay a visit to the field. After completing her chores, she would teach the children with utmost care and concern. Being a single woman and performing all the duties with a heart of high magnitude in an unbelievable task.

It is said about her that she frequented her visit to the Blessed Sacrament to charge herself in the presence of Eucharistic Lord. This same fervour was seen in the life of Servant of God even after the death of her husband. As a widow, she frequented the visit to the Eucharistic Lord in the Church besides attending daily Mass. If Innaiah had a mission of serving the Church as catechist before and after marriage, Servant of God had the same before and after marriage, especially in her case even after marriage and after the death of her husband, as a wife as well as a widow. She shifted her residence from Eraiyur to Kilachery because she wanted to take part in the daily Eucharistic Sacrifice. For the very fact that she wanted to attend Daily Mass she came from Eraiyur to Kilachery. Her shifting the livelihood is foundational, something fundamental, serious and engrossed act of total surrender to the Eucharistic Lord. She had earnest thirst and love for the Eucharist.

Servant of God had understood that the vitality and the primordial source of her life was in the Lord. She received showers of energy and power from the Eucharistic Lord in the Liturgy. She gave great importance to the Liturgical activities. Servant of God gave the maximum importance to the Eucharistic Lord. She had deep faith in the Eucharistic Lord, and not only along with the community she prayed in the Holy Mass but also alone in the Church. Hence it is very clear that she drew strength for her ministry from the Eucharistic Lord. As Saint Bonaventure mentions daily Mass gives the energy to live the daily challenges of life. Servant of God was ignited in this manner that the real presence of Christ our Lord is the real strength that accompanies all of us to live our daily life.

1.4 DEVOTION TO EUCHARIST

E. Eliyasu narrated:

Father and I went to Thirupermandur via Ulundi, Surakapuram to my aunt's house in Elapakkam. There were thorny trees and bushes everywhere, there was only a walk path. I felt it as a long journey and it was impossible for a person to walk alone. Means of transport like vehicles and bus were not available at the time. On our way, father would tell many stories and try to wade off my pain. Then he would tell soul-stirring truth. Eraiyur is the place from where Gnanamma would walk to Kilachery for attending the holy mass.

We could not imagine the hardship and toil of Gnanamma who ventured through this place 100 years ago. Gnanamma then settled in Kilachery considering the distance. This is the path walked by Gnanamma as told to my father by my grandfather and now I pass on the information to you.

The Servant of God was so open to God that she was able to listen to God in the interior of her heart and respond to him with hope leaving behind familiar places to move to new place to start the mission. And she had hope in God's words to her that she did things even though at that time it looked incomprehensible.

From teaching catechism to the girls of the village she moved to establish boarding school for them. She found that this was the way to include women and increase their participation in church activities.

1.5 LIFE REVOLVED AROUND THE HOLY EUCHARIST

The life of the Servant of God Thatipathri Gnanamma totally revolved around the Eucharist. She devoted herself to prayer particularly to Eucharist and to charitable works. Though several facts about her life were not registered, the tradition has transmitted powerfully her holy life to this generation. A collection of various testimonies of people

clearly affirm that she regularly spent much time before the Eucharist after the Eucharistic celebrations. She looked to the Eucharist to draw strength from the Lord as she battled alone in the unknown place.

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2 ROOTED IN THE WORD OF GOD

Before marriage Servant of God was praying the word of God to decide her life on the basis of discernment. As St. Paul puts it "For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that by steadfastness and the encouragement of the

scriptures we might have hope” (Rom. 15:4). Servant of God understood the fact that the Eternal Father spoke to her in the Bible. Hence she paid great attention to the biblical words and learned the ways to contemplate on them so that the word of the scripture would sink into her in order to show her the way to be followed. She was attentively listening to the priest who interpreted the scriptures during Holy Eucharist also, whereby she took directions for her life. She was also a catechism teacher who taught biblical stories and biblical passages to the children and the faithful in the village. She believed that the words of the eternal father created the world and through the word made flesh the fallen humanity was given restoration and redemption.

Servant of God was keen on the word of God so that she would be keen on Christ and His mission. She had faith in the Divine word because its various books gave multiple experience of God’s Love and protection in her mission, encouraged her and motivated her to further her mission.

2.1 NOURISHED, LIVED AND SHARED THE WORD OF GOD

The Servant of God Thatipathri Gnanamma was the daughter of a Catechist. She grew up listening to the Gospel stories from her father eventually she also had the passion for reading the word of God. She was nourished and constantly drew courage and comfort from the Divine word.

Nearly after two centuries the people of Eraiyur, Kilachery and the adjacent villages still remember the servant of God Thatipathri Gnanamma as woman of wisdom. Her name *Gnanamma* reflects her own nature as she took wise decisions contemplating on the word of God and challenged the turn of events. Though she was a widow she connected herself invariably through the word of God with the people and touched their lives.

While referring to the Servant of God, Fr. Arokianathar the Parish Priest of Kilachery stated that he was impressed with her simplicity, deep piety, sound common sense, childlike docility and strong will. She regularly took part in the Holy Eucharistic and attentively listened to the interpretation of the Scripture. She volunteered to teach catechism to the children because of her familiarity with the Scripture. She captivated their minds through sharing the biblical stories vividly.

She paid great attention to the biblical words and learned the ways to contemplate on them so that the word of God would show her the way to be followed. She could visualize God's love in her life and protection in her mission.

3 FILIAL DEVOTION TO MOTHER MARY

The Servant of God had deep devotion to Mother Mary and believed in her intercession in times of struggles, suffering and sicknesses. Her favorite statue of Mother Mary is still with us. The year 1873 is inscribed on the statue transmits to the present generation the devotion of the Servant of God on Mother Mary.

3.1 AS AN EXTRAORDINARY FAITHFUL DAUGHTER

The Servant of God fostered a special devotion to Blessed Virgin Mary from her childhood. Imitating her mother, she used to kneel down and pray to Mother Mary as a child. She developed and nurtured the devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary from that time onwards. It is said that Gnanamma used to kneel before the statue of Blessed Virgin and pray in tears at times of anxiety and discernment. Even after the marriage she continued

her practice of praying to Blessed Virgin Mary. When she became a widow she had to face lot of challenges in the Society. Gnanamma soon realized how Mother Mary would have been left alone after the death of Joseph and her painful widowhood. She kept Blessed Virgin as her model in nurturing her five sons.

The Servant of God returned to her native place, Phirangipuram, in order to sell some of her lands. When she came back to Kilachery with the money required to put up the school building she also brought along with her Thanneer Mariamma, a friend whom she had known from her childhood. The name 'Mariamma' reminded Gnanamma of her dear mother and mother-in-law all the more Mother Mary in whom she found comfort and consolation throughout her life. Mariamma soon turned out to be a confidant and a collaborator.

3.2 HER PIETY TOWARDS BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

Gnanamma saw herself as a mother of every single child and tried her best to fulfil their needs. As children came from their homes to School daily, she understood that problems at home would affect their education. Therefore, she visited the families in Kilachery and taught them to pray and made them pray Rosary in family prayers and she gained the confidence of the villagers. Her piety towards blessed Virgin Mary was acknowledged by the people of Kilachery. She insisted among the people the tradition of praying Rosaries in the families and in common in the Parish Church. It helped in restoration of faith in catholic families.

The Servant of God loved the poor children in the Hostel as if they were her own children. At night after supper they would come and sit at her feet to listen to the Bible stories. Whenever they were sick, she used to make them pray before Mother Mary to

regain their health. The Servant of God guided the boarding girls and later the sisters to pray Rosary and to rely on the intercession of Mother Mary. She was keeping Mother Mary in her life as a model of best Mother. Having convinced about the importance of Blessed Virgin Mary in her life she treasured a beautiful statue of Blessed Mother holding child Jesus on her left extending the right hand towards us. This statue of our Blessed Mother was found in the archives of Royapuram convent. This was the statue in front of which Servant of God knelt and prayed rosary and exhorted the children in the school and the boarding to Blessed Virgin Mary. This statue from Kilachery was shifted to Royapuram in the year 1885 after the death of Servant of God.

4 DEEPLY ROOTED IN PRAYER

She was well grounded in deep devotion to blessed virgin. It is very obvious from her prayer life that she was continuously praying for the conversion of her brother Showraiyya, who was in fact a sculptor involving himself in making Gods and Goddesses of Hindu religion. As per the job he was fully into the Hindu way of life, which was not liked by the Servant of God. Hence like St. Monica who prayed for her son to be converted, she prayed for the conversion of her brother. She patiently waited in hope, and as she wished her brother came back to Christianity and his family in his death bed.

4.1 AN EXTRAORDINARY CONTRIBUTION THROUGH HER LIFE OF PRAYER

The Servant of God travelled from Erayur where she stayed with her relatives to Kilachery to take part in the daily Eucharistic Sacrifice. There is a traditional belief among the people of Erayur that after her return from Kilachery attending the Eucharistic celebration she would spread out her *Pallu* (loose end of the saree) as a gesture of sharing the blessings of the Lord with the villagers. She unwrapped her gift of faith in the

Eucharistic Lord to others. Her presence and prayer boosted the faith of the Catholic families.

The salient features of Gnanamma's personality were to be found not only in her extraordinary contribution as a woman of action, but above all in the life of prayer and constant union with God that made her a "active contemplative". She gave an example of heroism in the most ordinary situations of her life by living faithful to the benevolent gifts bestowed by God. People saw her in constant prayer and witnessed her mortifications. Immersed in contemplating the mystery of the Blessed Trinity, she set a sense of divine filiations in Christ as the foundation of spirituality, wherein the fortitude of faith and the apostolic daring of charity were harmoniously united with filial abandonment to the Father.

5 UNTAINTED LOYALTY TO THE CHURCH

As a believer Servant of God loved the Church and had tremendous confidence in the Church because it was built on the sacrifices made by the missionaries such as Bishops, Fathers and Catechists. Since her husband was also a catechist, who went to mission areas along with the missionaries, she developed a special love for the Church. Hence she gave herself fully to the Church and helped her husband, the Catechist. She took active part in the different social, economic and spiritual activities of the Church. Servant of God saw Church as the Kingdom of God which contains all the treasures for the humans to live their life in a meaningful way. In the ways of its Master, charity, preaching, humility, self-denial and sacrifice were the essential characteristics of the Church.

They were adopted by servant of God. She believed that these aspects of the Church were essential for her mission, hence she practised them with diligent care. She gave everything like the poor widow in the Gospels.

5.1 FAITH IN THE ECCLESIASTICAL AUTHORITIES

It is said in the booklet titled *The Woman of Courage*, “Gnanamma could always depend on the support of her parish priest.” She always consulted and got permission from the Local Ordinary and then only proceeded to the next step of the endeavour. Bishop John Fennelly, the Vicar Apostolic of Madras, looking into the condition of Gnanamma travelling all the way up and down from Phirangipuram to Madras, advised her to stay and settle down in Madras itself. And she followed his advice.

During the time of Jesus women served Jesus and assisted him in his mission. In the same manner Servant of God, the widow made it a point to serve the Church and the ministers of the Church. Servant of God was in sincere fidelity to the Church and gave herself completely for the welfare of the Church.

When Mother Gnanamma started St. Clara’s school for girls in Kilachery many protested against her attempt to start a school for girls. No one in the village sent their girl children to St. Clara’s school to pursue education. So, Mother came forward to enroll girls from other places. Due to this, the villagers agitated saying, “Girl children from other places should not enroll here.” They said that particularly girls from other caste communities must not join the school. They asked, “Are the girls from other communities in par with our girls? Will they sit equally with our children? If they are coming to the

school, then who will work in our fields and houses? Are you not aware of that?" These were the questions raised by the people to Servant of God Gnanamma.

But blow after blow made her stronger and courageous amidst all oppositions and difficulties. She took refuge in the church and cried at the feet of the Lord. Meanwhile Rev. Fr. Arokianathar entered the church. Father consoled Gnanamma saying, "Don't you know even at the time of Jesus Christ he was also opposed? Take the life of laywomen as example. Whenever we begin anything new, there will be agitation and protest. We will also be ill-treated. But they will be accepted in due course of time. Leave your burdens with the Lord and look after the parish children. God will never forsake you!" "What Father then said to Gnanamma resounds in my ears now," said Puthotta Rayappa.

5.2 OBEDIENCE TO THE BISHOPS AND PRIESTS

The Servant of God left alone with five sons to bring up as a widow yet she put her entire trust in the providence of the Lord and proved her worth of Christian fortitude and cheerful surrender following the instructions of the Ecclesiastical authorities, especially Bishop Stephen Fennelly the Vicar Apostolic of Madras. Therefore, she resolved to devote the remaining portion of her life involving in the pastoral activities and education of the girls.

The saying of St. Paul "God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong," (1Cor 1:27:29) is verified in the Servant of God. A young in experienced widow was chosen by God to found the Congregation of Nuns. It was possible for her because of her obedience to spiritual heads and absolute faith in the Lord. The tradition says that true to the principles she held

during the life she gave the following maxim at her death bed, “Be always humble and obedient to the prelates and spiritual heads.” She believed that the ecclesiastical authority represents Jesus Christ on earth because of which she took the instruction of Bishop Stephen Fenelly and followed all those instruction in her life.

The native catechists played a special role and actively took part in the missionary work of the foreign missionaries. Innaiah, the husband of the Servant of God was a trained catechist, an efficient tutor to the Priests in learning the regional languages and he accompanied the Priests on their travel to Madras and to mission stations. At the time of persecution after embracing the Christian faith Innaiah along with her mother were forced to leave Phirangipuram and came to Pondicherry. Innaiah joined the Apostolic School and studied earnestly for twelve years with the aim of becoming a priest but God destined him for some other purpose that he served the Lord as catechist. Since Innaiah was a comrade to the Priests naturally the Servant of God was also docile and made discernments in consultation with the Church authorities. It is tangible when we read the life history of the Servant of God.

5.3 CONSTANT SEEKER OF SPIRITUAL DIRECTION FROM FR. AROKIANATHAR

Fr. Francis Arokianathar, ICFT, was a fortress and a source of strength to the people. Fr. Francis Arokianathar, the Parish Priest of Kilachery was, a Franciscan Monk and the Rector of the Institute of Immaculate Mother of God. He proved himself to be an active evangelizer. At the time when the Servant of God was in Kilachery, he was looking for women catechists, who would be devoted to the task of evangelization. He was very much impressed by Gnanamma and her sound common sense and indomitable will-power. So, he shared with her his idea of starting an Institute for women devoted to evangelization, to be alive and alert to the people. Fr. Francis Arokianathar became her

spiritual father and her unfailing guide and counsellor. He was worthy to be called “The Great inspiration of the Congregation.”

There were many priests who helped the Servant of God in discerning and carrying out the mission God was calling her to. Among the various priests who helped in the foundation and development of the Institute of Sisters of St. Anne, Fr. Arokianathar guided her and supported her in her mission for about 37 years. Rev. Fr. Arokianathar was her Spiritual Director for each and everything in her life and on the mission, she sought the directions and guidelines from Fr. Arokianathar. When she started the school, she consulted him, even for the formation of Agathamma and Arulamma she consulted him and took directions from him to send those two formees to Bellary to get formed as nuns for the mission.

6 DEDICATED TO THE MISSION OF EVANGELIZATION

Mother Gnanamma when she reached Kilachery, the first ministry she involved herself in was teaching catechism in the Parish. She began her evangelization ministry in a small way by teaching catechism to the children in an unknown land. Mother Gnanamma came down to Kilachery to share her life and work and worship among the people of the village. Her primary task was to plunge into the life of the people of God, getting to know them as individuals and as a whole. She set apart herself as a living laboratory to enrich the conversations about God and the Church. So she steadily studied the expectations and existing realities, and to weigh what it means to be not just a member of the Church but a self-appointed Shepherd of Christ’s people. Mother Gnanamma would have known in her heart that teaching catechism was just a beginning into a great mission of evangelization.

6.1 MESSENGER OF GOOD NEWS

Jesus commanded everyone to go out into the world, to the ends of the earth and proclaim the message of Good News to all creation. The command to evangelize is not just a responsibility of few people, but for all the baptized. Every catholic is called to be more than collaborators and be co-responsible for the being and action of the Church. “Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel” says St. Paul (1 Cor. 9:16). Built on the faith and blood of the Apostles of Christ we are called to evangelize the world.

Everyone is set on the journey at the time of Baptism that God will guide throughout and beyond life in this world, “Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven” (Mt. 5:16). The word of the Lord echoed into the ears of Mother Gnanamma at that moment she started her journey on the planet earth. It was an invitation extended to her when freshly marked with the cross of Christ. Mother Gnanamma was chosen to be set apart by the Holy Spirit to live a life of service and love. She was called to let her light shine, so that people could see signs of Christ alive and present in the world. She did not commit herself to any special kind of way of life, but through her baptism God had called her to evangelize the world, the commitment she fulfilled so faithfully.

6.2 ARDENT MISSIONARY ZEAL FOR CATHOLIC FAITH

Servant of God Thatipathri Gnanamma was an ardent missionary with a great zeal for evangelizing the local folk. Starting from evangelizing his brother to follow catholic faith, and catechising people and children at Phirangipuram as a married woman, mother of children continued the same spirit and even in a greater density perpetuated her activity of teaching catechism to the children and elders at Kilachery. In this modality of functioning she lived as an evangelizer of God’s Word and the Magisterium of the church. Wherever she was she acted as the evangelizer bringing people to God simultaneously taking God’s Word and the teachings of the Church. She was an ambassador in this manner. She was an evangelizer of vocations to priesthood and religious order.

6.2.1 EVANGELIZING PEOPLE IN THE LOCAL CHURCH – PHIRANGIPURAM

Gnanamma was nurtured all through her life in Catholic faith, was a great support to Innaiah to persevere in his faith till the end of his life both as an ordinary believer and an enthusiastic educated catechist. Thus, Innaiah being trained in the Pondichery seminary started by Bishop Bonanad MEP and also as the Catechist of Phirangipuram was able to be a powerful instrument for all the missionaries in Guntur district especially to the M.E.P fathers with regard to translations and assistance in the pastoral services and accompanied in all missionary journeys with them. Thomas Anchukandam says, that Bonnard makes mention of the fact that the Catechists who accompanied him on his missionary journeys proved themselves most helpful due to their facility with the language, their knowledge of the Indian mythologies, and their ability to engage in persuasive arguments with the non-Christians. They were the committed Catechists who engaged themselves in evangelization all on their own as in the case of Nedlibandla Arlappa (one of the catechists of that time) who was instrumental in the conversion of thirty-two *reddis* of Ratnavaram. In the same manner Mr. Innaiah was also an ardent catechist who committed himself in the mission of Evangelization. In line with the husband Servant of God also committed herself in the same line of ministry as well also as a Catechism teacher who started the evangelization with the teaching of Catechism to the people and the children. Mr. Innaiah as a catechist experienced the Love of God through his ministry and offered himself to the lord. “Innaiah returned soon after to his home town and to his land at Phirangipuram hoping to contribute to the local Church as a lay person. His mastery in languages, his communication skills to interact with missionaries from abroad easily, and his intelligence in translating” In line with her husband Servant of God also wanted to offer whole self with her full intellect and talents to the Lord. She as a wife of Innaiah the catechist, meticulously followed her husband to offer her life of Catechising and Evangelizing the folk of her vicinity.

6.2.2 EVANGELIZING PEOPLE IN THE LOCAL CHURCH – KILACHERY MISSION AREA

It was more of a wife in line with the husband lived alike a faithful of the Lord in serving him with limited scope. Now, as she gets settled in Kilachery with the same zeal for evangelization but with extra power and energy she offers her complete self to the Lord in the mission area of Kilachery region because because she was called by the Lord, she discerned that way became totally an evangelizer through her thought, word, deed and the full self. She thought, spoke and acted only on a single tempo of evangelization thus her total self was of evangelization through teaching catechism to the people of God, for the people of the vicinity, and the children. More than anything else her life was the big example of catechism, Evangelization. She taught catechism more through her way life. Even today people of the Archdiocese of Madras-Mylapore think of her for the holy life she lived the simple life she lived, and the spiritual life and the local people of both Christians and non-Christians venerate her as holy woman lived an exemplary life. Looking at her life of holiness, Fr. Francis Arokianathar got impressed by the way she was involving in the church activities of teaching catechism. He was looking for a women catechist who would be devoted to the task of evangelization. At this point of time, he invited the Servant of God for evangelizing ministry. He was a great support to the Servant of God, who devoted to evangelization, to be alive and alert to the people on the call of God to evangelize.

6.2.2.1 PAROCHIAL EVANGELIZER

She was a strong supporter of the ministers of the Church hence she was a great help to the Parish Priest in all his pastoral activities at the parish level. In connection with this all the instructions and corrections and the guidelines were properly given to the

catechumenates and those who prepared themselves for various sacraments by the Servant of God. She held on to the pastoral activities and the perspectives of the parish. She took up that pastoral discernment to sustain people of God in the Church, she was constantly kept on reminding them in the parish in her capacity of Catechism teacher about the importance of the Church and the Church leaders as Bishops and Priests in the light of the Mystery of *Kerigma* and the Mystery of Christ the Church and to adhere to the norms of the Church.

Any form of pious activity was a laudable one for the Servant of God, because she found treasures of Grace in all of them, she could tap the graces for her sustenance. Servant of God was fully immersed with the forms of piety like praying rosary, visiting Churches, saying ejaculatory prayers and teaching them to the catechism children, praying for rain and harvests. Thus, she was a faithful who gave much importance to the pious activities. Servant of God was a great evangelizer in the way she initiated family prayers and of praying rosary in the houses at Kilachery.

6.2.2.2 AMBASSADOR FOR PROMOTION OF VOCATIONS

The Servant of God imbibed the spirit of Vocation through the Church Leaders especially after meeting the Apostolic Vicar John Fennelly she discovered her vocation to a committed life. She then understood the loss of her husband was a starting point of her reflection about her life and she realized that the time was getting ripe for a new sort/diagonal/angle of life in the church for her in a new light of God's call. She discerned God's call to be an evangelizer of the same call to other. She was content and fully immersed in that vocation to which God called her for His work, she lived that vocation to the full and became fully charged evangelizer of promoting vocations. And at this thrust of promoting vocations she went to the extreme point of organising vocations

to the girls to become nuns for God. In that way there were followers and disciples like Malayamma, mother of Fr. Ratnanadar, Nuthalapati Santhamma of Polur, Thaner Mariamma of Phirangipuram and Populamma from Erayur, students Arulamma and Agathamma. Servant of God decided to start a women collaborators and well-motivated acquaintances for her mission of girl education that got extended and expanded or in other words it got its maturation in the form of founding a new religious congregation. Moreover, she interiorized the Evangelical Counsels in her life and she found God blessing abundantly her commitment in Evangelization. She was the God-Mother for 37 children when she was teaching the children catechism, and preparing them for Sacraments. It is very well seen in the registers kept at Kilachery. In the same way in Phirangipuram too Thatipathri Innaiah and Gnanamma's names are registered in the registers at Phirangipuram for many of the children they were the sponsors / God-Parents.

7 A CRUSADER FOR GIRL EDUCATION

Archbishop Arulappa, *Emeritus* of Archdiocese of Madras-Mylapore proclaims the greatness and the specialty of Servant of God for her pioneering mission of girl education in the Kilachery region.

“At a time when schooling of children, was thought useless and schooling of girls particularly a sheer waste of time, appears this poor woman fight the current and show the necessity of education in full sense, that is not merely making them literate, but making them truly Christians. Obstacles were plenty. Her ambitious plan of getting village girls educated would have seem to her at first preposterous. But again faith and trust in God came to her rescue. Above all she was to discern a special plan which the good Lord had for her. Obviously she was one of those good inspired souls who were convinced that God has a plan for each one and that one must be ready to fall in line with that plan relying on the divine help which never fails.”

Mother Gnanamma knocked down the walls of hurdles with her profound faith in God. She stood up for the rights of women education at a time when women were subjected to oppression, discrimination and other social evils prevalent in the society. She

was certainly a crusader for women empowerment as she broke all stereotypes and offered her life promoting the noble cause of women's education.

Mother Gnanamma, hailing from Phirangipuram, Guntur District, Andhra Pradesh, South India, was a heroic woman of 19th century. Though born in Andhra Pradesh, she uprooted herself and settled in the rural village called Kilachery 60 kms away from Madras (Now known as Chennai) in Thiruvallur District, Tamil Nadu. She was renowned for her spirituality, Christian charity and above all for her ardent love for the education of the girl children. She was one of the pioneers to start a school for girls on May 3, 1863, exclusively for the girls who were considered by the then society as fit only for household works. Her heroic life has been an inspiration to many religious and laity today. With education and women's rights becoming increasingly more important at present we find the contribution of Mother Gnanamma towards the education and empowerment of girls very relevant today.

7.1 COMPASSIONATE LOVE FOR POOR GIRLS THROUGH EDUCATION

Her efforts to educate the girls was discouraged by many especially the men who opposed the education of women. But even after bearing such atrocities, she was never deterred by failure but continued to work for the empowerment of women with the providence of the Lord. What made her extraordinary is the compassion that she showed towards the girls, and the will to do something with their lives rather than just live for herself. The journey, which Gnanamma took in 1874 with just two young professed sisters, has reached the state what it is today. Servant of God Mother Thatipathri Gnanamma contemplated on the situation and empathized with women of her time in the 19th Century who were deprived of education and thus marginalized. She discerned that all her energies should be employed to dispel the darkness that enveloped the poor girls in Kilachery village, Tamil Nadu. She lit the candle of education and enlightened the women to stand the challenges of life.

Gender inequality pervaded the whole world in the 19th century. India was no exception. The condition was rather worse in India than in other countries. India is a complex society with citizens from various social, religious, and economic backgrounds. Yet women suppression was prevalent everywhere in equal degree. From the day she is born until the day she dies, an Indian woman is expected to be under the control of a man and to serve him without question.

However, Mother Gnanamma firmly believed that women are born free and are precious in the eyes of God and they have a right to life and to freedom. She garnered greater strength and determination to change the situation for better. She decided within her to set an example to the womankind and she literally fought to establish herself and by that she inspired every other woman who looked upon her.

Spiritual people never fear the adverse situations, because their minds are already fixed on the solutions. Mother Gnanamma herself was not a woman of letters but of the spirit of encouragement, courage and strength. Yet the illiteracy and darkness around her disturbed her so much that she could not just let it go on. Mother Gnanamma never thought of momentary relief for the problems of the society, but looked through and beyond the horizon.

7.2 EVANGELIZATION THROUGH EDUCATION

When Mother Gnanamma started teaching catechism she observed an unjust situation that the boys had a school for secular education whereas the girls had nothing in the village. That unfair situation disturbed Mother Gnanamma and forced her to take the side of God. She was the perfect blend of mercy and justice that she could not wait for someone to work for the change that she yearned. Therefore, she decided single-handedly to start a school for the girl children. In the school she appointed a trained teacher

Annamma to teach and to give secular education. Mother Gnanamma took up the task of teaching catechism in the school. Starting of the school is an extension of Mother's thirst for evangelization. Mother Gnanamma's faith led her to start a new ministry and bring in an irrevocable change in the society.

8 POWER OF HOPE

The Servant of God Gnanamma's hope did not originate from within herself, but from outside of herself, as a supernatural gift bestowed by the divine. It was the virtue of hope that allowed her to continue to trustingly walk forward, even when faced with challenges, financial crisis, criticism and life destroying disease asthma, confident in the promises of Christ, enabling her to live as a child of God.

Gnanamma provides us with a portrait of the theological virtue of hope. In her life, we see not only the external, human manifestations of the virtue of hope, but also learn not to embrace those capital errors so common in our present age such as the unawareness of or disbelief in God's immanent presence.

8.1 HOPE IN DIVINE INTERVENTIONS

The Servant of God had a strong hope in divine interventions. In this regard, she had two important things to give to us as her heritage. They are 1. Marriage and the married life she underwent, 2. The spirit of Vocation through the Church Leaders.

- Marriage and the married life: Servant of God accepted the Sacrament of Matrimony as the Divine Intervention in her Life and gave herself completely to live the vocation of marriage. God blessed the couple with the fruits of marriage

and they accepted their five children and exercised responsible parenthood in bringing them up as children devoted to God and grow in wisdom and knowledge. When her husband died, she accepted it though it was a heavy cross on her shoulders. She took up her cross in order to follow Him, the Divine Master.

- The spirit of vocation through the Church Leaders: After meeting the Apostolic Vicar John Fennelly she discovered her vocation to a committed life. She then understood the loss of her husband was a starting point of her reflection about her life and she realized eventually that the time was getting ripe for a new sort of life in the Church, to found a new religious congregation. Moreover, she interiorized the Evangelical Counsels in her life and she found God's blessing abundantly her committed life.

8.2 HOPE EXPRESSED IN OBEDIENCE TO THE WILL OF GOD

Servant of God, meek and humble of heart, gave importance to the will of God. We learn from her that the sense of obedience allows us to truly surrender our entire will to God by being obedient to our superiors –Vicar Apostolic, Priests and so on. She took their directions as God's will for her. It enabled her in this way to emulate the example of Jesus Christ's submission to the Father's will. From her we learn that we will find true happiness when we go out of our comfort zones and accept the transfers or new tasks wholeheartedly whether they are familiar or extremely 'alien' to us. When we trust the guidance of the Lord through the Holy Spirit expressed through the religious superiors we will be able to make right decisions of great importance and we won't place pressure on the Superiors with multiple demands.

8.3 HOPE IN RELATIONSHIPS

The Servant of God was never timid and introvert, instead she was an extravert. She captured young minds of the girls of her times. She was able to attract others in favour of her mission. It is said also about her that she fostered leadership qualities in others by her encouraging words. She saw leaders in people around her and she led them to emerge as leaders through her words of love and encouragement. She was known as a person who had an impact on others around her. It is said that she electrified whoever came in contact with her. Such was her relationship with others.

The Servant of God was always open to learn the lessons of life from all kinds of situations. She was so much associated with the missionary priests, Apostolic Vicars and noble people that she always lived in a higher realm of spiritual state. She was always a willing apprentice to those whose gifts of charity, wisdom, kindness, mercy, love and faithfulness far surpassed her own. And thus, she made it possible for others to exercise their own practical wisdom to act flexibly and creatively in their own situations. 'The Clarammal School' is the demonstration of Mother Gnanamma's personal search and her dream for the hundreds and thousands of the future Generation. In this manner, she was able to reach out to the people in relationship. Based on the strong foundation of her relationship with the Lord she was able to relate with all others in terms of love and charity. Among them, Malayamma, the mother of Fr. Rathinanathar, Nuthalapati Shanthamma of Porur, Thanneer Mariamma of Phirangipuram, Pappulamma of Eraiyur stayed with the Servant of God and helped her in administering the School and the Hostel. How prophetic even a century ago ministries by the laity flourished at Kilachery!

8.4 ENDURANCE AMIDST LOSS AND LONELINESS

The life of our Foundress is mainly characterized by her sacrificial love and willingness to surrender herself as a sacrifice on the Altar of God. By her total submission to the Will of God, she was able to endure the sufferings at many critical and

decision making moments. She would have been in a great despair when God took away her beloved brother and parents from her life very early.

The Servant of God was deeply sorrowed by the shocking news of her husband Innaiah's death. She was left alone with five sons. She did not depend on any of her relatives but put her entire trust in God's providence and proved her worth of Christian fortitude and cheerful resignation in silent prayer. (Foot note – God's Winner). She was on the verge of deciding whether to continue from there or leave it at that point. She realized that God spoke to her, His plan and called her into new life. In fact, through those losses prepared her to offer herself as a burnt offering on the altar of God to that higher calling. She became so strong that no storm was distressing or disturbing ever after. She learnt to be more focused and wait for larger opportunities to prove her sacrificial love for God and His people. It did not take much time to understand that she belonged to frontiers not to the suffocating traditions.

8.5 HOPE AT THE TIME OF SUFFERING AND OFFERING HER SONS

We see in her life history that she underwent many kinds of sufferings. For another person, it would have been difficult to accept the sufferings she underwent. But for her it was a watchfulness in hope for the graces of the Lord to strengthen her.

The Servant of God underwent every kind of suffering with patience, with unwavering hope waiting for the voice of the Lord in and through these sufferings. She underwent different kinds of sufferings as Woman, Widow, Social Reformer, Spiritual Mother, Catechism Teacher, School Teacher and tedious jobs and journeys for livelihood and fund raising for the upliftment of the girl children.

The Servant of God was fully aware that the Lord was her stronghold and so she was not afraid as prophet Isaiah says, “Do not fear, for you will not be ashamed; do not be discouraged, for you will not suffer disgrace” (Is. 54:4). In spite of all her struggles she remained steadfast to carry out the purpose of His mission. She never grumbled about her difficulties. She was clear in her mind that without suffering there would be no salvation. She surrendered all her pain and suffering to the suffering and pain of our Lord and Master on the Cross. She faced everything to give meaning to the phrase of St. Paul “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me” (Phil. 4:13).

Strengthened by the trials of life, she was fortified to comfort the suffering, love the strangers and embrace the unfortunate. Her unexpected and incomprehensible pains gave her an extra measure of courage and tenacity that she willed to offer all her five sons for the service of God. She never doubted God’s providence and protection even at one moment all through her life. When Dr. John Fennelly, the Apostolic Vicar of the Archdiocese of Madras, offered to take her sons to Seminary in Madras, she did not feel the pain of parting. She knew it in her heart that her life was in the hands of God and she had nothing to fear. Finally she dared to move to an unfamiliar land to accompany her sons in their priesthood.

8.6 ENDURED PHYSICAL ILL-HEALTH

The Servant of God again and again suffered physical ill-health till the end of her life. But all through her life, she trusted in God and accepted her sufferings bravely and was completely open to whatever God wanted from her. She suffered non-allergic Asthma, caused by illness, like cold or flu or exposure to inclement weather during the travels she made to meet her sons in the seminary and later to get financial support for her ministries. The different climatic condition of two different places – Tamil and

Telugu Regions – type of food in the both the places, loneliness, suffering, and stress, helpless situations at the time of taking difficult and demanding decisions, heavy work load, physical and mental stress due to over burden of events aggravated Asthma she was suffering from. She did not lament over the needs of the mission which was hanging in the middle because she knew for certain that everything is left in the hands and care of God. Servant of God never thought or worried who would continue her mission left behind and never felt that she was indispensably needed.

9 PIONEER JOURNEYS FOR NOBLE CAUSE

The readiness to move and get displaced is a characteristic trait of a staunch believer. This trait is seen in the lives of all those have been chosen by God starting from Abraham in Old Testament and St. Paul in New Testament. It is clearly stated in the primary textual resource ‘The Historical sketch of the Institute’ that the Servant of God moved from place to place leaving behind everything in her life and sought the asylum and refuge in God alone. It was the virtue of hope that strengthened her to continue to walk forward and enabled her to live as a child of God even when travelled to different places and faced with numerous challenges.

9.1 JOURNEYED TO COMMIT HER SONS IN PRIESTHOOD

She was deeply sorrowed by the shocking news of her husband Innaiah’s death. But the Servant of God was strengthened in prayer and discerned the ways of God in her life. With childlike hope Servant of God left her birth place and moved to Madras at the invitation of Archbishop Dr. John Fennelly. She did not depend on any of her relatives but placing her hope in God she came to another State with different languages and cultural practices. It was her first long journey that She moved from her native place in

order to be a support in the formation of her sons towards priesthood in the seminary. She let herself guided by the Lord just like a child.

9.2 JOURNEYED TO BE IN A SERENE ATMOSPHERE

As the Servant of God was deeply prayerful and contemplative she found that the hustle city Madras was not conducive to her and moved to Eraiyur, a small village, a place of serenity. It was not an obligation for her but She herself chose to spend her life in prayer and in peaceful atmosphere moved by the spirit of the Lord. The people of the village inherited the memories of the Servant of God that they identified her as a person of prayer and a woman of wisdom who would listen to their difficulties patiently. The people believed that her prayer would dissolve their worries.

9.3 JOURNEYED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE HOLY EUCHARIST

The Servant of God uprooted herself from Eraiyur, the place of her relatives and settled in Kilachery. Eraiyur was then a substation of Kilachery Parish. People had to go to Kilachery for all their spiritual needs and Holy Mass. The primary reason for Servant of God to settle in Kilachery was to take part in the Holy Eucharist and to receive the communion daily. As she was a pious, Church oriented woman, resided near the Sacred Heart Church in Kilachery.

9.4 JOURNEYED TO RENOUNCE EVERYTHING SHE TREASURED

The Servant of God travelled to a far off her home town to sell her possession in order to start the school for the girl children. She also made whirlwind journeys to neighboring villages to collect funds for her mission especially for the basic needs of the

boarding children. Though the widows had to keep themselves away from all auspicious functions nothing deterred the servant of God to share her faith and do good to others.

9.5 JOURNEYED TO FOUND A RELIGIOUS CONGREGATION

The Servant of God went to Bellary the unknown place without any hesitation to discuss about the Novitiate training of the new Postulants Arulamma and Agathamma when they expressed their desire to become nuns. Then she took them to Bellary to join the Postulancy. After their profession, she brought them back to Kilachery.

As St. Paul travelled to preach the Gospel, the Servant of God undertook journeys several times to initiate and sustain her mission. She faced many hazards during her journeys as there were no fast and safe modes of transportation those days yet nothing could resist her in establishing the religious Congregation and sharing the blessing of faith with others.

10 THE HEROIC SPIRITUAL PATH OF THE SERVANT OF GOD

It would not have been possible for an ordinary woman of 19th century to establish a revolutionary trend in that time of slavery and bondage if she were not a woman of great valour, strong-minded, and fearless. The brave Servant of God was able to carry out the ‘breaking-away with the past’ because she possessed the virtue of fortitude.

10.1 A LIFE OF FORTITUDE

Servant of God lived a life of fortitude undeterred by the criticism of local people who condemned her for even thinking of educating the girl children. Under the threat of humiliation and extradition from the village, even possible deprivation of property, Servant of God continued to uplift the life of women through education and preached the love of God and His truth. The village landlords confronted her and threatened her existence there. But she wouldn't waver in her strict stance for the values of the Gospel. She realized that Christianity is an authentic way of life. She also understood that Christianity was not meant to be a comfortable, easy way of the masses.

She wanted to entrust everything to the Lord, including her sufferings and struggles. Hence she was very firm that the Lord was leading her in the mission, in spite of her struggles in the challenging situation. Servant of God had understood, nay, made it her life experience in the love of the Lord, to make herself a fitting sacrifice to the Lord who called her. She found her strength only in the Lord like, prophet Isaiah, "For I am honored in the sight of the Lord, and my God has become my strength" (Is. 49: 5b).

10.2 A LIFE OF HOLINESS

The first book, the historical sketch of the Congregation refers her as saintly woman and summarizes the growth of the Congregation as, "The tender sapling that sprouted from the small seed sown in Kilachery by a saintly woman, has grown into a mighty tree in Royapuram, Madras, with branches spreading far and wide over a vast space of ground." It is doubtless that the Congregation is spread beyond the borders because of the holiness of the Servant of God.

She was endowed with real wisdom to discern God's will, grasp His timely inspirations, rely wholly on Him and follow His ways. Her only reply was FIAT, her only

aim and desire was to proceed ahead and submit all obstacles to bring back souls into the fold of Catholic Church. We understand this clearly in the foreword of Thomas Pothacamury, the then Archbishop of Bangalore who complimented Gnanamma. His foreword reads as follows: “This Congregation was established by a humble widow, thus being instrumental for thousands of consecrated lives to continue His salvific mission on earth. Gnanamma’s spiritual guide Fr.Arokianathar, a monk in the Institute of Mary Immaculate at Chingleput was impressed with her simplicity, her deep piety and childlike docility. Her life of holiness can be well understood from others”.

10.3 OBEDIENCE TO THE WILL OF GOD

She was as docile as a child to her spiritual heads and as affectionate as a mother to her adopted daughters. She wholly forgot herself and spent herself for their material and spiritual welfare. In her dealings with outsiders, she was affable, and spiritual minded, and she always tried to turn their thoughts to God and the spiritual welfare of their souls. She abided by the Will of God faithfully, promptly, joyfully, courageously and perseveringly in all matters. Humanly speaking, she might be thought wholly unfit for the great and difficult task of spreading Gospel values through pastoral ministry and women education. Though she was without much education and experience of the outside world at large and was a most ordinary country woman from the agricultural community, she had absolute confidence in God and followed His Will fully. These qualities which God found in her in His infinite wisdom made her a fitting instrument to found a new religious Congregation for His greater glory and honour. In Gnanamma, we have one more telling instance of the verification of the saying of St.Paul “*God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong, God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to*

bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.” (1 Cor 1:27 - 29)

10.4 OPEN TO THE INSPIRATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

To continue teaching girl children she saw the necessity to have women dedicated for this mission. This was another leap she took to prepare people for religious life despite all the hurdles she met from the village men. She listened to the inspiring words of Fr. Arokianathar and Dr. Stephen Fennelly, the Apostolic Vicar, to move ahead, in her mission and sent two women who came forward to become full time workers in her Mission. In 1872 she sent these two to St. Anne’s Novitiate in Bellary for religious training. She was deeply inspired by the Holy Spirit to prepare them for future Church mission as religious.

Servant of God was hoping in the Lord to acquire eternal happiness in the Lord. Her desire was to establish the Kingdom of God in and around Kilachery, delivering the girl children from their bondage through education. She held fast to hope without wavering, because she was sure that the one who chose her would lead her along with the girl children of her time so that they might be justified by the Lord’s grace and become heirs in hope of eternal life. Although Servant of God had unhealthy social setup which was not conducive for her mission, she was not discouraged. She never gave up her mission due to hardships, because the spark of the Lord within her blessed her with unwavering hope despite all discouragements, sustained her during trials and difficulties, and helped her to lead a life with expectation of eternal beatitude.

10.5 A WITNESSING LIFE OF SIMPLICITY AND HARD WORK

Servant of God followed a poverty “that sells all that it has and searches for the kingdom of God above all things.” Servant of God realised that the examples for following Christ in His virtue of Poverty were the Early Christians of the 1st century. Having known that, she put all her properties in common so that it could be used for the common cause of the girls’ education and the mission. She did not want to possess anything for her own benefit but use it for the welfare of the oppressed young girls, poor children and the people in her mission area, because of which she is hailed even today by people. In the same way, she wanted her religious nuns to possess Christ alone, as St. Paul says, as their treasure, and to consider all else a waste. She instilled in her mind that poverty is self-renunciation for the betterment of humanity, for a better cause and for the better missionary commitment. The Servant of God offered everything of her own for the legitimate use of the common good.

The Servant of God was a humble woman and hard worker. Her many travels, varied efforts and never-ending sacrifices would proclaim loud to the world her thirsting heart and body, and her resolve to accomplish what she had set her mind on! Even at her death-bed, she had the clarity and courage to instruct her followers: “Never depend financially on the Government or others; Let your hard work and efforts be your support and strength.” Her spirituality was to find fulfilment in hard work!” The Servant of God exclaims that she was a brave instrument in the hands of God who made use of her in the right way to uplift the girls of the 19th century. It was not an easy task due to the unjust social structure and the system of the society, which looked for ways and means to discriminate people in the name of gender. Disparity between the male and the female was piling up. Hence she had to work hard even spoiling her own health.

- To start the school for girls at Kilachery

- To gather children for the school and catechism
- To send the sisters to the novitiate
- To raise funds for the education of the girl children

Her long tedious journeys, sacrifices, austere mortifications and unstinted hard work worsened her health condition very badly. She suffered from chronic asthma which she patiently and silently bore for 20 years. But Gnanamma loved to do God's work with an uncomplaining spirit. Sensing her end drawing near, she called her spiritual daughters and advised them:

“To envelope themselves with humility:

To be always obedient to the spiritual heads:

To embed themselves with Christian charity to serve the poor and the needy:

To provide spiritual instruction and shelter to the young girls who are victimized and helpless: and Not to depend on Government aid or expect help from others but be self-supporting through hard work”.

The Servant of God Gnanamma highlights the life of dignity that her spiritual daughters should embrace to be self-sufficient without depending on others.

10.6 SURRENDERED HER STRUGGLES TO THE LORD AS A LIVING SACRIFICE

The life of Servant of God is mainly characterized by her sacrificial love and willingness to surrender herself as a sacrifice on the Altar of God. By her total submission to the Will of God, she was able to endure the sufferings at many critical and

decision making moments. She was in a great despair when God took away her beloved brother and parents from her life very early. It was indeed a big storm when she lost her husband who died of cholera in an unknown and far-off place. She realized that God spoke to her His plan and called her into new life. Through those losses and amidst her sufferings she prepared herself to offer as a burnt offering on the altar of God to that higher calling. She became so strong that no storm was distressing or disturbing ever after. She learnt to be more focused and waited for larger opportunities to prove her sacrificial love for God and His people. It did not take much time to understand that she was sent by God to frontiers and to overcome suffocating traditions.

The Servant of God is known for her virtue of sacrificial love. In responding to God generously she made sacrifices at every stage of her life. i. As the first sacrifice she allowed her husband to immerse himself in the loving service to the people of God – assisting the missionaries and to be involved in his missions as catechist. And when he died while doing his ministry, it was a huge sacrifice that she had to accept in her life. ii. As second sacrifice she allowed all her sons to become missionaries in order to continue the work of God. iii. She sacrificed the supportive presence of her relatives and friends at Phirangipuram and went to Madras. iv. She sacrificed all her joys and pleasures for the sake of God's work in Madras. v. She sacrificed her house and properties at Phirangipuram, sold everything, brought the money to Kilachery and spent all her money for the mission of God, to educate girl children and to found a religious congregation to continue God's mission.

11 PROPHETIC MISSIONARY

All Christians by virtue of Baptism share in the identity of Christ as son of God and in His mission as Prophet, Priest and King. We are therefore called to re-examine the meaning of one life, our identity in the Church and the world, which has been defined

earnestly in term of separation from the world and supervising our life over that of lay Christians. We get plunged into the prophetic ways of life to give contemplative and prophetic example to the world and make our presence vital and contributory. Servant of God already made her presence contemplative and contributory registered in the hearts and minds of the people. So the Servant of God saw the historical reality with the eyes of God and felt with her heart and proclaimed a message of love and renewed the hearts of the people.

11.1 CONSTANT EXPLORATION FOR THE CAUSE OF THE WOMEN

She was a woman of constant search for learning and exploration. She learnt a great deal from the Word of God and from the examples of noble personalities than what one would derive from any University. As an illumined visionary, she exhibited creativity and flexibility in identifying and evaluating the adverse situation of the society and finding a lasting cure for the human irrationality or fallibility.

The roots of knowledge are in observation and its' fruit is prediction. The wise and virtuous who can observe and identify the cause of evil, dare to walk an extra mile and find a way out for it. Mother Gnanamma was so keen in observing the situation that prevailed and the plight of the girls in the village of Kilachery. And she realized that only the light of spiritual and secular education would bring them out of their misery. Mother Gnanamma got on to her knees to submit herself to the ordeals and test herself in the fire of search and exploration. Lo! 'The Clarammal School' for girls was born on 03.05.1863! A school exclusively for girls would not have been a reality if Mother Gnanamma herself was not committed to learning and growing in God's Wisdom.

As the Lord pointed out ...learn from the lilies of the field and the birds of the sky (Mt 6:28), Mother Gnanamma was always open to learn the lessons of life from all kinds of situations. She was so much associated with the missionary priests, Apostolic Vicars and noble people that she always lived in a higher realm of spiritual state. She was always willing apprentice to those whose gifts of charity, wisdom, kindness, mercy, love and faithfulness far surpassed her own. And thus, she made it possible for others to exercise their own practical wisdom to act flexibly and creatively in their own situations. 'The Clarammal School' is the demonstration of her personal search and her dream for the hundreds and thousands of the future Generation.

11.2 A VERY GOOD MODEL FOR A CHRISTIAN LIVING

Catechizing was her fulltime ministry. Both by word and example she catechized children and villagers. It was an integral catechizing of children and villagers because it focused on the social and spiritual reflection of the events happening in the society. It was like that of Jesus who went to pray at night and based on her prayerful reflection she gave herself to the mission of catechizing. She was a committed teacher of catechism in the parish church at Kilachery. She was not only the catechism teacher but also a very good model for a Christian living. All the children were inspired by her exemplary life and learnt catechism from her. Even today the villagers say that she was in fact a pioneer in this ministry. She strongly believed that catechizing was nothing but the re-enactment of God's love for his people. She used to teach the parables and stories of the bible in a simple story form so that it would easily captivate the children, and inspire them to have faith in the loving Jesus.

Although Servant of God had unhealthy social setup which was not conducive for her mission, she was not discouraged. She never gave up her mission due to hardships, because the spark of the Lord within her blessed her with unwavering hope despite all

discouragements, sustained her during trials and difficulties, and helped her to lead a life with expectation of eternal beatitude. She made many journeys for the noble cause of mission by which she actualized her vision.

11.3 COMMITTED TO CATECHIZE PEOPLE

Catechizing and imparting religious education was the very breath of Gnanamma. As the daughter of a catechist, as the wife of a catechist and as the mother of her 5 priest sons, she was always directly and indirectly involved in the mission of catechizing the people. She never missed any spiritual or pious activity in the Church specially the Holy Mass. Thus she was a self-ordained pastoral woman. During her stay in Kilachery between 1860 and 1874, she volunteered herself to take catechism to the children in the village. She had a deep thirst for pastoral service. Baptism record in Kilachery parish bears witness to the fact that she was a God-Mother and sponsor for 37 children. When she breathed her last, she instructed her spiritual daughters to commit themselves to catechize the people. The Servant of God initiated and led the house wives in the habit of praying in adoration in the noon hours which practice is still continued at Kilachery and surrounding villages.

11.4 RADIATED GOD'S LOVE THROUGH CHARITY

The Servant of God gave her complete life for the sake of the love of the neighbour and God. She was not concentrating on working for her welfare, but rather all the time she gave herself for the sake of the love of the other. She knew for sure that Love was the fullness and climax of the Law of life for which Jesus the Christ, the only son of God, was sent to the world. Following in the footsteps of the Master Jesus, she was also eager to give her full self in love for the well-being of others.

The life of the Servant of God was a life that was shared – a life that was broken for others! All her properties and possessions – movable and immovable became her capital for the early Church – our Congregation!” The heart of Gnanamma’s vocation was charity. Charity reflected in all other virtues of the Servant of God. From charity flowed all her service to God and neighbour. It was because of her heroic charity, displayed in acts of love and service to God and neighbour, that faith of the Servant of God was nourished and her hope was sustained even through the many trials and challenges of her life as an instrument of God at Kilachery. The Servant of God was moved with maternal heart to love all. People, and especially young women, wanted to be around Gnanamma as she radiated God’s love. These young girls received from the Servant of God the formation in charity not only by her gentle instruction and guidance, but also by her example and her acts of charity.

Every day after the holy mass, Gnanamma would meet the sick people and then pay a visit to the field. After completing her chores, she would teach the children with utmost care and concern. Being a single woman and performing all these works with a generous heart was an achievement of great magnitude.

Recalling the charity of the Servant of God it is written in *Gnanamma Kadhai*, “I remember the stories told by my grandmother and grandfather. Thatipathri Gnanamma went to Phirangipuram and sold her land and brass utensils to acquire money. Gnanamma purchased 14 acres of cultivable land with the money in Maiyyedu aka Mayyedu. She was the first woman farmer to cultivate in the field and remained an outstanding personality.”

11.5 GENEROUSLY SHARED WITH THE POOR

“Go and sell all your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me” (Mk 10: 21). She lived a life true to the Gospel values. A predominant virtue in the life Mother Gnanamma is her generosity. She suffered the life of a widow, having lost her husband at the early age of 37 leaving behind 5 children with her. Yet from the moment Servant of God Gnanamma received a rich inheritance of respect and recognition at Kilachery, she understood the true meaning of Christian charity, and generously distributed her wealth to those in need by establishing a school meant for girl children.

The villagers in Phirangipuram even to this day remember how she was generous towards the needy and the poor. Servant of God used to give dresses and food materials to those who were in need. One Mr. Showraiyya, an elderly man, says that his grandfather had told him that the Servant of God was very kind to the poor, giving out the share of the produce from her fields of cultivation, rice and *daal* for the daily living of the poor in and around her house and place. She also continued the same in Kilachery too.

11.6 EMPATHETIC TOWARDS NEIGHBOUR

Everyone deserves everything. That was the guiding principle and conviction of her life. And Servant of God went about doing things to make her conviction a reality. The experiences narrated by people, who worked for her, prove that. Servant of God bought 14 acres of land in Maippedu. She grew paddy there and fed the children from the income of the produce. During that time, there were not enough people who would work in the field, but in her field seven people namely Karuthamma, Muniamma, Kuruvamma, Mariamma, Maryamma, Govindaraj, and Arockiasamy worked very energetically throughout the year. Each took care of two acres of the field. Servant of God gave them

two to three measures of paddy along with their wages. According to the number of children in each household she used to give four to five measures of paddy.

“As we were working in Mother’s/Amma’s field, we would not go anywhere else to work. For every yield, Mother gave us enough paddy for all of us. She would also give hay for the cattle. During harvest, Mother would provide us with *Ragi kali* (ragi porridge), Tamarind chutney and spicy lettuce (Gongura chutney). Mother would never treat us as labourers, but will look after us like the way we treat our guests. Mother loved the poor and needy. Mother would always help others, even if Mother does not have food to eat, she was kind enough to provide others, as told by karuthamma and Raju who worked in the field.”

11.7 A KIND MOTHER TO THE ORPHANS

The Servant of God did not remain a mother only to her five sons. She became a universal mother to those little forgotten ones, who were fatherless and motherless. She brought them to her orphanage and gave them the necessary education and brought them up with motherly care and concern. After coming to Kilachery she found that place as the apt one for the Lord’s work of love and affection. Hence she started the works like the orphanage boarding where she was able to accommodate the poor illiterate students, started school and finally it necessitated the founding of religious community to continue the mission of service. It is the “great day and the dawn of a new beginning and joy for Gnanamma to be a mother of greater number of girl children. she is the blazing star that went out without fear or favour to live the inner impulse of responding to the Gospel, where you are told what you have done to the least you have done it to me” (Mt. 25:15). Because of her even now there are several villages and towns in and around Kilachery which get benefit of education and social upward movement.

12 A SYMBOL OF GOD'S SACRIFICIAL LOVE

Servant of God kept in her heart imprinted the values of the Gospel as Jesus appreciated the contribution made by the widow in the temple dumb box, she enacted the same role of the poor widow in her life. The poor widow in the Gospel sacrificed all that she had for her daily sustenance, in the same way and in a greater measure Servant of God sacrificed for the mission of God and of His people all that she had as treasure without any reserve. Servant of God learned to sacrifice from the poor widow and from Jesus she learned love and sacrifice. Thus she imitated Christ in the sacrificial love.

12.1 SELF-RENOUNCING

Servant of God is known for her virtue of sacrificial love. In responding to God generously she made sacrifices at every stage of her life. i. As the first sacrifice she allowed her husband to immerse himself in the loving service to the people of God – assisting the missionaries and to be involved in his missions as catechist. And when he died while doing his ministry, it was a huge sacrifice that she had to accept in her life. ii. As second sacrifice she allowed all her sons to become missionaries in order to continue the work of God. iii. She sacrificed the supportive presence of her relatives and friends at Phirangipuram and went to Madras. iv. She sacrificed all her joys and pleasures for the sake of God's work in Madras. v. She sacrificed her house and properties at Phirangipuram, sold everything, brought the money to Kilachery and spent all her money for the mission of God, to educate girl children and to found a religious congregation to continue God's mission.

12.2 MATERNAL CARE FOR GIRL CHILD

Love was the outstanding principle of her life, the call she received from the Lord to serve the girl children. Kilachery has become a renowned place due to Servant of God and her ministry among the people there. Earlier there was no school for girls, only the boys had the privilege of formal primary education. She stood against the gender bias and demanded and worked for obtaining justice for female children.

Servant of God lived in a house with country tile roof. She started a school in the name of St. Clara for providing primary education for girl children. No one came forward to join the school. So Gnanamma made the girls to stay with her and started giving them education. It was a 'Gurukul' system of teaching, where moral values and life orientation was taught. This school won the credit of being the first school for the girls in South India. As told by Karasala Joseph "Girls without Education is an uncultivable land, grass may grow there but not good children."

12.3 FORGIVING LOVE FOR ENEMIES

As she began to educate girls, some persons in the village began to oppose her. They began their vicious activities against her. Those days, it was said, the villagers were very rude to her for her radical social activities. Despite opposition she was able to go through every agony just because her love for the girls and the poor was greater and stronger than the enemies. Servant of God was very kind even to those who opposed her mission. She never failed to love even those who opposed her way of functioning in her mission. The heads of the villages in and around Kilachery were against providing education to girls and they wanted women to remain as oppressed people. But Servant of God was against the concept and practices of women oppression and worked towards

obtaining liberation of women from the bondages the unjust society had imposed on them.

The Servant of God stood up for the truth of God. She lived through the criticism of local people who condemned her for even thinking of educating the girl child. Under the threat of humiliation and extradition from the village, even possible deprivation of property, she continued to uplift the life of women through education and preached the love of God and His truth. The village landlords confronted her and threatened her existence there but she was kind to them, yet she wouldn't deny the truth, nor waver in her strict stance for the values of the Gospel. This courage and boldness to live out a Christ-like life, and incarnate the truth, amidst the ridiculous and threatening situation is the Gospel. Gnanamma realized that Christianity is an authentic way of life not meant to be in a standstill, comfortable but challenge the situation and live for others.

13 WOMAN OF COURAGE: LIBERATED WOMAN TO LIBERATE WOMEN

The servant of God Thatipathri Gnanamma exemplified courage and fortitude in the crucial circumstances. Though she lived in the 19th century, her astounding and radical response to the signs of the times still serves as a role model to everyone specially to the sisters of the twin congregations founded by the Servant of God. The Sisters of St. Anne-Madras and the Sisters of St. Anne – Phirangipuram continue to educate the generations of the young girls in faith and upliftment.

13.1 A RADICAL RESPONSE TO THE CONTEXT

Whenever there is oppression, Our God, the God of liberation intervenes and reveals himself as the liberator of the weak. The Exodus event is a classic example for the historic intervention of God to break the bonds of slavery. As we find Moses commissioned by God to lead the Israelites out of Egypt so also the Servant of God also was entrusted with a mission of liberating the girls from their enslavement by the God of liberation. The Servant of God, the valiant woman lived totally for this cause and challenged the social tradition of her time which condemned education of girls as sin against God – *Deiva Kuttram*. She took a radical stand against all social evils that stand as barrier for girl education in Kilachery. The girls of this village shouldered the responsibilities of household work such as looking after the sibling, fetching water, collecting wood, cleaning and cooking etc., as there were no schools for the girls. The Servant of God looked at this context, contemplated and courageously responded with the grace of the Lord and eliminated the gender disparities in education.

13.2 A CATALYST IN RESTORING THE DIGNITY OF WOMEN

The equality of Men and Women in the society at the time of the Servant of God was certainly an unimaginable dream as we still hear the cries of Women for liberation in this developing 21st century world of globalization, Scientific advancement and women empowerment where women progress in every field. Women being deprived of education to involve in Domestic work and Field work was the tradition of the times. None could dare to speak against this traditional culture. In a situation where there was no space for alternate thinking, Gnanamma felt that she was called to be an agent of transformation and a catalyst to restore the dignity of Women. The women in general were dominated by a sort of inequality which was not allowing women to have free to access to all the opportunities of the Society. The Servant of God was brought up in the most up-to-date Christian values embedded in the New Testament on womanhood and equality of genders

and dignity of persons. She was in continuous inner questioning to find the right solutions for the problem. “She restored the dignity of women through education”

13.3 PROMOTER OF GENDER JUSTICE

The Servant of God had the sense of social justice in the historic times of 19th century. As all the male children were given utmost priority to avail all the privileges, the girl children were under home slavery to be busy enslaved with the regular pattern of domestic works. At the time of cruel enslavement of the societal structure, whence nothing other than this sort of social pattern of life was the norm of the time, Servant of God had a different thought and wanted something extraordinary to be taught to the society. The pioneering work by her to give education to the girl children of the village was a revolution grandeur to promote equity. It was an awakening to the whole of the society of her time. The Servant of God interacted with people in a spirit of dialogue. She did a lot of charitable activities and used her talent to teach catechism to children and went on to give human formation especially to girls to obtain integral formation to respond effectively to the social, spiritual and intellectual challenges of her time.

When others were silent, Servant of God raised a question WHY is it that only girl children had to go to domestic works when the boys were running to school as the school bell rang? In the context of Kilachery, Franciscans gave education to the boys. When they themselves did not even give a thought about education of girls Servant of God thought about it. She read the context of Kilachery and she came out with the new endeavour of starting a centre for education of the girls, which became eventually an important hub for girls’ education and led to establishment of many more centres for the education of girls. She upheld justice in the lives of so many girl children and the society in general. She was not ready to compromise on anything which put under bondage girls and women in

general. Hence she was constantly vigilant to promote justice. Servant of God made it her life-philosophy “Maintain justice, and do what is right, for soon my salvation will come, and my deliverance be revealed” (Is. 56:1). She show-cased her way of life in justice.

14 TOWARDS NEW HORIZONS

Servant of God highly contemplative on the mission of God and discretely and responsibly discerned on the will of God in her lifetime. Hence, the Holy Spirit guided the Servant of God to discern on the new enterprises, new avenues, new missions, and set up new horizons. She was contemplative enough to conscript herself on higher values, courageous enough to take up the untrodden path, she was creative enough to enlist new methods, and thereby she was a visionary who could see new horizons.

14.1 HER CONTEMPLATIVE VISION AS A VISIONARY

The intimacy with the Lord and the prayerful life of the Servant of God made her heroic woman of God. She was able to discern with inner freedom because of her contemplation and she over-came the fear, doubt, suffering, failure, and act with inner freedom. The inner core of Gnanamma that awakened itself through God experience, helped her to assess the context and visualize the goal of life precisely. Despite being not much educated, she was able to comprehend and identify the blockade for women education in the soil of Kilachery. The Servant of God was able to grasp the perpetuated perception that women are lower than men led to the denial of women education. She was pained to see the boys going to school and the girls of the same age going to the fields at the bell sound of the school. The Servant of God pondered over the question “Aren’t

these girl children also the Children of God?.” The result of this contemplation paved way for the education of young girls at Kilachery.

14.2 HER CREATIVE RESPONSE AS A MISSIONARY

The Spirituality and wisdom of the Servant of God brought transformation in the Society. She not only saw things as they were, but saw how they should be. She had the grace to make it possible the impossible. That brought a change in the lives of women. The women who were confined to their homes came out and received the light of knowledge through education to breathe the air of freedom.

She was not shattered when her spiritual director Fr. Arokianathar was transferred to Bellary rather she made that situation as a place of formation for the two young girls to be trained for religious life. Making challenges as opportunities is a one of the tactics of creativity. It was possible for the Servant of God to dispel the darkness of women through her radical thinking and took efforts for the emancipation of women. At times the events that happen might appear to be normal. But they might become great seeds of transformation in future by the power of God. The spirit of Gnanamma who takes the first seat among those who live even after death guides and leads the sisters of our Congregation amidst those who live as dead even when alive. The path the Servant of God tread was rough but the journey she made was sacred and holy. Her life was grounded on the values of the Kingdom of God. The seed that was sown by her for the progress of the girl Children then, has branched out today as two Congregations - St. Anne of Madras and St. Anne of Phirangipuram. Both the Congregations have now more than 1300 Sisters working in the fields of Education, Health, Evangelization and social work in India and abroad.

14.3 COURAGEOUS SUBMISSION AS A HEROIC WOMAN

Mother Mary obeyed the will of God with courage and humility realizing the greater glory of God. We witness the same spirit in the Servant of God as she stood firm in the face of difficulties. The expatriation from her native place, relatives and the State is a proof for her courageous decision to abide by the will of God. She was criticized by others for her radical thinking of providing education for girls. The criticism of the villagers, the threat of the village elders, humiliation and loss of property did not distort her decision of working for the empowerment of women. She never bothered about the impediments but lived the values of the Gospel. The life she lived amidst the challenges with courage is a great inspiration to the present generation to do the will of God and constancy in the pursuit of goodness and justice.

15 EVANGELICAL SIMPLICITY

After her married life that is to say after the death of her husband she had a second phase of her life. More than a mother of five sons she opted to be the spiritual mother of the children of God. More than her commitment to the family responsibilities she opted for diametrically opposite enrollment of commitment to the wider range of mission for God. Hence she took up a personal discernment to opt fully herself for the mission of God and the Church. Although she was not a consecrated religious person she lived a life of evangelical simplicity. She made within herself a firm commitment to lead a life of chastity, charity, poverty and obedience as a lay widow. She formed a character out of this pattern of formulated life which serves an example for the laity of our present time.

15.1 POVERTY

She sold all her legitimate wealth in order to lead a simple life and serve the Lord and people of God with the money she procured out of the selling. She imitated Christ's virtue of poverty like that of the early Christians of the 1st century. The Servant of God having influenced by this as a first early Christians she kept everything in common so that it could be used for the common cause of the girls' education and the mission. Servant of God did not want to possess anything for her own benefit but use it for the welfare of the oppressed young girls, poor children and the people in her mission area, because of which she is hailed even today by people. Servant of God offered everything of her own for the legitimate use of the common good.

Servant of God Gnanamma followed in the path of poverty the spirit of affectivity. It was an appeal to the poverty of spirit while living very soberly. Servant of God frequently understood this when that desire to appeal to the "spirit" was tested. Nothing could keep her away from Christ, because Christ was her treasure and wealth. Amidst all her tests and temptation, she was able to withstand and use all the riches and the goods for God and His people.

15.2 CHASTITY

It is said in the life of the Servant of God that "that [Chastity] was reflected in her motherly concern and love that embraced each and every one...these were the basis of her life throughout!" Servant of God understood that the chastity of Jesus Christ is an example for the missionary. Hence, she was careful about the fact that though she was not a professed nun she followed the chaste life with utmost responsibility and commitment. She could have re-married after the death of her husband but she remained chaste and pure for God and His work. Servant of God clearly understood that this theme of chastity in regard to the missionary and the mission, demanding a purity in thought, word and deed and thereby a complete offering of oneself physically, emotionally and

spiritually. It is except being an alarm and a reminder constantly, it is the dedication to the mission seriously and fully.

15.3 OBEDIENCE

Servant of God “did not pronounce her vow [of obedience] in the congregation in a formal canonical sense; but [practised] an obedience that constantly listened to the stirrings of the spirit that calls from within.” Servant of God very well understood that obedience to the Divine Master is the principle of its kind. In line with the Master, she practiced obedience to the bishops, pastors, and other ecclesiastical authorities, also she obeyed them with reverence and respect.

Servant of God was obedient to her parents. She obeyed the will of God to accept Mr. Innaiah as her Husband, and she was a very devout and obedient wife as a married woman. As a widow, she was an obedient servant in the vineyard of Christ as a great missionary. She obeyed the call from God. She said Fiat to the plan of God for her.

16 SPIRIT OF DISCERNMENT AND STRENGTH OF DETACHMENT

God turned the coward disciples into courageous preachers of faith by filling them with the Holy Spirit. The spirit of discernment and detachment enabled them to go to far-off countries leaving their own. They remained staunch in their faith even at the face of adversities. The spirit of discernment and strength of detachment remains the essential characteristics of an evangelizer. Mother Gnanamma also met with the worst misfortunes and harsh conditions of life when she lost her parents and husband to death. But she did not lose courage at any moment, instead strengthened by the Holy Spirit with greater courage and renewed hope moved on. With a spirit of discernment and detachment as a missionary she was able to move from Phirangipuram to Madras, Madras to Eraiur and

Eraiyr to Kilachery. Her disposition at the time trials, intense journeys and ability to go beyond the confining situations of life speak volumes of her constant thirst for evangelization through her life and service.

CONCLUSION

The virtuous life of Servant of God is a ray of hope to the laity to deepen their trust in the Lord, an invitation to become socially responsible people of God. Although she was not a religious herself, she is certainly an inspiration not only to lay faithful and also to all the nuns of both the congregations St. Anne's of Madras and Phirangipuram and other religious too.

It is narrated in the book *Institute of St. Anne: Historical Sketch that* In her dealings with outsiders she was affable and spiritual minded, and she always tried to turn their thoughts to God and the spiritual welfare of their souls. She abided by the will of God faithfully, promptly, joyfully, courageously and perseveringly in all matters. Therefore, she devoted her life to lead the faithful towards God and spent her energy and time for the secular and religious education of the girls.

She was a soldier of faith who brought equality and kingdom of God on earth through catechism and women Education following the teachings of Christ. The Servant of God holding her chaste hands on to God rendered wonderful service to the society. It has its influence over millions of people through the centuries. The fragrance of her holiness and dedication for Evangelization still attracts women to uphold her vision and continue her prophetic mission.