

# A VIOLET BY A MOSSY STONE

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— BY L. FRANCA AUGUSTINE —

As we hold Mother Teresa as the Lord's gift to the world of our times, we are also aware of many 'unsung heroes and heroines' who in small or big ways try to bring smiles to the faces of the needy. One such angel of light who moves around in my locality is a medical doctor, Dr. Ruth Gonseth.

Dr. Ruth lives in a rented room in Tandhi, Ratnanagar municipality of Chitwan District in Nepal. She is a Dermatologist from Switzerland. But Nepal seems to have become her second homeland and bringing healing to the poor of the place her life's mission. Though she is in her late 70s, she spends most hours of the day on her feet trying to reach out to as many sick people as possible. She has a fine perception and genuine sensitivity and concern for the needy and that leaves her with very little time for herself.

With a great dream to start a hospital for the poor of Nepal, she landed in this small town and began investing all her resources for the purpose. After 6 years of hoping against hope, patiently waiting, making all efforts to mobilize people, things, funds and above all to



▲ Dr. Ruth Gonseth



comply with the governmental restrictions and requirements, she felt she was swimming against the current as the corruption at all levels were more than she could cope with. The only option left with her was to abandon her dream. She did it in great desperation, but not altogether.

Dr. Ruth courageously took the challenge of getting out of the yet to complete hospital building letting go all her past investments and began rendering her services at the local health post. The Bokular health post was nothing more than a small structure with minimum personnel, medicine and service and hence with a few helpless poor visiting it. Dr. Ruth's entry into this miserable place was the beginning of a total transformation. Within just two years of her presence in the health post, it has become a hospital with almost all facilities, full-fledged staff and best of treatment at minimum cost. The queue of patients at the hospital seeking attention from Dr. Ruth is getting longer each day and her hours in the hospital are growing daily. She is indeed drawing crowds with her presence in the hospital.

Though she comes from an affluent family in Switzerland and has held important positions in the government of Switzerland, Dr. Ruth does

not look for nurses and attenders to comfort her patients. She herself cleans the wounds, applies medicines, bandages, dresses the patients and does all sorts of odd jobs with a simple availability and gentle concern for the persons who suffer. Her obsession to bring healing and comfort to the poor is marvellous. Dr. Ruth does not limit herself only to the hospital. The recent earthquake provided her lots of opportunities to extend her services far and wide. Almost on a weekly basis she conducts health camps that take her to the far off villages of Nepal.

With her charismatic personality Dr. Ruth has been able to inspire teams of volunteers from Germany, Austria and Switzerland. Doctors, nurses, technicians and other volunteers come over giving their free services for a long or short period. To satisfy the requirements of the government, she needs to return to her country every year and she makes use of her time there to mobilize personnel, materials and funds to be utilized for the poor patients.

'A violet by a mossy stone half-hidden from the eye', Dr. Ruth continues to spread the fragrance of selfless Christian love and service.

*(Franca Augustine belongs to the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity. She has been working in Nepal for the last 12 years)* 

## NOMINATIONS FOR ICPA AWARDS 2017

**T**he Indian Catholic Press Association (ICPA) invites nominations for three annual awards to be conferred on selected Christian journalists/writers/publications during the Association's National Convention and General Body meeting to be held at Archdiocesan Pastoral Centre, Nagpur from February 24-25, 2017.

The awards are in the following categories:

- 1) Fr Louis Careno Award for an outstanding journalist/institution in India in English or any other recognised Indian language except Hindi.
- 2) Swami Devanand Chakkungal Award for a journalist/institution in India for outstanding contribution to journalism and literature in Hindi language.
- 3) Award for Best reportage on SC,ST for a journalist/publication for promoting/campaigning the cause of the SC, ST.

The last date for nominations is 10 January 2017.

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