

St. André – Marie Warapan

(1929 – 2015)

Sr. St. André – Marie Warapan was born on December 15, 1929, in Pune, Maharashtra, India. She was baptized just 15 days after her birth. The youngest and only daughter in her family, she had two elder brothers, both of whom predeceased her. Her father, Antony Warapan, hailed from Kerala and worked as a Military Accountant, a profession that involved frequent transfers across India. Her mother, Angela Warapan, was from Goa. These transfers exposed young Marie to diverse cultures and customs, broadening her outlook on life and giving her a liberal, cosmopolitan upbringing.

Education

Marie completed her schooling in several institutions across India:

- Daughters of the Cross, Mumbai
- MJM Convent, Pune
- St. Joseph's Girls' High School, Waltair
- Sacred Heart Convent, Bombay
- Religious Formation and Studies

In 1952, at the invitation of the then Superior General, Mother Thérèse Marie, Marie joined the Pre-Novitiate at Annecy, France. Remarkably, she travelled to Annecy on a three-month sea voyage by ship. She entered the Novitiate in 1953 and made her First Profession in 1954, taking the religious name Sr. St. André.

Soon after, she was sent to Cardiff University, UK, to study English Literature, where her sharp intellect and wit earned her recognition as one of the most brilliant students. She graduated with Honours in Literature. In 1958, she made her Final Profession at Annecy and then spent time at both Annecy and Llantarnam Abbey, Wales.

Academic Career at St. Joseph's College, Waltair

In 1959, Sr. St. André returned to India to take up a teaching position at St. Joseph's College for Women, Waltair, where an urgent need for an English Literature lecturer had arisen. She served the college for twenty years as a Professor, renowned for her clarity and precision in teaching literary techniques, especially those of William Shakespeare and William Wordsworth. She encouraged her students to think critically and ask questions, and she gave special attention to Student Sisters, sharing her wisdom generously.

Principalship and Institutional Development

In 1964, Sr. St. André became the second Principal of St. Joseph's College for Women. Drawing on her European experiences, she took the college to new heights of professionalism and academic excellence.

Key achievements during her tenure included:

- ❖ Securing affiliation for B.A. Psychology under Andhra University
- ❖ Adding a new floor to the college building with UGC aid
- ❖ Introducing two Intermediate sections (Arts & Science) for 250 students
- ❖ Constructing a four-storeyed Science Wing for laboratories with UGC support
- ❖ Extending the Home Science Block with Swiss aid for the B.Sc. (Home Science) programme
- ❖ Selection of the College for COHSIP (College Humanities and Social Improvement Programme) and successful continuation into a follow-up programme after 1983

Her leadership was marked by integrity and honesty, which led to her election as Provincial Councillor.

Administrative and Formative Ministries

From 1979 to 1985, Sr. St. André served in Bhubaneswar, Odisha, in administrative ministry, demonstrating her adaptability and administrative skills. In 1985, she returned to Annecy and, in 1986-87, pursued a Theology Course in the UK.

She later served as Principal of Sudeep Theological Centre, Bangalore (1987–88) and as a Formator (1989–94), shaping young Sisters into confident, self-reliant women.

Her quest for learning continued—she undertook a Counselling Course at St. Anselm's, Kent, in 1997. From 1998 onwards, she dedicated herself to counselling the elderly and youth in Bangalore.

Later Years

In 2004, Sr. St. André returned to Waltair, spending her time reading, reflecting, visiting the college, and delivering guest lectures. In 2006, she moved to St. Joseph's Home for the Elderly in Visakhapatnam, where she lived for ten years.

Sr. St. André was known for being twenty years ahead of her time, a woman of courage, intellect, and compassion. She passed away at the age of 85 on September 18, 2015. She leaves behind a lasting legacy as a teacher, leader, counsellor, and woman of deep faith.