



Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate

On the Vesper of the feast of the Presentation, as Sister Moon and all the stars of the Southern hemisphere illuminated the evening sky of Goiás, our sister, Maria Aparecida Teles Proto, was drawn by the all-embracing power of Divine Love into the fullness of the Eternal Light of Christ. Like Mary and Joseph, she experienced the wonder of grace of sharing with the world the mystery of God-with-Us. Like the prophetess Anna, she devoted her life to serving God and the people of God, night and day. And like the Prophet Simeon, she awaited the liberating and life-altering moment of sacred encounter, when her entire being gave expression to the words: "Now, Master, you can let your servant go in peace." (Lk 2:29)

On November 21, 1944, Dona Margarida and Senhor Sebastião, welcomed into their lives a precious little daughter. With great devotion to the Patroness of Brazil, Our Lady of Aparecida, they named her Maria Aparecida. The eldest sister in a family of nine children, Cida learned from a very young age the value and importance of caring for others.

Growing up on the outskirts of a small agricultural town known for its cotton and sugarcane, Cida was a young adolescent when the first American missionary priests and sisters arrived in Santa Helena de Goiás. Almost immediately, the Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate captured the hearts and vocational imaginations of the young women they inspired, including Cida. Responding, as St. Francis said, to "God's holy manner of working," Cida was among the first members of the Brazilian foundation of the Congregation to commit herself to the Gospel way of life - following in the footsteps of Francis, Clare and Mother Alfred - all the days of her life.

Going through the stages of Franciscan formation, Cida dedicated herself to her studies and to the pastoral ministries in which the sisters were involved. As time went on, she recognized a growing need among the people, especially those on the margins, for teachers, yes, but also for nurses. Knowing that this was a path that few Joliet Franciscans had taken, she held fast to a vision of quality healthcare for the poor. In time, her aspirations found support among her sisters in Brazil and in the United States. Ever attentive to the needs of others, Cida was an animated and rigorous teacher, a skilled and compassionate nurse, and a pastoral minister who embodied an unwavering commitment to justice and mercy. Above all, she was a disciple of Jesus and Franciscan sister who believed "another world is possible."

Cida possessed many gifts. Among them was a capacity for understanding the languages of others, not just the language of words, but the language of the heart. Though among her North American sisters she kept her abilities in English somewhat private, she made the lives of missionaries arriving from the United States a little easier. Thanks to her patience, her gentle humor and her kindness toward others, Cida made a point of assuring all of her sisters, and indeed everyone, that no matter what language they spoke, there was much more to communicating with people than getting the words right. The most important thing was to grasp the deep meaning of *confiança* - having trust in God, having confidence in others and trusting oneself.

In January of 1980, Cida made her first journey to the United States. One reason was to further develop her abilities in English and to gain

Alleluia!



Irmã Maria Aparecida Teles Proto, OSF

more understanding of North American culture. However, the other reason, which for Cida was the more important one, was to get to know her North American sisters, especially the senior sisters living at the Motherhouse and the infirm sisters at OLA. Over the course of several months, she succeeded in creating bonds of affection that remained in the hearts of those whose lives she touched long after her return to Brazil.

As the years went on, Cida's work as a nurse in Goiânia's urban hospitals and clinics attested to her unwavering commitment to serving the sick poor with respect for their dignity and personhood. As the health of her own parents began to decline, and the needs of other family members increased, Cida also devoted herself untiringly to the care of her family. After the death of Dona Margarida, Cida found herself exploring new opportunities in Franciscan life and mission. With Sister Teresinha Mendonça Del'Acqua, her classmate, she ventured into a new experience of ministry with the People of God in the Dominican Republic and sharing community life in mission with the Bernardine Franciscan Sisters. In April of 2012, following the Congregation's General Chapter, Cida returned to the sisters in Brazil and made herself available in a variety of ministries, including preventative health care for mothers and children.

In December of 2015, when faced with a serious diagnosis of cancer, Cida demonstrated exceptional courage that was sustained by a strong faith in a living God to whom she entrusted herself and her unfolding future. She lived life to the fullest, as much as she could for as long as she could, thanks to the loving support, concern, companionship and untiring care of her Franciscan sisters and family members. Gradually, Cida began to prepare for her journey home to God, fully conscious as a nurse of what awaited her in the passage from this life to eternal life where there would be no more tears, no more suffering and death, and no more mourning or sadness (Rev 21:4).

Throughout her life, our Sister Cida often pondered the wisdom of a quotation from one of her favorite books, *The Little Prince*, by Antoine de St. Exupery. As you listen to these words, think of them as her special *lembrancinha* to us all: "And now, here is my secret, a very simple secret: *It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye.*"

Today, as we remember our Sister Maria Aparecida, let us take these words to heart, a life lesson, and with deep gratitude to God for the gift of her life among us, let us say: Alleluia, alleluia!

Irmã Maria Aparecida Teles Proto, OSF

November 21, 1944— February 1, 2018

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| <i>Born:</i> | November 21, 1944 |
| <i>Parents:</i> | Sebastião Proto Arantes e Margarida Teles Proto |
| <i>Postulancy:</i> | January 15, 1967 |
| <i>Novitiate:</i> | December 15, 1967 |
| <i>Final Profession:</i> | March 29, 1976 |
| <i>Entered New Life:</i> | February 1, 2018 |

Ministry History

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| 1967 | Postulant, Goiânia |
| 1968-1969 | Novice, San Damiano: Goiânia |
| 1970-1972 | Teacher, Grade 2: San Damiano: Goiânia |
| 1973 | Teacher, Grade 2: San Damiano: Goiânia/Pastoral work and Catechetics Youth Group: Church of São Jose |
| 1974-1978 | Teacher, High School Biology, Instituto San Damiano |
| 1979 | Nurse Supervisor: Cruzeiro Veelho, DF Regional Hospital |
| 1980 | Sabbatical, Casa Mãe, Joliet, Illinois, USA |
| Nov. 1980 | Pastoral Ministry: Church of Santa Helena, Santa Helena, Goiás |
| 1981-1982 | Nurse: Santa Casa Hospital, Goiânia, First Auxiliary to the Governing Group |
| 1983-1984 | Director of Nursing: Hospital Sagrado Coração, Nerópolis, Goiás/First Auxiliary to the Governing Group |
| 1985 | Secretary: Instituto San Damiano, Goiás/Health Ministry: Church of Cristo Rei |
| 1986 | Principal: Instituto San Damiano, Goiás/Pastoral Ministry of Health, Pastoral Ministry of the Child: Church of Cristo Rei |
| 1987 | Ministry of Health: Instituto San Damiano/Pastoral Ministry: Church of Cristo Rei |
| 1988 | Teacher: English to 2nd grade/Pastoral Ministry: Church of Cristo Rei/Nurse: Cais Nova Era, Aparecida de Goiânia |
| 1989 | Pastoral Ministry to Women and Children: Church of Cristo Rei/Nurse: Cais Nova Era, Aparecida de Goiânia |
| 1990-1991 | Nurse: Cais Nova Era, Aparecida de Goiânia |
| 1992-1995 | Nurse: HUGO (Emergency Hospital in Goiânia) |
| 1996 | Chief of Nursing, HUGO (Emergency Hospital in Goiânia)/Coordinator of Catechism: Church of Cristo Rei |
| 1997-2004 | Family care ministry |
| 2005-2007 | Regional Secretary/Family care ministry |
| 2008-2011 | Family care ministry |
| 2012 | Pastoral Service: Inter-Congregational Mission |
| 2013 | Pastoral Ministry: Church of Santa Helena, Santa Helena, Brazil |
| 2014-2015 | Pastoral Ministry: Church of Santo Antônio, Hidrolândia, Brazil |
| 2016-2017 | Family Ministry: Church of Cristo Rei, Alverne, Brazil |

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| <i>Interment:</i> | February 2, 2018, Brazil |
| <i>Predeceased by:</i> | By her parents, Sebastião Proto Arantes e Margarida Teles Proto |

Rest in Peace, Irmã Cida!