



## Obituary

SR CLARETTA MTHALANE, OP

26.06.1944 – 12.12.2021



In a polarised society we are called to offer  
a concrete model of community which,  
acknowledging the dignity of each person  
and sharing our respective gifts,  
makes it possible to live as brothers and sisters.

*(Pope Francis)*

On the 26 June 1944, Emmerentia Ntombikayise was born to Francis and Ma Ntombi Mthlane in Kwa Mg wagwa, Pietermaritzburg. She was the first born of the nine children of her parents. She did her primary education in the St Theresa's School, and her high schooling at Maria Memorial School and at Sacred Heart School at Oakford.

Emmerentia was baptized and learned her faith from her parents and family. Her baptismal commitment was enriched and strengthened in the parish community. Her confirmation in the community of faith led her to explore the desire to become a close friend of Jesus. She then entered religious life at our Motherhouse Convent in Oakford, Verulam, in December 1963, exploring this new way of Christian life.

In June 1967 Emmerentia made her First Profession, beginning her new life as a professed religious sister. She was known in the Congregation as Sr Claretta (under the patronage of St Clare of Assisi). In 1971 Sr Claretta had discerned that this was the life God was calling her to, and she made her Final Vows, to love and serve God and God's People, all the days of her life until her death!

Sr Claretta trained as a nurse and mid-wife, following Jesus as a disciple dedicated to His healing ministry. She served God's People, the little ones, the young ones, adults and the aged in several hospitals, clinics, maternity homes, senior persons Care Homes and as Matron of the St Francis AIDS Hospice. These institutions were as near and as far-flung as KwaZulu Natal, the former Transkei, Gauteng and in England.

In the Congregation Sr Claretta had been entrusted with the responsibility of being a companion to the Junior Professed Sisters, in the South African Region. She did this work for six years, ensuring that these Sisters recognized the meaning and purpose of their vocations and commitment to God. Sr Claretta participated in some

renewal programmes for her own ongoing religious and spiritual growth: Fons Vitae, in Mahikeng; Spirituality Renewal in Port Elizabeth, at St Anselm's in England doing a course on Spiritual Direction and Counselling.

An introvert, a woman of few words, who knew what she was about, and yet she would only engage when invited or when a matter was serious enough to intervene! A woman of deep integrity, and clarity as to what was right and correct. Her patients were to be treated with care and dignity and as for the little people in the centre, she referred to them as "my children". And indeed, Claretta insisted on an holistic approach to the child-rearing and care practices for these children, who were infected or affected by HIV & AIDS.

Her former Manager and her former Deputy Matron at St Francis Centre, on hearing of Sr Claretta's death, both spoke highly of the quality and commitment of her professional work and her ability to relate with people across all spectrums: patients, professional staff, those in authority and those attending to essential and basic tasks of life, rich and poor, black, white and anyone and everyone else!

Sr Claretta always began her day at 4am, she made her meditation at 4:30am and one could set one's clock for 5:30am as she drove out of the gate to the St Francis Care Centre, to take reports from the night staff, and check-in with the staff on day duty.

In December of 2013, Sr Claretta was transferred to Villa Assumpta/Siena as she was struggling with poor health and in need of more specialized care herself.

We thank God, and her family, for the gift of our Sister Claretta's life, lived and shared generously with us. She devoted herself, heart and soul to God through her vowed life as an Oakford Dominican Sister in our Congregation.

*Rivers do not drink their own water;  
Trees do not eat their own fruit;  
the sun does not shine on itself and  
flowers do not spread their fragrance for themselves.  
Living for others is a rule of nature.  
We are all born to help each other.  
No matter how difficult it is ...  
Life is good when you are happy;  
but much better when others are happy because of you.*  
(Pope Francis)

**Hambakahle (go well), dear Sister, and special friend.**

***RIP***