

## MOTHER AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

**J.Carmelete Silviya,  
Asst. Professor,  
Computer Science Dept.**

### **Introduction**

*The Cross of Christ traces for us a way of growth ,to receive the fullness of God's gift, enabling us to help all people to open themselves to the grace of the Passion of Christ, a power always at work in the world .....*

Mother Claudine Echernier's life reveals these words to us. Whatever we enjoy today, it is the fruit reaped from the seed Mother *Claudine* sowed.

According to Romans 12:6-8 ,

**“Having the gifts differing according to grace that is givent to us ..... the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness”.**

Mother was a source for women empowerment. Women Empowerment refers to increasing the spiritual, political, social or economic strength of Women. It often involves the empowered developing confidence in their own capacities. Mother Claudine can be visualized as a catalyst of Women Empowerment and her Pioneers, The Sister's of the Cross of Chavanod expand it to the highest. There are *Three Dimensions* to it –

### **MOTHER CLAUDINE – AN EVANGELIST**

Evangelists have responsibilities towards the World as well as the Church.

**Christ commanded his followers to preach the Gospel to the whole World and to teach disciples to observe all that He has commanded. (Acts 14:21,22).**

Mother Claudine had a thirst from her childhood days to learn and to teach catechism . She strove and struggled immensely and finally quenched the thirst. She was always in search of God's plan for her and walked towards it. When her path was clear she converted all her difficulties into dimensions. .

**There are two ways of spreading light ...**

**To be the candle, or the mirror that reflects it.**

Mother Claudine played this twin role successfully throughout her life. As a grain of wheat falls into the ground to bring forth abundance, Jesus emptied Himself on the Cross that All may have eternal life , In the footsteps of Jesus, our Foundress and our pioneers educated themselves at the cost of immense sacrifice and gathered around poor uneducated girls to impart faith formation,

basic education and some skills. Sisters at France and Switzerland are privileged to share in the mission of non-formal education. Sisters teach French language to foreigners and help children who have difficulties in the school. In parishes they teach catechism as well as reading and writing to the girls unfortunate to attend school. They are involved in faith formation, guidance of youth and families at various levels, Strengthening their faith and bonds of love.

In India, right from its inception, most of the apostolic activities are oriented towards education. The presence of Sisters in numerous educational institutions, throughout the country has definitely made a difference not just in academics, but much more in quality, as the focus is on value-based education. Acknowledging that 'Education is the apprenticeship of life' the educational Institutions are open to all irrespective of class or creed, with a preferential option of the minorities and the poor.

Adult literacy programmes are being conducted according to the needs of the area. Women are trained to participate in the panchayatraj institutions and in the revenue units. Empowerment of women is done through sessions and seminars on topics pertaining to their daily lives like Health Care, Herbal Gardens, Prevention Methods, HIV/AIDS awareness programme. Their centres for Aids patients are doing yeoman service.

Following the footsteps of Mother Claudine presently there are 1364 Sisters of 12 nationalities in 16 countries of 4 continents who serve as evangelists to the Society. Not only they preach the word of God to the people, they practice the word of God in their life.

### **MOTHER CLAUDINE – SOCIAL APOSTALATE**

Social Apostolate are committed to create better Society together and individually, there are many gifts to share. Working as a team, great strides can be taken in improving family life and civil Society.

**People are like stained-glass windows.**

**They sparkle and shine when the sun is out,**

**but when the darkness sets in, their true beauty is revealed**

**only if there is a light from within.**

*- Elizabeth Kübler-Ross*

According to these words, Mother Claudine out of her poverty, had a spark within her to do something for the Society at her young age. Mother Claudine's admirable unselfishness is revealed in all her acts - all her earnings were faithfully handed over to her parents for the needs of the household. She was satisfied with two dresses, one for Sunday and the other for week days; they were of linen and they comprised a part of her salary. One day she lent her only Sunday robe to a poor girl who did not have one to make her first communion.

Claudine Echernier understood perfectly that her first duty was to do her work with care. She accomplished it with all the exactitude, order and cleanliness desirable. The kitchen, the linen-room, the garden, the church decorations: all showed her skill, her diligence and her vigilance.

Mother Claudine continued teaching, received no remuneration, and was content with the remnants of her pupil's snacks.

The apostolic activities of the Sisters in France and Switzerland, is social Education. They reach out to school children and their families, listen to and accompany the young students of higher secondary schools and universities. They help the aged and those in difficulty through 'Secours Catholique' and St. Vincent de Paul and also Welcome the homeless.

In Geneva, the Sisters welcome and lodge in the "Foyer l'Accueil", many young women coming from five continents for their university studies and professional formation. Right from the year 1886, they have established their foundation throughout India and committed themselves, to the integral development of persons, for the transformation of Society. The wide spread social and health care centers in the Provinces of Amravati, Trichy, Madurai, Pune, Kolkatta, Guwahati, Angamaly and in the delegation of Andhra , reach out to the least, last and the lost, and work in solidarity with them, struggling to build a new Society that will uphold equality, and respect for every human being. Due to extreme poverty many children suffer malnutrition. In collaboration with agencies the Sisters have launched out with health care services and feeding programme. Farmers are also supported in times of drought.

**We must be the change we wish to see in the world.” – Mohandas Gandhi**

As per these words the beloved Sisters of the Cross of Chavanod strive towards the Society to launch the kingdom of GOD within and among us.

### **MOTHER CLAUDINE – AN ENTREPRENEUR**

The French origin of the word gives a clue: one who undertakes a new activity. They often take risks, and they are self-starters who think creatively. One who seeks opportunities out of Problems – seeks out the Solution.

Mother Claudine was a hard and sincere worker. She never stayed idle, engaged herself in many works. Mother started her career as a shepherdess. Mother learned to stitch, and worked in farms and helped in construction. Once unfortunately her father was imprisoned At that time Mother took the trouble to give her young brothers a love for work, as a role model she made plait straw with which she manufactured hats continuing the work late into the night by the light of her little lamp. Later as a Mother of a Congregation - her sincerity, hard work, prudence , forethought and passion towards teaching spread its root as a banyan tree to many countries covering almost half of the Globe and have originated many Successful Leaders and Entrepreneurs. The function of leadership is to produce more leaders, not more followers.

We can relate the 'Parable of the Talents' which has many layers of meaning, to Mother Claudine. The essence of the parable relates how we are to use God's gift of grace. As regards the material world, it is a story about capital, investment, entrepreneurship, and the proper use of

scarce economic resources. Mother used God's gift of grace and multiplied and returned it in plenty.

Mother Claudine is a motivator in every day life. Today, Women empowerment and the education of the girl child, have motivated Sisters of the Cross towards taking up many life giving projects which have been successfully implemented - Organizing self help groups in remote villages, alleviating and emancipating the marginalized dalits, tribals and the subaltern groups , working for the welfare of domestic workers ..., Their income-generating schemes are initiated for the marginalized.

In Nepal, the day care centers for mentally challenged children, the needlework centers for the unemployed women and their services to several families having handicapped children, is a witness to the presence of God.

In Holy Land, the Sisters are engaged in welcoming the pilgrims and rendering humble service in Bethlehem, and Jerusalem. They have a small hostel for girls. Today, their special concern is to remain close to the Arab Christians and search for ways and means to promote peace and reconciliation. Great achievement is usually born of great sacrifice, and is never the result of selfishness.

## **Conclusion**

**Mother's love is the fuel that enables a normal human being to do the impossible.**

**-Marion C. Garretty**

According to MARK 4:8

**"Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, multiplying thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times."**

With the Blessings and Abundant Love of Mother Claudine,  
Let us be the seed of good soil.