



### **Mother Mary Francisca De Chantal**

Mother Chantal's life was a total surrender to the will of God. From her early years at home, to the ripe years of old age she submitted herself to the will of God and found joy in it. Her deep attachment to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament enabled her to overcome all the trials and tribulations in her life.

Mother Chantal (Philomina Vallayil) was born on 23 December 1880 to Mathew and Mariamma at Champakulam. From her young age, she was impelled by a desire to love the Lord with her whole heart and give herself in service of the poor and needy. She had taken a firm decision right from her childhood which she kept intact till her death that she would not cause pain to Jesus or Mother Mary. Showing deep interest in spiritual activities, she attended daily Mass and was an active member of the Sodality of our Lady. Though she wanted to fulfill her desire to serve the humanity by becoming a Religious, she was forced by the family to give consent for her marriage. But, within a short time, she became a widow and returned to her own home in Champakulam.

God in His providence had prepared Philomina Vallayil to receive the very special gift of Eucharistic love. She spent her widowed days at home in silence, solitude, prayer and penance, cherishing and nurturing her desire to dedicate herself to God and His children. The unexpected encounter with Fr. Thomas Kurialacherry at Kalloorkatt Church opened a new way for her and it filled her with strength and inspiration. She found in him a spiritual guide who would lead her to her real destination.

Fr. Thomas Kurialacherry also was aware that a leader or collaborator was essential to lead and guide the young congregation he had in his dream. From his meeting with Philomina, he knew that she was the right person to fulfill what he had planned from the Perpetual Adorers chapel in Rome. Mother Chantal was a deeply religious woman and that was the source of her extraordinary courage and strength. During the formation period, the Founder became aware of her motherly love, courage, strength and determination that were essential for keeping up with the demands of a new congregation. On 23rd January 1903, she left her house as directed by Fr. Thomas and spent a year with the Clarist sisters at Changanacherry where she pursued her school level studies. Later while continuing studies at Mutholi, she had about 17 children under her care, accompanying her. They were the first candidates in the congregation. Six of them received veil on 8th December 1908, which resulted as the foundation of the Adoration Congregation.

Since the Founder Mar Thomas Kurialacherry had to attend the needs of the diocese, the responsibility of starting new schools and colleges were entrusted to Sr. Chantal, which she did efficiently. All the first schools and convents of the SABS were erected and started as a result of her hard work and dedication. Her official life which did not last much long was thus filled with lot of difficulties that she had to face from government authorities, local people, Non-Catholics and even from those within the convent too. From within the convent walls she had to face humiliations which she took as nice occasions to

identify herself with her Heavenly Spouse. She was denied the permission to make her final vows together with the others professed with her, due to reasons unknown. Her hardships in official life and official life itself came to an abrupt end by the unexpected demise of the Founder in 1925, where after she was pushed away from active life and remained so till the end of her life.

Later on in her life, Mother Chantal had to face many more trials and tribulations, which she silently endured and joyfully accepted to identify herself with the 'Suffering Servant of Yahweh'. But all those were ample manure from which the congregation was able to take great leaps in its forward journey. Mother was never seen complaining or irritated or criticizing, but always bowed her head in submission repeatedly ejaculating 'Glory to God'. She always stood silent conforming to the Eucharistic Lord, with whom she had a deep personal attachment. She was always the same person – loving, compassionate and caring to others, and seeking comfort and consolation only from the Eucharistic Lord. She shared what she had in plenty, her spiritual and material resources with those who were around her. Her compassion for the poor and needy which manifested right from her childhood was exhibited in her life of exile too.



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Sacrament enabled her to overcome all the trials and tribulations in her life. Even when she was rejected by her own sisters, punished by the diocesan authorities and belittled by the public, she accepted everything with joy to make the Eucharistic Lord known, loved and adored by all. When the horizons of her apostolate was limited within the convent walls she acted as a missionary by making use of all opportunities that came across her to promote Eucharistic devotion. She spent long hours before the Blessed Sacrament, conversing with Jesus even in the odd hours of the night when no one was around. Most of the time, she could be seen lost in deep contemplation in the convent chapel.

The last days of Mother Chantal witnessed the depth of her physical suffering too. She was called to her eternal abode on 25th May 1972. Mother Chantal was a heroic woman in all aspects especially in her suffering and determination. During her lifetime itself she used to make children pray and she interceded for their intentions which made people draw to her tomb after her death. People come to her tomb in large groups from far and wide. Her intercession is mainly sought after by young ladies for getting married and by pregnant ladies for having a normal delivery.

Mother Chantal who cooperated with Mar Thomas Kurialacherry in founding the congregation was recognized as the Co-Foundress of the Adoration congregation in the Renewal Synaxis held in January 2007. Mother Chantal's contribution to the congregation as the First member and Co-Foundress was a consequence of her immense love for Jesus in the Eucharist. This divine love was depicted in her love for all others and for the growth of the congregation, overcoming innumerable obstacles. The love she had for the poor, her devotion to the Holy Eucharist and her suffering in silence were heroic and continues to inspire one and all.

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