

Little flower of the month of October

The first little flower of this month of October takes us to Goa, India. What is that happened there?

People during that time also suffered a pandemic. The Franciscan Hospitaller Sisters, with the consent of their Foundress, Sister Maria Clara, were in the frontline, full of courage which came from their interior disposition to be and live as minors, hospitallers and mothers, giving their very lives.

"It is said that in a building, which was gloomy and dark in appearance, where pain and death spread terror, the Franciscan Hospitaller Sisters were at the bedside of the unfortunate, whom smallpox had driven them away from their own families. Without fear of contagion, they took care of those in frail health, abandoned by their loved ones. The police took the sick to a place called Lazareto, to be provided with health care. There they were treated in a pitiful manner.

As soon as the Sisters learnt of what was happening, they officially approached the Governor to offer their services in Lazareto. They were accepted immediately. There they went, full of joy and enthusiasm, to meet the Bridegroom of a thousand faces, to live in proximity with those infected by smallpox. The nurse, at the door, would ask the Sisters for details regarding the sick, to be communicated to the doctor, who trembled at the thought of going to the infirmary. It was with great difficulty that they got a priest to administer the sacraments. Besides their mortal illness, the people were totally abandoned by their own family!"

With the courageous witness of our Sisters, God, compassionate and rich in mercy, accomplished something marvellous: families began to accept their sick and only the poor remained in the care of the Sisters; and Mother Clara had the joy of not seeing any of her Sisters infected.

Even today, by the gift and grace of the charism, the Lord continues to work wonders on the *calvaries* of the earth, where, standing like Mary, the Franciscan Hospitaller Sisters continue to be merciful, alleviating the pain and caring for the basic needs of so many brothers and sisters.