CHAPTER – 13

THE MISSION IN ACTION

Thresia’s ardent desire to identify herself with the crucified Lord, and her strenuous effort to console Him in His suffering due to the sin of the people, found challenging expression in a new apostolate. Fr. Mathias Mundaden, the editor of her writings, observes: “The Servant of God (Thresia) used to hear the gentle and mysterious voice of the spirit in the interior of her soul for a divine mission, and it followed her like a shadow. Eventually it became a passion and a challenge. Under the direction of her spiritual father, she listened to the movements of the Holy Spirit in her and tried ways and means to meet the challenge.”

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Thresia saw the people’s sufferings in God and she could not sit quietly. In the words of St Teresa of Avila: “… they become the slaves of God and are branded with His sign, which is the sign of the cross, in token that they have given Him their freedom. Then He can sell them as slaves to the whole world, as He Himself was sold, and if He does this He will be doing them no wrong.” Thanks to the profound love for the Master, Thresia defied all the oppositions and prevailing customs and conventions of her time and became a slave for all. As St. Paul she considered her reputation, name and fame as a loss. “For His sake I have considered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse in order that I may gain Christ” (Phil. 3:8). Here the words of Fr Mundadan are noteworthy:

She engaged herself in acts of charity, not for worldly appreciation but for love of Christ. She hastened to the midst of the poor and destitute, to the sick and sinners, to the downtrodden and to the abandoned, with great apostolic zeal to wipe out their tears and to lift them up from the rut of their sinful life and to fill them with Christ spirit. Many appreciated her ways, some despised her and still others branded her as an obsessed woman. But the undaunted Thresia, motivated by the spirit of Christ visited homes of all who needed her services without distinction of caste or creed, and attended to their spiritual and temporal needs such as

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1 M. Thresia, *The Writings of Mother Mariam Thresia*, 16.
preparing them for happy death and for receiving sacraments, praying for them, doing sacrifices for the recovery of the sick and even collecting funds to meet the needs of the poor.\(^3\)

1. Family Apostolate

The works of mercy that Thresia was rendering were mostly concentrated on families. Her model was Jesus Himself, her beloved Lord and Master. Jesus was born in a family, the Holy Family (Lk.2:1-7), did His first miracle in a family (Jn.2:1-10), moved from village to village, house to house, healed the sick, paralytic (Mt. 9:1-8), gave life to a dead child in the house (Mt. 9: 18, 23-26), consoled a widow giving life to her only son (Lk.7:11-17), walked miles to the house of a Centurian to heal his servant (Lk.7:1-10), went as guest and gave salvation to the family (Lk. 19: 1-9) etc. The Church started to speak about family as the primary vital cell of the society\(^4\) and about family apostolate only after the Vatican II. In the Apostolic letter, *Familiaris Consortio*, Pope John Paul II invited all the consecrated persons both religious and priests to enter into family apostolate activities: “I would like to add a most pressing exhortation to the heads of the institutes of consecrated life to consider – always with substantial respect for the proper and original charism of each one – the apostolate of the family as one of the priority tasks, rendered even more urgent by the present state of the world.”\(^5\) Almost a century ago Thresia had the foresight to see the dire need of the family apostolate and entered into this apostolate with prophetic courage. God was preparing Thresia through tests and sufferings to be the founder of a new apostolate. When Holy Father John Paul II declared Mariam Thresia Blessed in 2000, His Holiness said in the Apostolic Letter of Beatification that Thresia entered into family apostolate activities from her family itself.\(^6\) Bishop James Pazhayattil commented: “Visiting the families from door to door with her friends and serving the sick and suffering, attending to the dying without any discrimination of caste or colour, she became the nucleus of family apostolate.”\(^7\)

\(^3\) M. Thresia, *The Writings of Mother Mariam Thresia*, 17, 18,
\(^4\) *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 11.
\(^5\) *Familiaris Consortio*, 74.
A retired chairman of Kerala Public Service Commission, Mr. M. K. Devassy testifies to Thresia’s extraordinary courage and apostolic zeal:

I have heard from several people that she was actively involved in rendering social service to all people irrespective of caste and creed, particularly in the line of nursing the sick and giving spiritual advice on the eve of death. This was very extraordinary in those days, as girls did not do such an apostolate. Unmarried girls were not permitted to enter other homes where she went even during night to nurse the sick and dying, for which she received abuse from others.8

Thresia had to suffer harsh remarks, severe criticisms and ridicules from many even from her own kith and kin. Her spiritual father, Fr. Joseph Vithayathil was also criticized harshly. In such disheartening experiences, Thresia did not give up her sublime mission for families. Rather, she selflessly worked with more enthusiasm to save the families.9 Though a few criticized, many welcomed, appreciated and encouraged her activities.10 One of the eye witnesses says: “Mother went out doing family apostolate. She visited the houses, prepared the youth for marriage, settled the family problems and disputes among the parents and couples and brought back peace and joy in the families, nursed the sick people, and consoled the suffering. She inspired all to do good to others.”11

At present the bonds in the family and in the society are getting more broken than in those days. Spirituality is giving way to science, technology and psychology. Selfishness and senselessness rule the hearts of people. Unhappiness and loneliness prevail in families and in the society. “At this juncture Mariam Thresia was chosen by God, a century ago, to start renewal in families as a prophetess.”12

Thresia’s family apostolate was a heavenly guided mission.13 Her activities in the family can be categorized into various ministries.

9 Vithayathil, Diary, 95.
10 P.V. Annie, Gender and Spirituality, 204.
11 Mrs Thresiamma Kannampuzha, Doc.96, Copier Publica Documentorum, Vol.11, CHFA, Mannuthy: 423.
13 Nedungatt, Crucified with Christ for All, 47.
1.1 The Conversion of Sinners

Jesus appeared to Thresia many times with bleeding wounds all over the body and carrying the cross and told her that He was suffering owing to the sins of the people; there was no one to console Him, no one to love Him. On one such occasions Jesus asked Thresia that she should comfort Him, suffer for the sinners and pray for their conversion. God gave her extraordinary gift to read the heart of others. She wrote in the autobiography: “During my meditation I used to be rapt in ecstasy and see visions in which faults of others would be revealed to me. I therefore requested my spiritual father to bring them to the right path by giving them necessary corrections. With this infused knowledge Thresia was invited to do penance and pray for the conversion of great sinners in the parish. Many times Mother Mary instructed and led her to the persons who were living in great sinfulness. There are many incidents recorded in the *Diary* of Fr Joseph Vithayathil.

One day Blessed Mother asked Thresia to offer special prayers for the conversion of a great sinner. Accordingly she began to pray for him. After a few days Mother Mary informed her that the man had begun to become aware of his sins and started having a desire for conversion. A few days later at midnight he expressed his desire to confess and to receive Holy Communion. The parish priest prepared him and he made a confession of his whole life. Next morning the priest carried Holy Communion for him. However, his condition became worse; he became unconscious and started saying: “I am ruined; this room is full of fire.” Placing the Eucharist on the table, the priest asked the people there to kneel down and pray the rosary. Thresia prayed very specially for the patient before the Blessed Sacrament. The next day at about noon the man regained consciousness. In the afternoon demons harassed Thresia, horribly wounded her, and told her to mind her own business. Mother Mary informed her spiritual father that demons were mad with anger and wounded her because she prayed for that sinner’s conversion. She also said that such strange things happened in connection with conversion of sinners.

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14 Vithayathil, *Diary*, 26, 44, 48, 75, 78.
17 Vithayathil, *Diary*, 48.
18 Vithayathil, *Diary*, 48-51.
Once while Thresia was very severely tortured by demons, Jesus came to console and strengthen her. Then He told her that ‘only if she perseveres in her sufferings till the end she will be able to see Him (could have the beatific vision). Allowing severe suffering to happen and then granting consolation are in the will of God. All these tortures she should suffer with goodwill and offer them for the conversion of sinners and for souls in the Purgatory.’

Thresia felt unworthy and was hesitant to go to advise the educated and elderly people as they used to ridicule her. Once, her spiritual father asked her to pray for an elderly and educated man in the parish. For twenty years he was living a sinful life. Though many retreat preachers advised him, it was all in vain. Thresia was asked to pray and advise him. Under obedience she did. With her friends and other people, she started a novena in honour of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the presence of Blessed Sacrament for his conversion. In the beginning when she spoke he was reacting very badly. Then she used to kneel down with him and pray to Sacred Heart of Jesus. Slowly he changed and felt like taking part in the Holy Mass; and within twenty days he made a confession of his whole life and got completely changed.

There was another interesting incident about the conversion of a woman. One day while Thresia was suffering great pain, a woman from her parish came to her room. As she entered the room, Thresia felt a foul smell. The woman looked gloomy. Thresia asked her the reason for her sadness. She told Thresia that while making confession, she concealed a sin because she felt ashamed. Thresia gave her some spiritual advice; however, the woman could not bring herself to confessing that sin and tried to receive Holy Communion. Thresia objected to her going to receive Communion. The woman got angry with her and reprimanded her. Thresia suffered in silence and prayed and did penance for her. Seeing Thresia’s patience towards her and the penance and prayer she was doing for her conversion, the woman got afraid and gradually acquired the necessary strength to overcome her shame and finally made a good confession. She came back and asked Thresia for a pardon for reprimanding her in the public.

19 Vithayathil, *Diary*, 65, 66.
20 Vithayathil, *Diary*, 77, 86.
21 Vithayathil, *Diary*, 86, 87.
22 Vithayathil, *Diary*, 122-125.
Thresia with her gift of reading the hearts of people could direct many souls to the right path. During confession days, according to the direction of Mother Mary and the spiritual father, Thresia used to go to the church and pray for God’s grace on the people so that all might make good confessions.23

Many witnesses have testified to Thresia’s concern for the sinners. “She took special interest in preparing sinners for confession and for Holy Communion and advised them about the special observance of spiritual Communion from time to time. She believed in taking risk for the conversion of sinners, disregarding adverse circumstances and dangers.”24 In an incident Sr. Yohanna was her companion. She narrates it:

I remember another episode in which I was her companion. An old man was laid up but he did not want to receive sacraments. The Servant of God visited him when he got sick and advised him to make his confession. On her return she called upon the community to pray ardently for his conversion. Again she went to him and advised him and said that the parish priest would come to hear his confession. But when the parish priest went to him, he refused to confess. Again the Servant of God exhorted the community to pray and do penance. In the end, the sick man called for the priest and with great repentance received the sacraments.25

Mother Mary once informed Fr. Vithayathil that the sufferings given by God to Thresia on Fridays were for the conversion of sinners.26 Thresia used to express her desire to suffer more to save the souls. Once, Mother Mary advised her not to pray for any suffering but ask only for a share of the suffering.27 Thresia manifested great zeal all through her life to quench the thirst of Jesus for the souls. It was her ardent desire that no sinners should perish and that all should come to God and be saved.

1.2 Ministering to the Dying Patients

Thresia wrote in the autobiography: “I have seen the fight of the devils at the time of the death (of others); then I would pray to the Blessed Mother so that they

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23 Vithayathil, *Diary*, 92.
24 *Positio*, ‘Summarium’, 33.
26 Vithayathil, *Diary*, 89, 90, 97.
would overcome the despair and die a peaceful death.” 28 Mother Mary entrusted to Thresia this new mission to help the dying patients. She asked her to visit everyone in the parish who was at the point of death. This happened in 1904 when Thresia was twenty eight years old. At that time, her three years of diabolic torture allowed by God, had not been over over. However, Mother Mary promised her that if she was to go out for this purpose she would have no any harassment or torture from devils on the way. 29 According to the instructions given by Mother Mary and her spiritual father, Thresia used to visit every dying patient in the parish. Tradition has it that during her time no patient in Puthenchira, her native place died without getting her care. There are a number of incidents described in the Diary of Fr. Vithayathil. A few are cited below:

According to Mother Mary’s instruction, Thresia went to the house of Yakkov (Jacob), a man of eighty years old, who was laid up with illness. His house was three or four miles away from her’s. He was a man of solid virtues, but was stubborn. She prayed fervently for his repentance. She saw devils standing near his head and tempting him to despair. He was speaking like a mad man. She kept praying for him. After some days he died. Mother Mary informed her that he had died with repentance. 30

There was an inspiring incident which manifests Mother Mary’s powerful intercession for the dying patients. Thresia was praying fervently for a patient who was hopeless and not repenting over his sins. Asking for the intercession of Blessed Virgin Mary, she recited a full rosary. Thresia saw Jesus coming to condemn him to hell. By that time Mother Mary intervened and told Jesus that he was attending Holy Mass on Saturdays, and that therefore he should not kindly be sent to hell, instead punishment be meted to her. Jesus was dumbfounded. Later the patient repented over his sins and died and was sent to the Purgatory for twenty five years. 31

A soul was lost forever because Thresia could not be of any help to the patient. Through this experience she was taught that in doing the will of God she need not fear anyone. The experience was as follows:

29 Vithayathil, Diary, 60.
30 Vithayathil, Diary, 60, 61.
31 Vithayathil, Diary, 104.
According to the spiritual father’s direction, Thresia used to visit a woman suffering from a deadly disease. In the morning of the day of her death she gave the patient consolation and hope. At that time she saw a devil trying to make the patient lose hope, reminding her of her sinful life, while an angel was seen giving her hope. Fearing her father’s scolding, she returned home, hoping to visit the patient again. When she reached home her father rebuked her severely. After sometime when she got ready to go to the patient again, her father flared up and forbade her going. On that day itself that woman passed away. The next night the dead woman’s soul appeared to her in the midst of burning flames and told her “…I am lost forever. If you had been near me at the time of my death, I would have been saved.” And she disappeared. Thresia felt extremely sorry and informed her spiritual father of this. Mother Mary had already informed him about this and had asked him to scold Thresia for not going to the places where she was asked to go. So he blamed and reprimanded her severely. She told him that she had not gone because she was afraid of her father’s scolding and the disturbances in her house. On hearing this, the spiritual father told her that on occasions when she had to fulfil God’s will, there was no need of fearing anybody or thinking of worldly excuses.32

Fr. Vithayathil had recorded that it was her guardian angel who informed Thresia about the patients who were seriously sick and in dying condition.33 Almost in all the cases of dying patients Thresia saw devils and angels fighting for the soul. Towards the time of death the devils disappeared and the soul will be taken away in the company of angels or Mother Mary.34 Certain patients reacted showering abuses upon her and yelling words of despair and hopelessness. It was a great challenge for her to remain near them and persevere in praying for them. It manifests her great courage and deep faith in the eternal salvation. Here is an example of such an experience:

An old woman of seventy years from a prestigious family was seriously sick. The parish priest heard her confession but could not give her Communion owing to her vomiting of blood. As she became more serious, she started to shower abuses

32 Vithayathil, Diary, 79-81.
33 Vithayathil, Diary, 180.
34 Vithayathil, Diary, 83, 84.
upon Thresia unconsciously, broke the rosary and threw it away and started to despair. For three days and nights Thresia remained near the patient praying for her, advising her and making her repeat the ejaculations. However, the patient was becoming more violent mouthing off to Thresia and pushing, pulling and scratching her. The patient was showing interest in the worldly matters like wealth and rejecting any spiritual help given to her. The patient spat upon Thresia a few times. As Thresia knew that she was doing all these not in a conscious state, she continued to help her. When the patient started showing the signs of dying without repentance, Thresia looking at the crucified Christ cried aloud and prayed for the soul. Finally, the patient herself started to pray some ejaculations and asked for a confessor. The patient died when she had gone for Holy Mass. During the Mass the soul appeared to Thresia and told her that she was sentenced to the Purgatory and thanked her for her help and asked pardon for spitting on her consciously.35

Thresia and her friends prayed very intensely for a cancer patient, who did many sinful acts during his youthful time, and offered him Holy Mass for salvation. Though he was reacting very badly in the beginning, towards his final hours he responded well and during his death no devils were seen near him. She saw his soul going heavenwards with an angel. Mother Mary informed her that he had been saved. At that time Blessed Mother told her spiritual father: “Don’t you see now that it is useful to send her to the homes of the dying patients. So do not discourage her. Her people have objections to her going like this. You must tell them not to do so.”36

Thresia had to face a lot of criticisms and ridicules from people for visiting the houses.37 Once, the devils scolded her and tried to stop her helping the patients for repentance.38 However, nothing could stop her visiting the dying patients. Instead she even asked Blessed mother’s permission to stay awake in the nights to help the patients.39 Once when Thresia was sick, she sent a parishioner who came to see her to a dying patient and thus she could help the patient get a peaceful death.40

35 Vithayathil, Diary, 146-149.
36 Vithayathil, Diary, 69.
37 Vithayathil, Diary, 69.
38 Vithayathil, Diary, 81.
39 Vithayathil, Diary, 82.
40 Vithayathil, Diary, 125,126.
Once, Thresia had a very rare experience while caring for a dying patient. A devotee of Sacred Heart of Jesus was at the point of death and she wished to see Thresia. The previous night of her death Thresia could go to her house. The patient received the anointing of the sick and expressed her desire to receive Holy Communion. As there was no consecrated host in the church, she had to wait till the next day. The patient felt very sad thinking that she might die without receiving Holy Communion. Though Thresia was not feeling physically well, ignoring her weakness she encouraged the patient to remain in hope and to continue in prayer. At that time she saw an angel giving Holy Communion to the patient. When Thresia was surprised to see this rare sight she doubted about it and then she was informed that the devotees of Sacred Heart were given such privileges by the Sacred Heart of Jesus. During the patient’s death, the Holy Family remained close to her. This soul had to remain in the Purgatory only for fifteen days because of her impatience in sufferings.\(^{41}\)

Thresia was going not only to the Christian patients, but also to non-Christians especially the low caste people. Once a Hindu (Ezhava) Lady was contracted by smallpox and was about to die. As she expressed her desire for receiving baptism, it was given to her. Thinking that she had been dead, people covered her and went away. Mother Mary came to her and removed the cover and gave her water before she died. Thresia saw her soul going straight to heaven with the angels singing praises.\(^{42}\)

Thresia was ready to suffer any amount of pain or take any risk, even to walk miles to help the dying patients. If it was necessary to go out in the nights, she would have her younger brother go with her.\(^{43}\) Such expeditions by a young woman would be unusual even today; unaccompanied visits would even be unthinkable. They were unheard for those times. For Mariam Thresia mere social conventions had to yield to the order of heaven and the needs of souls to be saved. So she continued her visits in spite of criticisms.\(^{44}\)

### 1.3 For the Souls in Purgatory

One day Thresia had a strange vision in which a soul appeared and informed her that thanks to her prayer he had died with a repented heart. The next day he again

\( ^{41} \) Vithayathil, *Diary*, 136.
\( ^{42} \) Vithayathil, *Diary*, 105.
\( ^{43} \) Vithayathil, *Diary*, 82, 83; Positio, ‘Summarium’, 28.
\( ^{44} \) Nedungatt, *Crucified with Christ for All*, 53.
appeared and told her that he was sentenced to Purgatory for a long period. Again the soul appeared to her a few times in great suffering and asked her to pray for him and to tell others to pray for him. Mother Mary asked her to tell his family people to do special acts of charity for his soul and to pay certain debts which he had not paid and offer Holy Mass for his soul.45

After a few days while she was in the house, an angel brought her Holy Communion and after receiving the sacrament she fell into an ecstasy. Blessed Mother took her to Sheol (Paataalam). There she saw many souls rolling in a pit of fire. She felt the burning heat. Blessed Mother said: “Compared with the agony of these souls, your sufferings are negligible. Shouldn’t you therefore help them?”46 Blessed Mother was entrusting to Thresia a new mission. Since that day Thresia kept praying very fervently for the fullness of salvation to be granted to souls in the Purgatory.

Thresia wrote in her autobiography: “Many souls appeared to me and begged for prayers for deliverance from the Purgatory. I have seen some of them going up to heaven on first Saturdays.”47 Very many souls appeared to Thresia in great anguish, introducing themselves and asking for her prayers and at times asking her to inform their family members to offer Holy Mass and to do reparation for their debts. Letter 32 was written to her cousin brothers to inform them of their father who had been suffering in the Purgatory for a long period. In the letter Thresia had requested them to offer Holy Mass and give alms immediately for the salvation of their father’s soul.48 Here are a few more examples from Fr. Vithayathil’s Diary:

One soul appeared to her and introduced himself as a great benefactor of her spiritual father. He was in the Purgatory for seven years and asked her to pray for him and to tell the spiritual father to offer Holy Masses for the reparation of his sins. After eight days, on a Saturday she saw his soul going to heaven holding the hands of Mother Mary. At that time the soul told her that it was owing to her prayers that his days in the Purgatory had been reduced and he could then go to heaven.49

45 Vithayathil, Diary, 41, 42.
46 Vithayathil, Diary, 43.
49 Vithayathil, Diary, 87, 88.
Another one soul was in the Purgatory for a hundred years and he had six months more to complete his due. The soul asked Thresia to pray for him and the period of three months was reduced thanks to her prayers and she saw him going to heaven happily.\textsuperscript{50}

On the feast of Our Lady of Carmel, Thresia participated in the Solemn Mass and offered the full indulgence she received for a soul and she saw the soul going to heaven. That soul had been in the Purgatory for twenty six years. The same day another soul appeared to her and asked for her prayers. He had been sentenced to Purgatory to the end of the world. He wanted to inform his children to offer Holy Masses and do charity for the deliverance of his soul.\textsuperscript{51}

One soul from her parish appeared to her and wanted her to inform his father and brother of offering many Holy Masses for the deliverance of his soul and also of checking his accounts of money transactions and paying all the debts he had and giving three rupees as charity.\textsuperscript{52}

Once a soul while going to heaven holding on to Mother Mary’s scapular appeared to Thresia and informed her of the severity of suffering in the Purgatory. The soul said that a few days in the Purgatory was felt as long as many years and that therefore she should pray for the souls in the Purgatory.\textsuperscript{53} In the Biography of Mother Mariam Thresia, Fr. Vithayathil has recorded Thresia’s concern towards the souls in the Purgatory:

Thresia had great devotion and pity towards the souls in the Purgatory. She often saw the Purgatory and offered indulgences, Holy Masses and Holy Communion for the souls suffering there. She also did severe acts of penance. Some souls appeared to her in such frightful ways as burning in fire and with hands and legs bound in chains and begged for the help of her prayers. As this saintly soul could not bear to see such frightful sights,

\textsuperscript{50} Vithayathil, \textit{Diary}, 102.
\textsuperscript{51} Vithayathil, \textit{Diary}, 110. Most probably to inform this matter that she might have written the above quoted letter 32. In the letter she has mentioned that everybody would be sorry if she tells the extent of his period of suffering.
\textsuperscript{52} Vithayathil, \textit{Diary}, 70, 71.
\textsuperscript{53} Vithayathil, \textit{Diary}, 89.
she asked them not to appear to her in future and told them that she would give them as much help as possible. The services rendered by this virgin in nursing the sick, and saving the souls from the Purgatory are unequalled.”

Thresia exhorted her Sisters: “For the sake of souls in the Purgatory do all the good works permitted to you.” “Always remember the pain in the Purgatory and the fact that the wicked will have to suffer the fires of hell like an incombustible thing in a furnace.”

Thresia’s infused knowledge on death and life in the Purgatory is wonderful. She says:

My children, in this month dedicated for souls in the Purgatory, may I speak to you a few words on death. Death will catch hold of us like a thief. Nobody knows at what age and when it happens. When we die, we have to leave everything here on earth. Remember specially that hours and minutes will pass away quickly … During this month special prayers are to be offered for the souls in the Purgatory. I tell you definitely that there is no pain on earth comparable to that in the Purgatory. Our sufferings in this world are very insignificant. We cannot get any idea of the intensity of pain in the Purgatory. Oh! What a great pain! Truly I tell you that a person, who would seriously think about that for a moment, will not live in this world even for a moment.”

1.4 Nursing the Sick

“Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he committed sin, he will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man has great power in its effects.” (Jas. 5: 15-17). During the time of Thresia, hospitals were very rare and were only in

54 Vithayathil, Biography of Rev. Mother Mariam Thresia, 56.
faraway bigger towns. In remote villages, believers depend on spiritual healings. In such a context, Thresia was asked to take care of the sick by Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Joseph and the guardian angel. In union with the Lord, she experienced the power of prayer. She had the deep faith that God will cure the sick if it is His will. “Before people came to know that there was something extraordinary in Thresia, the devils had smelt the fragrance of her virtues and begun efforts to annihilate them.” Thresia has recorded in the autobiography: “Whenever I went to help the sick, the devils used to abuse me and threaten me with a club. Without any fear I would remain there and continue to help them.”

According to Mother Mary’s desire and direction Thresia used to go to the houses of the sick in her parish. She, with her friends, nursed and consoled the sick in their homes. If needed, she went out two or three times a day for the purpose. Reminding the sick of the wounds and sufferings of Jesus on the cross, she tried to induce faith and hope in them and read out spiritual books for them. She used to decorate their rooms with flowers at the time of administering the Sacrament of Anointing of the sick and of giving Holy Communion to them. Once when Thresia was hesitating to go near a patient because of the crowd nearby, an angel encouraged her saying: “Go close to the patient and speak to him.” With great difficulty she went close and helped the patient.

Thresia’s self-sacrifice in caring the poor, sick and needy is very well manifested in an extract taken from the Diary of Fr. Vithayathil:

A woman of thirty years from a poor family had been laid up for twenty years with paralysis of hands and legs. There was a deep wound on her leg and pus was oozing from it. There was an overpowering stench emitted by the wound. Because of this her parents and relatives had abandoned her. When Thresia was informed of her case, ignoring the heavy stench she went near her … Thresia recited the act of contrition to her and gave her advice so as to give her courage. After some time she died.

58 Vithayathil, Diary, 180.
59 Vithayathil, Biography of Rev. Mother Mariam Thresia, 26.
61 Vithayathil, Diary, 81, 83.
63 Vithayathil, Diary, 83.
64 Vithayathil, Diary, 152.
There were many occasions when Thresia took upon herself the physical sufferings of others. For example:

A woman belonging to another parish had been suffering from a stomach disease for some years. The illness increased and the fever, swelling and the pain in the stomach became strong. The physician said that a cure was impossible and that she would not live for more than eighteen days. The spiritual father asked Thresia to pray for the patient and she had been praying for her. According to his instruction Thresia visited and nursed the patient. When the fever and the pain of the patient increased, Thresia prayed that she would suffer these and that relief be given to the patient. At once the fever and the illness were passed on to Thresia. However, God would not cure the disease. Thanks to the prayer of Thresia the patient lived one more month; finally she received the Last Sacrament and died peacefully.\(^65\)

When the sick people were abandoned by their dear and near ones because of the graveness of their sickness, Thresia had them taken to her own house to take care of them. A witness who knew Thresia well states:

There was a woman of a low caste (Pulaya) called Thiri who had a deep wound on her leg. There was foul smell and pus oozed out of the wound. Her relatives and other people thought that it was leprosy; so they abandoned her. Thresia took that woman to her house and made a small hut for her and made some arrangements for her to take rest lying down comfortably. She washed her wounds and applied medicine on the wound. She begged for food from others to feed her. After many days, the sickness got only worse. Then the woman received baptism. Some time later she died and was buried in the parish cemetery.\(^66\)

On another occasion when a newly convert was sick and her own relatives abandoned her, Thresia with great difficulty begged to one of her distant relatives to allow her to stay in his house. Thresia went to nurse her every day and night. She

\(^{65}\) Vithayathil, *Biography of Rev Mother Mariam Thresia*, 31, 32.

\(^{66}\) Nedungatt, *Crucified with Christ for All*, 53, 54.
prepared concoctions and other herbal medicines for her. When she became very seriously ill, the relative expressed dislike for keeping her. Still with the help of many others she took care of her even staying up late in the nights with her. This house was four miles away from her house. She prayed and asked others to pray for her peaceful death.67

Hearing about the sanctity and good works of Thresia, people from far and near places approached her, begging for her prayers and advice. During her journey to other places, people invited her to their houses for prayer. Here is an incident narrated by Fr Vithayathil:

One day Thresia was going to her mother’s house in Thuravoor. On the way at Chalakudy, a man asked her to visit his house. But Thresia was reluctant to go in. Then the patient’s mother came to her crying and said: “I have only one daughter and she is going to die. Please come and see her.” Thresia answered that she was not a doctor, but she yielded to the mother’s pleading and visited the patient. She recited a full rosary and asked the family members to recite the Litany of All Saints. She prayed to God to give relief to the patient. Immediately the pain diminished and the girl was cured.68

1.5 Care for the Poor and Orphans

“Come to me all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Mt. 11:28). Jesus’ invitation to the poor echoed in the heart of Thresia from her childhood. Little Thresia exhibited great concern for the poor and needy. In her autobiography we read that she used to hold back the special food prepared and given to her by her mother to improve her health, and would give it away to somebody who is more in need of it avoiding the attention of anyone around.69 She had great interest to teach those children who were poor at studies. She helped them to read books and say prayers.70 The poverty that she experienced in her own life 71 most probably helped her understand the needs of the poor and miserable people.

67 Vithayathil, Diary, 94.
68 Vithayathil, Diary, 105, 106; Nedungatt, Crucified with Christ for All, 54.
In caring the poor and needy Thresia’s ultimate goal was to help them grow in faith, in the love of God and thus enable them to lead a life of real peace and joy. In the Diary we come across many occasions where Thresia’s deep concern for the poor is well expressed. Thresia observed that many were not able to go to church owing to lack of proper dress. She asked her spiritual father for money to buy cloth. He gave her the money needed and she herself stitched the dress for them. To her surprise sometimes without her knowledge she had found cloth in her box, by which she could stitch dress for many. All the aforesaid incidents express her concern for the poor patients. There are many witnesses who have testified to Thresia’s love for the poor and orphans. A few of the extracts are given below:

“She begged for help from the rich and gave the collections to the sick and the poor when she herself was poor. Even when she was in desperate need at home, she used to give all possible help to the poor and needy.”

“She used to help others with great sacrifices on her part. I have heard her asking (her Sisters) to give her own share of food to the beggar, when there was nothing else left in the house.”

One of her followers, Mother Anna remarked: “Even after becoming a nun, Mother Mariam Thresia showed great zeal in helping the poor as she did earlier, and also trained those under her care to do likewise. She spent a part of what she got through hard work, and as alms from other people, for the uplift of the poor. And she also made the Sisters set aside a small part of their noon meal and share it with their poor students.” One witness commented that the most outstanding virtue in Thresia was her love for the poor and afflicted. Her relationship to the servants was cordial. She worked along with the servants and she really loved them. In return they too loved her immensely. She used to help them in all their needs besides giving them due wages. She rendered humble services even to her subordinates and to the down

72 Vithayathil, Diary, 158.
73 Poitio, ‘Summarium’, 195.
75 Poitio, ‘Summarium’, 507. Mother Anna was first cousin of Fr Joseph Vithayathil. She became the second Superior General of the Congregation of Holy Family from 1952 to 1958.
76 Poitio, ‘Summarium’, 145.
77 Poitio, ‘Summarium’, 134, 225.
trodden.\textsuperscript{78} An outcaste woman has given this testimony from her experience: “Though her family was poor, still when we did not have any work, she would ask us to go to her, and she would give us something for our livelihood.”\textsuperscript{79}

When there was not any place in the convent for accommodation or resources proper meals, Thresia was ready to take care of children left orphans. Whenever she saw that the children were rejected or not cared by their parents she would bring them to her convent. Here is a testimony:

Mother Mariam Thresia came to know about a certain Ambattathy (a low caste woman) of Puthenchira lying on her death bed, and she went to see her … After her death she saw a little baby girl crawling on to the body of its dead mother. So she picked up the orphan child and brought it to the convent. She baptised the child and named her Brigit.\textsuperscript{80} Thresia took care of the orphans like her own children. Annie a helper in the convent, who was brought up by Mother Mariam Thresia as an orphan girl, wrote from her experience: “She was a mother to me in all my life. She would give me bath, comb my hair and dress me up for the school. When I came home from the school Mother would give a portion of her food to me.”\textsuperscript{81} Thresia had great love and concern for the orphan children. “She was filled with divine life and spirit and therefore she could not but love the poor and the needy.”\textsuperscript{82} Before her death, there were ten orphan children under her care.\textsuperscript{83}

1.6 Education for Young Children

“For she is an initiate in the knowledge of God,
And an associate in his works.
If riches are a desirable possession in life,
What is richer than wisdom who effects all things?
And if understanding is effective,
Who more than she is fashioner of what exists?

\textsuperscript{78} Positio, ‘Summarium’, 43.
\textsuperscript{79} Positio, ‘Summarium’, 127.
\textsuperscript{80} Positio, ‘Summarium’, 508.
\textsuperscript{81} Nedungatt, \textit{Crucified with Christ for All}, 56.
\textsuperscript{83} Vithayathil, \textit{Biography of Rev Mother Mariam Thresia}, 96.
And if anyone loves righteousness,
Her labours are virtues;
For she teaches self-control and prudence,
Justice and courage;

Nothing in life is more profitable for men than these (Wis. 8:4-7) Like Solomon, the author of the book of Wisdom in the Holy Bible, Thresia too received the infused knowledge about the greatness of the knowledge of God. She understood the need of a school to give children the knowledge of God. 84 The source of all knowledge and virtues in Thresia was her union with God. From her own experience she was convinced that the knowledge of God will make a person mature and virtuous. From the childhood Thresia knew the value of knowledge. Hence, ignoring the ridicules from the elders she had the courage to teach young children, especially those who were poor at studies. 85 It seems that she had an inborn talent for teaching. 86 At that time there was no school in her village, Puthenchira. Therefore, the children, especially the girl children were not able to get school education. From her family visits she felt the dire need of education for children in the locality. As she expressed the desire to her spiritual father, he readily agreed to the suggestion and sought permission from the Local Ordinary to start a school.

After founding the congregation in 1914, the first institution Thresia started was a Primary School at her village in 1915. Practically there was not anything to start a school on. There was no building. Without any finance or competent personnel, and only keeping her trust solely in God, she dared to start the first and second standards of the Holy Family Primary School in the convent building which was built for her stay. 87 By the grace of God, within a year the school building was completed, qualified teachers were appointed and the government recognised the school. 88 This venture exhibits Thresia’s extraordinary courage and faith in the Lord and her infused wisdom.

84 Vithayathil, Diary, 188.
87 Vithayathil, Diary, 188.
88 CHF. Charitrathilude, 43; Vithayathil, Diary, 188.
As per the request of the parents of the children who were coming from far away places, Thresia was generous to accommodate them in the convent building. “Desiring the bright future of the congregation and realising the need of education for the Sisters according to the signs of the times, a building was bought on rent in Thrissur and four Sisters and twenty girls were sent there for higher studies in 1918.” In 1926 Thresia started a Lower Primary School at Kuzhikkattussery. She also started an industrial school adjacent to the regular school for the people to find a means for living. A witness who observed Thresia’s interest in the field of education writes: “Even though the Servant of God was not educated, she was very earnest and interested in the education of others. She was interested in teaching the people the means of gaining a livelihood and was looking for ways and means to this end. She found weaving a useful trade in this line.

Thresia, an illiterate woman from a remote village could take such daring steps from nothingness, whereas in this modern era one cannot think of such bold initiatives even from an educated ordinary woman. It was said that “There was not a single family in the locality who had not been cared for by Thresia in one way or other … her presence was a constant source of power to the locality. In her absence they felt lonely.” This is the effect of the mystical union with her Master, the Lord God. (Isn’t God God?).

2. The Values Imparted

In the Apostolic Letter of Beatification, Pope John Paul II has stated: “The Servant of God Mariam Thresia Chiramel Mankidiyan lived the commandment of Jesus: ‘A new commandment I give to you that you love one another; even as I have loved you that you also love one another’ (Jn.13:34), according to His teaching and unto the model of His life. She did the most effective kind of evangelisation by teaching to love especially the poor, the sick and the rejected in the society through

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89 CHF Charitrathilude, 44.
90 Vithayathil, Biography of Rev. Mother Mariam Thresia, 92; see also Vithayathil, Diary, 188.
91 Vithayathil, Biography of Rev. Mother Mariam Thresia, 93.
93 Positio, ‘Summarium’, 51.
her deeds than mere words.”  

As stated by the Pope, Thresia loved the poor as He loved. “If we love one another, God abides in us and His love is perfected in us” (1Jn.4:12). She was united to God and His love was perfected in her. In her selfless giving to God and one another, she could impart certain values to the world. Let us try to enumerate a few of them.

2.1 Vicarious Suffering for Others

“If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospels will save it” (Mk. 8: 34, 35). Responding to Jesus’ invitation Thresia was ready to take the crosses at any cost for the salvation of others. There are many instances when Thresia like many other saintly souls took upon her the physical pain of others and relieved them or saved them from the punishment of God.

Once, a child was brought to her who, due to a fall could not open her mouth and receive Holy Communion. Feeling sympathy for her, Thresia prayed to God to give herself any pain or suffering for the cure of the child. At midnight whole of her left side was paralysed and she suffered acute pain on that side. Two or three persons were needed to change her position in the bed. However, as a result of her prayer and sacrifice and by the grace of God, the child was able to receive Holy Communion. Just after a day Thresia had a vision of Jesus in great sorrow and suffering and told her that one man in the parish did a mortal sin and so He was suffering and there was nobody to console Him. Then Thresia said: “I shall do any reparation for the sin.” She started to have intense pain on the left side of the chest. She bore the pain with great patience and with a smile without any complaints.

On another occasion Thresia accepted suffering to save her village from an epidemic. Fr. Vithayathil explains it:

During the month of January in 1909, severe small pox broke out among all castes of people in her place. About sixty Christians died of this

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96 Vithayathil, Diary, 100.
97 Vithayathil, Diary, 100.
disease. The rapid spread of the epidemic worried everyone. They believed that it was the just punishment of God and they conducted community prayers. Thresia also prayed earnestly. When the Lord appeared to her once, she prayed with great sorrow asking him to put an end to this punishment. Then He said, “I cannot bear the sins committed by people. I don’t punish them according to my justice. Who will do penance for all the sins of people and the consequent sorrow and indignity I suffer?” Then she said, “If God permits I shall do daily penances for their ingratitude and indignity.” The Lord said, “Nineteen more days have been decreed for the punishment. During these nineteen days you must suffer pain day and night.” Accordingly, she suffered the pains and crosses sent by God day and night. Afterwards the disease affected only a very few people; when she began her penance all of them survived.98

2.2 Forgiving Love

To forgive is the touchstone of genuine love. In the Holy Bible, Jesus asked to forgive seventy times seven (Mt. 18: 22) and He showed the model by forgiving those who crucified Him (Lk.23: 34). Identifying herself with the crucified Lord, Thresia from her childhood practised the great virtue of forgiveness.99 “Thresia was a symbol of forgiveness.”100 Her conformity to the will of God and deep faith in God’s intervention in all the matters of life enabled her to forgive all those who criticized or ridiculed her. The letter 11 which she wrote to her spiritual father is a good example for this. In that letter she expresses great joy in the intervention of God in the midst of heart-piercing criticism.101 Experiencing the greatness of God she said that being a sinner she could not complain and let His will be the done in everything. She could forgive unconditionally her criticisers. Receiving a shameful and insulting letter from her Aunt, Thresia forgave her completely and said: “May be it is God’s will that people must speak ill of me. I do resign myself to it totally.”102

98  Vithayathil, Diary, 175; Nedungatt, Crucified with Christ for All, 55.
100  P.V. Annie, Gender and Spirituality, 200.
Bishop John Menachery, Thresia’s Local Ordinary was sceptical about her extraordinary experiences and put her to several tests. However, her attitude towards him was highly edifying. She always obeyed him and showed great respect towards him. The order of exorcism, ban on daily Holy Communion, and ban on having special food etc. given by the Bishop, were accepted by Thresia with great joy without any complaints. She survived all the criticisms and rejections victoriously. In 1918 Thresia received an order from the Bishop: “Forbidden to go to any parish outside Puthenchira.” Though it was painful, she accepted the order joyfully. When she heard that Bishop was seriously sick, forgiving him unconditionally, she went to Thrissur and received last blessings from him on the day of his demise in 1919. One witness testifies that Thresia was often insulted by a gentleman in her neighbourhood. When he became ill, she went and prayed at his bed. Thresia’s forgiving love is a great model for all.

2.3 Human Dignity

“We are God’s children now: it does not appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure” (1Jn. 3:2,3). Thresia saw everyone in God and believed that all are his children. As the Word says she too wished everyone to be purified and be able to see Him as He is. Through visions she knew that Jesus was in sorrow for every single person who committed a sin. Her great love for the Lord impelled her to work for the salvation of every human being accepting any suffering for his/her sake and with no discrimination. She considered rich or poor, young or old, all alike. Her prayers during the time of the Holy Eucharistic celebration covered the whole humanity: “I pray that all men, women, children of all other Christians and non Christians may know the true religion and be saved … I pray for the living and the dead, for all sinners and for all the intentions of the Church.” This is a proof of her respect for everyone.

103 Vithayathil, Diary, 169.
104 Vithayathil, Diary, 130.
105 Positio, ‘Summarium’, 506.
108 Vithayathil, Diary, 100.
A contemporary of Thresia, Mr. P.C. Kunjuvaried, a retired head master from a neighbouring village testifies: “In my opinion the message she gives is the same for the Church and the society, and it is this: all of us must treat others as equals and we must serve them sincerely and thereby we must bring them to God.” Another witness says: “Whenever there were sick people she used to go to their home irrespective of whether they were rich or poor.” “She was always willing to render the most humble service not only to the equals but also to the subordinates and to the down-trodden. She used to go to nurse the poor in their huts and the rich in their homes.” Thresia’s great zeal for the salvation of souls gave her extraordinary courage to brush aside the social customs and conventions and to consider everyone to be equal.

2.4 Against Caste Discrimination

During the time of Thresia caste system was prevailing in the society Christians were considered to be of high caste, and the scheduled tribes like Pulayas and Parayyas were without any caste and they were marginalised and relegated as the outcastes and untouchables. Thresia who considered every human being a child of God, respected everyone, treated everyone alike and found no difference between a Christian and a Hindu, a Pulaya or a Paraya. Her love for God which culminated in her union with Him gave her enormous stamina to remain in her convictions. She could experience the throbbing of Jesus’ Heart for the love of every human soul. In quenching the thirst of Jesus’ for souls, she did not consider the people’s caste or creed. Thresia’s neighbour, Mr. M.K. Devassy, a retired chairman of Kerala Public Service Commission says: “She was actively involved in rendering social service to all people, irrespective of caste and creed, and particularly in the line of nursing the sick and giving spiritual advice to people on the eve of death. This was very extraordinary in those days, as girls did not do such an apostolate. Unmarried girls were not permitted to enter other homes where she went even during the night to nurse the sick and dying, for which she received abuse from others.” There are many instances recorded about her care for the low caste people. Once Thresia took care of

111 Positio, ‘Sumarium’, 133.
112 Positio, ‘Sumarium’, 43.
113 M.N.Srinivas, Caste in Modern India and other Essays, 10, 141; Nedungatt, Crucified with Christ for All, 15.
114 Vithayathil, Diary, 26, 44.
a low caste woman named Ambittathy, who was in her death bed. She baptised her
before death. A little baby girl was crawling on her dead body and she brought the
child to the convent baptised and named her Brigit. She brought up the child in the
convent.116

Thresia brought a sick woman, the mother of a worker in the convent and put
her up in a convenient room on the north side of the boarding house at
Kuzhikkattussery and nursed her for about three months.117 A Kanakkan (low caste
Hindu), aged fifty five was brought to the craft school building where he was cared
for a month.118

There was a striking incident narrated by Almala, a low caste eye witness that
Thresia taking care of a Pulaya woman who was a leprosy patient, for many days. She
was baptised before death and buried in the parish cemetery.119

2.5 Women Empowerment

The intuitive mind of Thresia gave her a great realisation that only through
education of women the families could be renewed and restored. In those days schools
were rare and girls were not sent to schools. Like the great reformers Swami
Vivekananda and Mahakavi Kumaranasan who challenged the prevailing customs,
Thresia too was a bold reformer who could start a school to educate girls.120 It was
from nothing, with no place, no building, no trained personnel, but with the only
capital of trust in God that Thresia ventured to start a school – the Holy Family
Primary Girls School at Puthenchira. By the grace of God, within a year everything
got settled and could attain recognition and grant from the government.121 Thresia’s
farsightedness about education of women, the growth of the congregation and of the
locality enabled her to take the risk of starting a boarding house at Puthenchira in the
convent itself,122 another boarding house in Thrissur town for the Sister’s and girls
English education, a Lower Primary School at Kuzhikkattussery and a weaving school

118 Positio, ‘Summarium’, 508.
119 Nedungatt, Crucified with Christ for All, 53, 54.
120 CHF History, 39.
121 Vithayathil, Diary, 188; CHF Charitrathilude, 43.
122 CHF Charitrathilude, 44.
adjacent to the Primary School for the uplift of women.\(^{123}\) That a woman who never attended a school took such bold steps for the empowerment of women manifests her infused knowledge coupled with heroic courage and dependence on the power of God.

### 2.6 Option for Poor

The main thrust of Thresia’s apostolate was for the salvation of souls and uplift of the poor. After Vatican II through various Encyclicals the religious and the faithful have been reminded of the necessity opting for the poor. Much before the early part twentieth century, Thresia practised this virtue of poverty and imparted this great message to the world. She herself exercised the spirit of poverty to a high degree\(^{124}\) and remained simple in all things throughout her life without any extravagance in dress, food and personal belongings.\(^{125}\) A witness said that the outstanding virtue in Thresia which attracted him most was her predilection for the poor and the abandoned and her deep love and concern for the domestic servants whom she considered to be her own children.\(^{126}\) Most of the witnesses have deposed about her love for the poor in the diocesan enquiry Tribunal.\(^{127}\) Her service to the poor had started even before she became a young lady. In those days poor people were living in the compounds of the rich as tenants. They were scattered all over the village. Though unmarried girls were not permitted to enter other houses, she used to reach out to all their homes.\(^{128}\) There are many incidents to prove her love and care for the poor. One witness testified:

> “An old man converted to Christianity was abandoned by his people. The Servant of God and her Sisters provided him with a shelter near our house where Sisters visited him and nursed him providing him with food and other necessities of life. When he died, they themselves did everything required for a decent Christian burial.”\(^{129}\)

It is recorded that Thresia used to send Sisters to collect alms to be given to the poor families while they themselves were in dire need.\(^{130}\)

\(^{123}\) *CHF Charithrathilude*, 47, 57; *Positio*, ‘Summarium’, 79; *CHF History*, 45.

\(^{124}\) *Positio ‘Summarium’,* 34.

\(^{125}\) *Positio, ‘Summarium’,* 83.

\(^{126}\) *Positio, ‘Summarium’,* 46.

\(^{127}\) Nedungatt, *Crucified with Christ for All*, 56.

\(^{128}\) *Positio, ‘Summarium’,* 131,28.

\(^{129}\) *Positio, ‘Summarium’,* 82, 83.

\(^{130}\) *Positio, ‘Summarium’,* 34.
Thresia’s love for the poor extended to the care of orphans. She used to take orphans from the streets and from the poor people’s houses and feed them. Thresia established a modest orphanage in the convent itself without any government aid and provided everything for the unfortunate children.

### 2.7 Patient Waiting

Thresia’s waiting with great patience for the fulfilment of the will of God is highly appreciable and edifying. It was her intense love for God and deep faith and hope in His promises (Lk.1:45) that gave her the profound capacity to wait till God’s will was accomplished in her. This was manifested from her childhood. Thresia had great desire to receive the sacraments of Confession and Holy Communion. She went on knocking at various doors to get the permission with great patience and finally she got it before the customary age.

In a letter to the spiritual father, Thresia’s attitude behind waiting for the Lord’s time was clearly manifested: “God Himself will get things done. Don’t think anything otherwise! The reason why God did not grant you then the favour you asked for may be that He had greater good for you in store. Father, please don’t feel worried on account of this.” In another letter she wrote: “The devil is playing every possible trick that we may not obtain what we pray for. Because, they try to distort whatever I say so that you may be fed up with it. I am not at all sorry about it … I pray to both of them (Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Joseph) for their intercession. I am not desperate … Father, please continue to pray for what we have been praying for, without being fed up. God will grant it soon.”

Thresia had exhibited great patience while praying for the conversion of sinners, nursing the sick especially while helping the dying patients. Though the patients sometimes abused or reacted very badly, she would remain with great patience till she won the soul.

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136 Vithayathil, *Diary*, 79, 80, 86, 147-149, 102 etc.
Twelve years of waiting for a clear discernment about Thresia’s vocation was a great heroic act. During this period she was tested in the crucible of suffering through active and passive purifications and humiliations. Without a word of complaint or murmurn, she subjected herself to God’s will, bearing everything with heroic patience.\textsuperscript{137} Her heroic patience reached climax in her death bed with her full resignation to God’s will: “If it be the will of the heavenly bridegroom that I leave you so soon in order to accept His invitation, let it be fulfilled.”\textsuperscript{138}

2.8 Total Self-surrender

In the life of Thresia we always come across her total self-surrender to God and others. If we take a quick bird’s eye view of her life, this virtue is manifested as an outstanding one in her. In the childhood, her love for God and the sacrifices and penance she did for His love were to the maximum that a child could do.\textsuperscript{139} There was no room to add more penance to her practice. As a child the trust and hope she had in God and the forgiving love she manifested were extraordinary.\textsuperscript{140} As she grew up, the sufferings she endured from the diabolic assaults, physical ailments, and the sufferings given by God to identify herself with Him, was overwhelming. Whenever Jesus asked her if she could carry His cross, her response was always: “With your grace I can.”\textsuperscript{141} When she got a little consolation she would say: “I don’t want consolation, let my Jesus get consoled, but give me more sufferings. I shall bear, not to my will but to your will.”\textsuperscript{142} We saw the vicarious suffering she accepted for the healing of others.\textsuperscript{143} She never missed a chance to help a dying patient. When she was sick too she made efforts to visit the patients in need.\textsuperscript{144} No incident is recorded that any sinner whom she met went without conversion of the heart.

After the foundation of the congregation, she worked hard day and night together with her usual ailments. Fr. Vithayathil has recorded: “More than five years she worked hard in the hot sun and rain walking some four kilometres everyday

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{137} Vithayathil, \textit{Biography of Rev. Mother Mariam Thresia}, 44.
  \item \textsuperscript{138} M. Thresia, ‘Exhortations’, 138.
  \item \textsuperscript{140} M. Thresia, ‘Autobiography’, 29, 30.
  \item \textsuperscript{141} Vithayathil, \textit{Diary}, 111, 116, 141.
  \item \textsuperscript{142} Vithayathil, \textit{Diary}, 157.
  \item \textsuperscript{143} Vithayathil, \textit{Diary}, 100; See the vicarious suffering explained before.
  \item \textsuperscript{144} Vithayathil, \textit{Diary}, 135, 136.
\end{itemize}
ignoring her usual sickness and sufferings given to her.”¹⁴⁵ Thresia taught her Sisters to give their whole self. She exhorted them: “If it is our will that forms the half, and the superior’s, the other, nothing can be worked out properly. If it were so, you wouldn’t be a totally dedicated spouse of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.”¹⁴⁶ Another occasion she told them: “See! I have given my Lord my whole heart. I don’t need anything in the world but the Lord.”¹⁴⁷ It is very obvious that Thresia’s self giving or self surrender or self emptying was total.

¹⁴⁵  Vithayathil, *Diary*, 190.