

SISTER CLEMENT XAVIER ROLA, SPC

December 24, 1917 to August 28, 2016

Teodoro Rola and his wife Benita Ringor both of Tagudin, Ilocos Sur, had a large family of six boys and five girls. The tenth in this brood of eleven was a girl who was born on December 24, 1911. This girl was appreciated as "God's Christmas gift to the family." Thus she was fittingly baptized Consuelo. Consuelo was truly a joy. She was gifted with a sweet singing voice which was enjoyed by everyone in the family as well as at the St. Augustine's School where she had her elementary and secondary education. In 1930 she earned her diploma as a nurse at the Chinese General Hospital in Manila.

She worked as an operating room floor supervisor at hospitals run by the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Paul de Chartres for twelve years. In 1942, during the Japanese Occupation, she entered as an aspirant of the Congregation. This was a gift of - herself to the Lord on her 3th birthday, December 24, 1942. To the query how she decided to become a nun and why as a Sister of St. Paul she replied: My spiritual director Father James P. Moran, SJ, recommended it. Besides, she had decided to follow in the steps of her elder Sister, Sister Gregoire Rola, who was the intrepid and amiable Superior of the Congregation's School in Narvacan at that time.

Sister Clement became a novice on December 8, 1943, made her first profession on December 8, 1945 and her perpetual profession on December 8, 1950. During these years she served at the various hospitals run by the Sisters of St. Paul: Santiago Hospital, Notre Dame Hospital in Baguio, Perpetual Succour, Cebu, Riverview, Singian Clinic, St. Paul Clinic and finally that Polyclinic across the seas, Rumah Sakit Suaka Insan in Banjarmasin, Indonesia. This last one she loved the most. She served there as a missionary together with 5 other sisters who left for the Indonesian mission on September 24, 1967 in response to the invitation of the Bishop.

Sister Clement stayed in Indonesia for 33 years. There she experienced one of the great challenges in her life. A patient was pregnant. The baby in her womb was supposed to be dead and should be aborted. Strengthened by her prayers to the Blessed Mother, Sister Clement injected her. This was effective and the baby was born alive but she was weak. The baby's aunt suggested that she be given away for adoption since there were already four elder siblings. This was not acceptable to the relatives or to Sister Clement who promised to help take care of the baby. The baby was name Maria Bernardine after St. Bernardine of Sienna, the saint honored on her birthday St. Bernardine of Sienna on May 20, 1958. Since her mother whom she calle mommy had to work, Sister Clement took care of her during the day. Baby Bernardine was sickly and had all sorts of disease: heart ailment, skin disease, etc., but Sister Clement took care of her as she promised. The Baby survived all of the illnesses. She must have felt she was loved by her surrogate Mother who liked to be called Mama. Maria clams that the bond between them was so strong that she felt the Nun's presence and her absence. She would gurgle with joy when Sister Clement was in the room and cry when she left.

With the care of her Mama during the day and her Mommy at night Maria outgrew all the illnesses she suffered from. She was intelligent and multi-talented and would rain at every competition she joined. She became the principal organist at the Cathedral, and a successful business woman who believed in the power of prayer and in attending Mass daily. When Sister Clement came -back to the Philippines for good in the year 2000 Maria made up her mind to visit her at least once a year on Sister Clement's birthday, December 24. As the years went on her Mama got older and started developing progressive dementia, her visits were more frequent, almost every month with generous "pasalubong" for all caregivers and Nurses and Sisters. The caregivers called her "Mama" also.

Retiring in 2000, resting in the first Vigil House Sister, Sister Clement was in the first batch of patients at the SPC Vigil House in Taytay. She lost not only her sweet soprano voice but her memory and a part of her right leg which had to be amputated below the knee because of gangrene. She had diabetes.

Dear Sister Clement, even with all your sufferings you remained patient. Lack of appetite did not make you cranky. You have left us, your companions in the infirmary, so quietly with no agony. No one had any suspicion that you were having your last supper on the eve of your departure. Your death early in the morning at 1:45 underscores the message of the reading for the week: for us to be ready, to stay awake for we know not the day nor the hour when the bridegroom would come. Please pray for us that we may heed the Lord's reminder every day of our lives and be ready as you were. May you now rest in peace, Sister. We will miss you.

Written by:

Sr. Mary Cyril Corpus, SPC