

Our Saints

Bl.Sr. Rani Maria



Sr. Rani Maria (Kunjumary), the holy flower of Pulluvazhi, who died for the love of Jesus serving the poorest of the poor in Indore, was born at Pulluvazhi in Ernakulam Archdiocese on 29th January 1954. She was the second child of Paily and Eliswa Vattalil. She received the first lessons of the Christian faith from her own family and with the desire to live as a zealous missionary, Kunjumary joined S.H.Province Ernakulam of the Franciscan Clarist Congregation and made her first profession in 1974.

When she got permission to achieve her dream of becoming a missionary, she arrived at Bijnor, a North Indian mission station of Ernakulam Province in 1975. She served the poor people of the villages for eight years as their loving mother by providing food for the hungry, employment for the unemployed, relief for the afflicted, and opportunity of education for the children. Her next service was in Satna in Madhya Pradesh where she stood courageously on behalf of the poor with the power of the Holy Spirit and fought against injustice, superstitions and the cruelty of the land lords.

Then Sr. Rani Maria was transferred to Udayanagar in Indore, Madhya Pradesh on 16th May 1992 and she continued her social service activities. She became one among the villagers and the favourite names given to her by them such as 'Mother of the Poor', 'Smiling Sister' and 'Indore Rani' prove her close rapport with them. The dramatic change in Udaya Nagar within just three years time outraged the land lords, and they threatened her with dire consequences. However, she did not lose her heart and went ahead with her village developmental activities.

She spent a long time before the Lord every day and consulted with Jesus before going to the villages. Sr. Rani Maria who preached the Gospel of Jesus opting for the poor followed the same path that Jesus tread. Like Him she was abandoned by all and was stabbed and dead on a jungle road side in Indore and she became one with Jesus in her death on 25th February 1995. Bishop George Anathil, the Bishop of Indore, was the first person to reach on the spot where the martyr's corpse bathed in blood was found. The funeral ceremony was officiated by him and her body was buried at Udayanagar on 27th February 1995 where she worked for the poor. It was Bishop George Anathil who persuaded F.C.C. to commence her beatification process⁷.

Sr. Ceelia (Ernakulam) and Sr. Rosily Parekattil (Bhopal) were appointed the Vice Postulators by Mother Marianna, the Superior General in the Plenary Council held from 21st to 24th July 2002. Diocesan Tribunal was started in Indore and Ernakulam for the beatification process. With the guidance of Bishop Chacko Thottumarickal, Bishop of Indore and Mother Ann Joseph, Superior General the Tribunal members opened the tomb of Sr. Rani Maria on 18th November 2016 and the mortal remains were collected and the entire bones of her body were counted. A few of them were put aside. The rest was kept in a specially prepared casket and it was re-interred in the Sacred Heart church at Udayanagar with due reverence.

On 23rd March 2017 Pope Francis signed the document which was submitted by Cardinal Angelo Amato, the Secretary of Sacred Congregation for the Saints⁸. On 4th November 2017 in the presence of Cardinals, Archbishops, Bishops, Priests, Superiors of different religious congregations and thousands of faithful during the Thanks Giving Holy Eucharistic Celebration, Cardinal Angelo Amato declared Rani Maria as the Blessed Martyr Rani Maria through the Decree of Pope Francis⁹.

Thus Sr. Rani Maria remains an inspiration to the Indian Church having a tradition of 2000 years, being the first Martyr of the Syro Malabar Church.

Source : Congrégation des clarisses franciscaines en Inde
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