

Miraculous Intervention of Father Duston in a Vocation Crisis of a Religious Sister

During the first national lockdown in response to the Covid-19 outbreak (2020), from the last week of March 2020, I was held up at CMI Preshitha Provincial House in Coimbatore. One day in the month of May, I received a telephone call from a religious sister known to me from her student days. Although she was fulfilling her unique ministry and was also entrusted with a significant office at the provincial level administration, she spoke to me about her struggle in proceeding with her life in the Congregation; she spoke to me about her personal struggle in relating with her immediate major superior, who haunted her like anything. As I understood, although this sister was entrusted with a number of assignments in the province, due to various factors, including, their personal incompatibility (and, probably, professional jealousy), the major superior did not trust her; not only the major superior did not facilitate anything for the proper fulfilment of this sister's assigned ministry, but also had created blocks, even if, with permission, the latter had arranged any provisions for the institution where she was working. Practically, during the telephonic conversation, this sister told me, to my utter dismay, that she was fed up with her present state of life and wanted to quit her religious community, and that she was planning to join another congregation.

As this sister had already made her perpetual profession, and had already celebrated silver jubilee of her first profession, I felt very uncomfortable with the proposal to change the congregation in response to her struggles originating from her relationship with the major superior. I spoke to her at length, and argued and tried to persuade her to give up both proposals, namely, of leaving the present congregation and joining another. As most of my arguments and persuasions were already known to her, naturally, she did not get convinced of my reasoning and insistence. Moreover, due to the pandemic and the lockdown, personally she felt miserable as she was held up at a place where she was living with the same major superior, which made it almost impossible to settle with her issues immediately.

After having spoken with her for a couple of hours on the phone with the hope of settling her down in the same congregation, I was at my wits end, as she did not agree to any of my proposals. Finally, having felt so helpless and exhausted, I told her that this discussion cannot continue, and she should drop this line of argument and, being a person who has already lived in the congregation for three decades, it is unreasonable to think of joining any other congregation. Although I told her so, I knew in my heart that she was neither convinced of my arguments nor would she relent to my persuasion. Naturally, I felt so helpless.

On the same evening, during the community prayer, when the informal prayer with the intention of realizing the canonization of Father Dunston was recited, I felt an inner urge to seek his heavenly intercession, especially as he himself was a concerned formator and a person who was closely involved in guiding and animating a number of consecrated religious and priests; I myself being one of his novices, and who also received his continued support in spiritual life for a long time, my inner urge to seek Father Dunston's intercession in this instance was so compelling. I must admit that not only did I pray for this intention during the community prayer in the

subsequent days, but also this thought of a committed nun leaving her present community lingered through my mind, which resulted in praying earnestly throughout the day for a positive resolution of this crisis with the immediate heavenly intercession of Father Dunston. I do not know the reason, but I had a strong feeling that Father Dunston's heavenly intercession in this case will be positive, as he did persuade and support many to overcome various crises in their vocation to consecrated life and priesthood.

On the third day, I received yet another phone call from the same sister: naturally, I was a bit nervous to answer the call, as I suspected that she would continue the same line of conversation that we had in the previous instance. However, thanks be to God, to my utter surprise, she spoke to me in a very composed manner, and told me that the situation remains the same, but she has positively decided to drop any further thought of leaving the congregation and of joining any other community. As she told me, her intense prayer and discernment during those couple of days, immediately after our telephonic conversation, made her realize that her vocation is definitively in the community in which she had made her perpetual profession, and that she would never entertain the thought of leaving the community again. She thanked me for the guidance I offered at a time when she had no one else to talk to and for helping in her personal discernment. At this moment, in my heart, I felt so relieved, and started thanking the Lord for this timely bestowing of the grace upon this sister through the heavenly intercession of Father Dunston. Later, in the evening, during our supper, I shared in our Provincial House community about this miraculous discernment that was facilitated through the intercession of Father Dunston; subsequent to my sharing, a few others in the community recalled similar instances of favours received. Again, I shared this instance with the community gathered for the birth centenary celebrations of Father Dunston, which was held at Bharathamatha Ashram, Palakkad. Every time I visit the tomb of Father Dunston, I continue to pray for this sister, and thank him for the timely intercession in restoring her confidence in the call she has received from the Lord.



10 December 2020
Coimbatore

Fr. Saju Chackalackal CMI
Provincial, Preshitha Province, Coimbatore