

Sr. Flora Topno: A Beacon of Mission, Shines Brightly



**Motto: “Owe to me if I do not preach the Gospel.”
(1 Corinthians 9:16)**



By Sr. Christna Ekka and

Sr. Ankita Lakra

A brief biography of Sr. Flora

Sr. Flora Topno is a devoted and dynamic missionary whose life has been a testament. Known for her punctuality, vibrant spirit, and deep devotion to God, she has inspired countless individuals through her work and presence. She was a beacon of missionary zeal and faith, embodying the true spirit of an MSMHC missionary. With unwavering enthusiasm, she dedicated her life to pastoral work, reviving dormant missions, walking long distances to reach villages, and tirelessly proclaiming the name of Jesus. Her deep devotion to prayer, especially in adoration, fueled her compassion as she prayed over the sick and shared the Good News with everyone she met. Fluent in connecting with people of all ages and undeterred by language barriers, she creatively used every moment to spread Christ's love. Through her humility, adaptability, and tireless commitment, she inspired those around her, leaving a legacy of faith, service, and missionary spirit that continues to guide and inspire. She has lived her vocation with remarkable dedication. Even in her later years, despite losing the ability to speak, she continues to inspire those around her with her determination, grace, and ever-present smile.

Childhood

In Kisni's green fields, her journey took flight,
Where dreams blossomed under the soft morning light.
With laughter like music and faith deeply sown,
She grew in God's love, her heart fully known.

Barefoot in the soil, chasing butterflies,
Her laughter danced softly beneath open skies.
Through meadows of dreams, her spirit would play,
In the warmth of childhood, she'd find her way.

With every birth, the world breathes in hope,
exhaling the promise of tomorrow. In the quiet moments of birth, nature reveals its profound magic, bringing forth the priceless gift of life. This gift was bestowed upon Sr. Flora on January 2, 1950, in the quaint hamlet of Kisni Bertoli, Gumla, to Mr. Junas Topno and Mrs. Elizabeth Kandulna. She was born under the parish of Kudda, within the Diocese of Khunti, in the state of Jharkhand, India. Fifteen days after her birth, she was baptized on



January 17, 1950, at her parish church, then located in Torpa, and was given the name Flora. Affectionately called "Folo," she was the youngest of three siblings, with an elder brother and an elder sister. Surrounded by the natural beauty of her homeland and nurtured by the unwavering love of her devoted parents, Flora grew up with a deep sense of faith and purpose. Her roots in this serene village fostered in her a profound connection with both God's creation and the people she was destined to serve.

Schooling

Walking the dusty road, through paths so small,
In heat, in rain, in cold's firm call.
With books in hand and a heart so bright,
She lit her world with wisdom's light.



School, a "house of knowledge" and a "temple of learning," illuminated the life of our dear Sr. Flora. At the break of day, she eagerly made her way to this temple of knowledge to learn. Thus, her educational journey began at Roman Catholic Mission School, Kisni, where she completed Kindergarten to Class III from 1960 to 1963. She then continued her studies at Marcha from Class IV to VIII, from 1964 to 1967. Subsequently, in 1971, she successfully completed her matriculation from St. Anne Girls' High School, Torpa, growing up alongside girls of her age and joyfully walking long distances to school each day. Surrounded by the natural beauty of her homeland and nurtured by the love of her devoted parents, teachers, and friends, she grew up with a deep sense of faith and purpose.

Vocation:

After completing her higher secondary education at St. Anne Girls' School, she felt a profound calling in her heart. At the age of 20, she shared her desire to dedicate her life fully to Christ. This deep yearning led her to make the decision to leave her family and home behind, feeling that her true purpose was to serve others and follow Christ's example more closely. She embraced the life of a religious nun, seeking to live in simplicity, humility, and devotion, away from the distractions of the world. Her decision was rooted in a desire to embody love, selflessness, and faith, as she took up the path of religious life with the hope of doing God's work and spreading His message of compassion and grace.

Her burning desire to become a nun brought her to Assam along with her two companions to a lovely convent known as St. Mary's Convent, Barpeta Road. She

reached the community on May 23, 1972, and joined the vibrant and enthusiastic girls who were already there, training themselves to become the spouses of Christ.



Period of Formation

	Date	Place
Aspirantate	23rd May 1972- 1974	St. Mary's convent Barpeta Road
Postulancy	24th may 1974	St. Mary's convent Barpeta Road
Novitiate	7th December 1974	Peachland Shillong
First Profession	8th December 1976	Peachland Shillong
Juniorate	1976- 1977	Peachland Shillong
Final Profession	8th December 1982	Peachland Shillong

Sr. Flora as a MSMHC

Sr. Flora is one of the well-trained sisters in the field of evangelization. Known for her vibrant and dynamic charisma as a preacher where she used her innovative ideas in proclaiming the word of God through hymns, translating many into vernacular local dialogues. She was a bold and courageous sister with exceptional adaptability and leadership qualities. She was assigned to the mission stations of the congregation in Tseminyu, Dibrugarh, Champhai, Bangalore, Guwahati, Tetenbari, Kudua, Doomni,

Barpeta Road Bandel, Agiamore Boropahari, Dumka, and Dhajea and served the congregation as a teacher, animator of the house, boarding assistant, a highly effective touring sister and a provincial councilor for evangelization. Whether walking long distances to reach remote villages, meeting with locals, or praying with the sick, she poured her heart into everything she did. She mastered many languages to be more



efficient in the mission field, and also to understand better the people.

Through her tireless efforts in evangelization, she has witnessed countless individuals and families to embrace Jesus and commit to a Christian life. Her work often involved traveling long distances, enduring difficult conditions, and making personal sacrifices, but with unwavering faith and trust in God to surmount every challenges in her mission. Through her selfless dedication, Sr. Flora became a true "messenger of Christ," bringing light to places of darkness and hope to those in despair. Her life is a powerful example of what it means to live fully for the mission of Christ, touching hearts and transforming lives wherever she goes.



Time with the sisters



A Glimpse into the Life of Sr. Flora

Sr. Flora's life was a testament to her unwavering commitment to her faith and her calling. Some of the key qualities that defined her life include:

1. Enthusiasm for Missionary Evangelization: Sr. Flora was driven by a passion to spread the word of God and bring people closer to their faith.

2. Deep Devotion to Prayer and the Word of God: Her love for prayer and scripture was evident in her daily life, guiding her actions and decisions.



3. Tireless Evangelist: Sr. Flora willing to travel extensively, preaching and sharing the Good News without rest.

4. Courageous Corrosiveness: She demonstrated steadfastness in correcting others, always seeking to guide them towards the right path.

5. Forgiving and Loving Nature: Sr. Flora embodied the virtues of forgiveness and love, harboring no resentment towards others.

6. Unrelenting Work Ethic: Her spirit of hard work, both manual and mental, inspired those around her.

7. Generous and Available. Sr. Flora's generosity and availability to others were hallmarks of her selfless nature.

8. Truthful and Faithful: She truthfulness, upholding these values life.

These qualities, among others mark on the lives of those who knew



remained committed to in all aspects of her

have left an indelible Sr. Flora.



A Glance at Sr. Flora's Missionary Work

Year	House	Assignment
1978	Tseminyu	Teaching and Missionary Evangelization
Feb. 1979-82	Dibrugarh	Missionary with the sisters Evangelization, teacher and boarding in charge
Dec. 1982	Champhai	Teacher and boarding assistant
April 1984	Bangalore	Spirituality course
April 1985	Guwahati	Preaching retreat and seminars
1988	Tetenbari	Superior and headmistress
1990	Kudda	Superior and Missionary evangelization
1994	Bangalore	Training on faith-formation
1995	Bandel	Missionary evangelization
1999	Agiamore	Missionary evangelization
2005	Boropahari	Superior and Missionary evangelization
2009	Dumka	Missionary evangelization
2012	Boropahari	Missionary evangelization
2014	Bethel	prayer
2015	Bandel	Prayer ministry
2017	Agiamore	Missionary evangelization
Nd.	Jesuit centre	Counseling course
N d.	Dhajea	
May 2023-July	Ichapur	Treatment
August 2023	Bandel Home	Praying ministry and health issue

Sr. Flora in Bandel Community



Sr. Flora had been enjoying the fullness of life until 2023. However, due to health issues, she was moved to Ichapur for the treatment, where she suffered a stroke that left her completely paralyzed. Her chances of survival seemed little, but by the grace of God and through the prayers of all the

sisters and family members, she miraculously recovered. She was brought to the Bandel community in August for her recuperation.

Though she is now able to walk, the stroke left her with the inability to speak. Despite this, Sr. Flora has regained much of her independence. She helps herself with daily tasks and walks around the house twice a day, holding a rosary in her hands praying for everyone. Her presence has become the heart of the community. Whether it's the sisters, aspirants, hostel girls, or domestic staff, everyone enjoys communicating with her. They speak to her in sign language or regular conversation, and she responds with expressive sounds, bringing joy to all who interact with her.

With the community Sisters

Sr. Flora is always on the move, walking through our community—whether in the garden, kitchen, or veranda. Whenever she meets someone, she offers kind and encouraging words. In her routine life, she brings color by holding her rosary and spending her mornings in prayer in the up chapel. If anyone looks for her, they will find her nowhere else but there. She shares meals and conversations with the sisters in the refectory, joins in community prayers, sometimes attends meetings, and spends time reading newspaper or spiritual books. One of the most inspiring things about Sr. Flora is her deep prayer life. Even without words, she prays with great devotion, encouraging us to grow in our own faith. We are grateful for Sr. Flora's presence and the example she sets for us all.



With the Candidates



Sr. Flora embodied punctuality in every aspect of community life, setting a shining example for the young formees. She took a special interest in the candidates, gently waking them up when they doze off during study

hours with a patient and affectionate touch. Whenever they sought her blessing and prayer, she would humbly nod in agreement, her presence radiating warmth and kindness. The candidates deeply feel her love and care, cherishing her in return with heartfelt affection.

With the Boarding Children

Sr. Flora showed the love of Jesus by caring for the boarding children with kindness and affection. She helped them with their daily tasks, studies, and playtime. Speaking to them in their own language made them so happy, bringing bright smiles to their faces. Seeing Sr. Flora with the children reminds us of the words of our founder, Van Stephen Ferrando: "You have been sent like angels to this village to take care of the little children whom Jesus loves so much." Her presence brings truly Christ's love and joy to the children, living out our founder's vision.



Sr. Flora with domestic staff:

Sr. Flora's humility and kindness shone brightly in her interactions with the domestic staff. Despite potential language barriers, she effortlessly connected with them, sharing lighthearted moments and spreading joy. Her heart spoke a universal language, transcending word and fostering meaningful relationships.

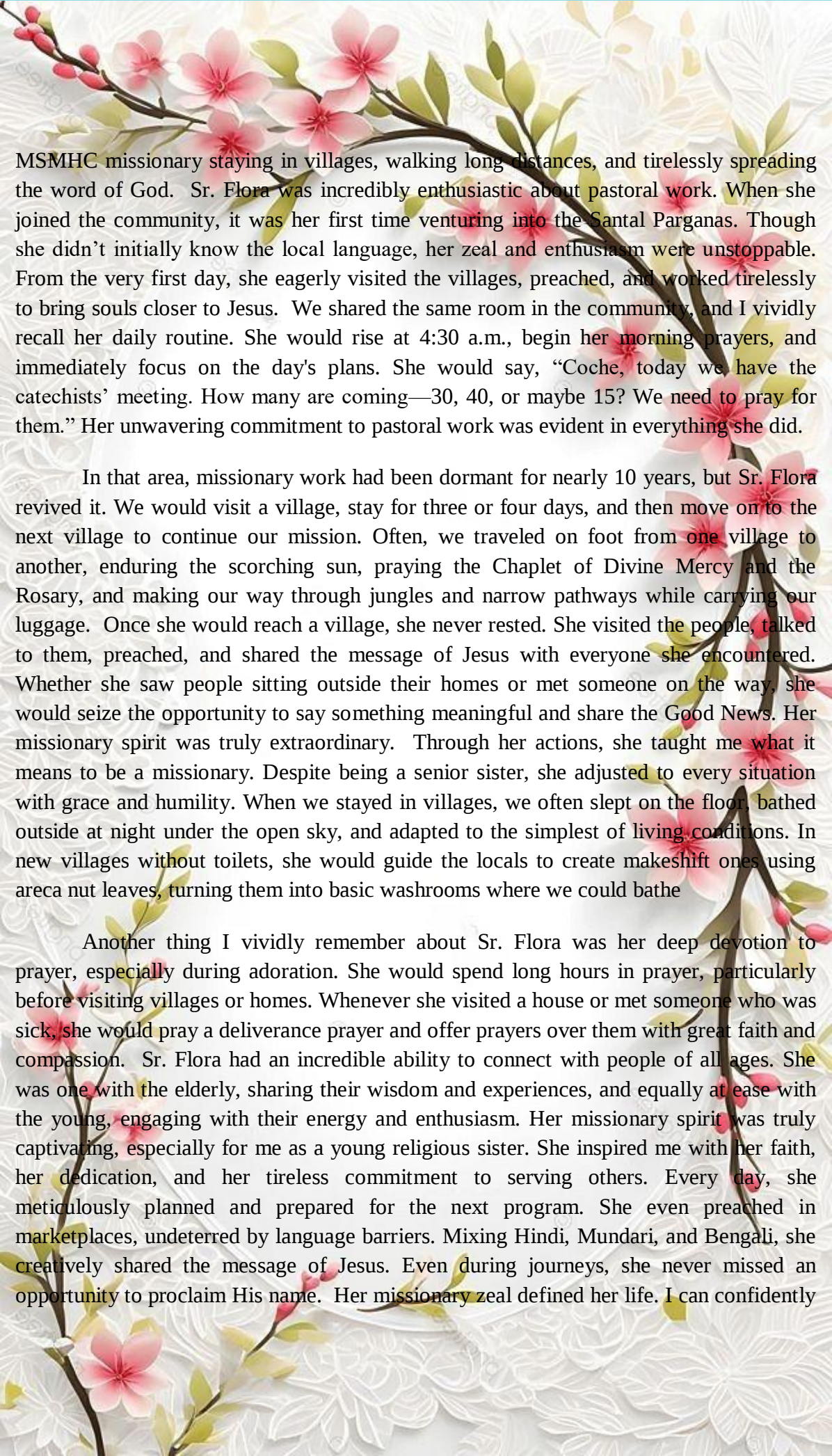


Testimony:

Sr. Bincy's life experience with Sr. Flora



I had the privilege of working closely with Sr. Flora during the second year of my religious life in Agiamore as a touring missionary. Together, we visited villages, engaged in pastoral work, and truly embraced the essence of missionary life. It was with her that I experienced firsthand what it means to be an



MSMHC missionary staying in villages, walking long distances, and tirelessly spreading the word of God. Sr. Flora was incredibly enthusiastic about pastoral work. When she joined the community, it was her first time venturing into the Santal Parganas. Though she didn't initially know the local language, her zeal and enthusiasm were unstoppable. From the very first day, she eagerly visited the villages, preached, and worked tirelessly to bring souls closer to Jesus. We shared the same room in the community, and I vividly recall her daily routine. She would rise at 4:30 a.m., begin her morning prayers, and immediately focus on the day's plans. She would say, "Coche, today we have the catechists' meeting. How many are coming—30, 40, or maybe 15? We need to pray for them." Her unwavering commitment to pastoral work was evident in everything she did.

In that area, missionary work had been dormant for nearly 10 years, but Sr. Flora revived it. We would visit a village, stay for three or four days, and then move on to the next village to continue our mission. Often, we traveled on foot from one village to another, enduring the scorching sun, praying the Chaplet of Divine Mercy and the Rosary, and making our way through jungles and narrow pathways while carrying our luggage. Once she would reach a village, she never rested. She visited the people, talked to them, preached, and shared the message of Jesus with everyone she encountered. Whether she saw people sitting outside their homes or met someone on the way, she would seize the opportunity to say something meaningful and share the Good News. Her missionary spirit was truly extraordinary. Through her actions, she taught me what it means to be a missionary. Despite being a senior sister, she adjusted to every situation with grace and humility. When we stayed in villages, we often slept on the floor, bathed outside at night under the open sky, and adapted to the simplest of living conditions. In new villages without toilets, she would guide the locals to create makeshift ones using areca nut leaves, turning them into basic washrooms where we could bathe.

Another thing I vividly remember about Sr. Flora was her deep devotion to prayer, especially during adoration. She would spend long hours in prayer, particularly before visiting villages or homes. Whenever she visited a house or met someone who was sick, she would pray a deliverance prayer and offer prayers over them with great faith and compassion. Sr. Flora had an incredible ability to connect with people of all ages. She was one with the elderly, sharing their wisdom and experiences, and equally at ease with the young, engaging with their energy and enthusiasm. Her missionary spirit was truly captivating, especially for me as a young religious sister. She inspired me with her faith, her dedication, and her tireless commitment to serving others. Every day, she meticulously planned and prepared for the next program. She even preached in marketplaces, undeterred by language barriers. Mixing Hindi, Mundari, and Bengali, she creatively shared the message of Jesus. Even during journeys, she never missed an opportunity to proclaim His name. Her missionary zeal defined her life. I can confidently

say that if one could “squeeze her,” the very essence of her missionary spirit would pour out. Even in her old age, she sang, danced, taught action songs, and preached with the same energy and passion. I was deeply inspired by her life and mission. Her example taught me what it truly means to be a missionary and her legacy continues to guide and inspire me every day.



Life with Sr. Flora Topno in Agiamore by Sr. Josephine Zonunpari

Staying with Sr. Flora Topno a great and zealous missionary was a something to be remembered and cherished as life was enriched with experiences. Though it was just two years and yet there were moments that spoke volumes of the life of Sr. Flora as an MSMHC, a zealous and dynamic missionary with creativity for the proclamation for the Good News. As a fresh junior in 2018, I stepped into the St. Mary's Convent Agiamore community. In March 2018, I arrived with excitement and curiosity, where I first met Sr. Flora Topno, a dedicated missionary evangelist. Her warm welcome left a lasting impression. As I settled into community life, I grew in admiration of Sr. Flora's zeal, enthusiasm, creativity, and active commitment to her missionary work. Despite human limitations, she embodied remarkable virtues: - Discipline, Forgiveness, Hard work, Love. One memory stands out: my first day at the convent. While others were busy with classes, Sr. Flora warmly welcomed me in the morning. This gesture has remained etched in my memory. As I arrived, Sr. Flora approached me with a warm smile and said, "Welcome!" She then greeted me in our familiar dialect, "I dam em," making me feel instantly at home. What struck me most was when Sr. Flora introduced me to our community's pet dogs. She lovingly told them my name, where I was from, and that I would be part of their family too. This simple yet heartfelt gesture delighted me, and its memory remains special. These small acts of kindness spoke volumes about Sr. Flora's compassionate nature, and I felt grateful to experience her warmth and hospitality from the very beginning.

Like my fellow missionary sisters, Sr. Flora had a profound devotion to the Holy Eucharist and the Blessed Sacrament. This was evident in her daily participation in Eucharistic celebrations and adoration of the Body of Christ. Despite exhaustion and fatigue, she never missed these sacred moments. Whenever it was her turn to read or lead, she ensured that we felt the presence of Jesus through His words and the Blessed Sacrament. With unwavering love and dedication, Sr. Flora served the Church for many

years. I have come to know her not only as a remarkable missionary but also as a sister who serves the Church with unrelenting devotion.

Although she was advanced in years, Sr. Flora never relinquished her responsibilities to her fellow sisters. Instead, she diligently ensured that the church remained immaculate, reflecting her commitment to her faith and community. One of Sr. Flora's most remarkable virtues was her ability to forgive. Seeking forgiveness from her was never difficult, as she was always willing to accept apologies and forgive others' wrongs. This experience has had a lasting impact on me, showcasing the beauty and wonder of her life.

As a missionary, Sr. Flora was incredibly creative and spontaneous. She could organize and animate programs effortlessly, often at a moment's notice. Her energy and enthusiasm inspired younger sisters to serve the Church with similar dedication. Sr. Flora's talent for composing short hymns praising the Lord was particularly remarkable. Her sisters often requested her to create songs and recreational activities for program animations, showcasing her gift for music and community building.

Sr. Flora: A Life of Grace

**Through paths unknown, she walked in light,
A beacon bright in darkest night.
With hands that healed and heart so true,
She spread God's love in all she knew.**

**She left behind her world so dear,
To serve the sick, to calm their fear.
With every step, with every prayer,
She showed the world Christ's tender care.**

**To weary souls, she brought her cheer,
A voice of hope, a love sincere.
Through homes and halls, her mission grew,
A trail of grace in all she'd do.**

**Her life, a song of faith so deep,
A legacy we vow to keep.
For in her kindness, pure and wide,
God's love and mercy still abide.**

- Anil Gomes





Experience with Sr. Flora Topno by Sr. Roshni Aind

I first met Sr. Flora in 2019 when I joined the Agiamore community. From the very beginning, her warm welcome made me feel at home. As a missionary sister, her life of dedication and service left a lasting impression on me. She radiated kindness, humility, and a deep love for God, touching the lives of many.

During my time in school, she cared for me like a mother, always checking to see if I had eaten lunch and ensuring my well-being. I still cherish the affectionate way she called me "Maya," a name that made me feel special and loved. Sr. Flora was deeply committed to her work, always striving for excellence and carrying out her responsibilities with great devotion and joy.

Whenever I faced challenges, her love, support, and prayers became my source of strength. She always had a listening ear and words of encouragement, reminding me to trust in God's plan. Her kindness was not limited to people alone—she had a profound love for nature and animals, caring for them with the same compassion she showed to everyone around her.

Though our time together was short, Sr. Flora's impact on my life was profound. As a missionary sister, she continues to inspire me to live with the same love, dedication, and selfless service that she so beautifully exemplified.

Conclusion

Sr. Flora dedicated her life to spreading the message of Jesus Christ, making evangelization the heart of her mission. Through her tireless efforts, she has transformed the lives of countless individuals and families, guiding them to embrace Jesus and commit to a Christian way of life. Her work is a testimony to her deep faith, compassion, and determination to bring hope and healing to those she encounters. Sr. Flora's journey of evangelization is marked by her willingness to go where others might hesitate—reaching out to people in remote and underserved areas, meeting them in their struggles, and offering the love of Christ through her words and actions. Her approach was indeed, deeply personal; she built connections with families, listens to their stories, understand their challenges, and walked alongside with them on their journey of faith. Whether through visiting homes, gathering people in prayer, or sharing the stories of Jesus'

miracles, Sr. Flora's ministry reflects a profound commitment to the spiritual and personal well-being of others.

Her evangelization efforts were not confined to preaching alone rather being with people. She was known for spending time with the poor, the marginalized, and the forgotten, bringing them hope and encouragement. Many of these individuals, inspired by her, still remember her to this day and even long to find an opportunity to come and visit her. And one such occasion to witness was granted to Bandel community when a group of women From Agiamore who had come on a pilgrimage to the Bandel Church visited her. They sat around her with immense love and concern, just as they would for their mother. One could see tears of joy in their eyes. Thus, one can understand that, through her tireless efforts, she has transformed the lives of countless individuals and families, guiding them to embrace Jesus and commit to a Christian way of life.



“How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news” (Rom 10:15). The missionary journey of St. Paul resonates deeply with the missionary spirit of our beloved founder, Ven. Stephen Ferrando, who said, “Now I am not a missionary who goes, but who is, that is, who carries the mystery of Christ.”

Indeed, Sr. Flora embodies this spirit as she spends her life meaningfully at Bandel, carrying the mystery of Christ within, giving us the message of being the bearer of Good News.



Spends meaningful life at Bandel





Cherished moments with loved ones.....

