

Year of Mother Josepha



Reflection No. 3: Mother Josepha, Hendrina Stenmanns, SSpS, in her Waiting

Many have written a good number of reflections about Mother Josepha, Hendrina Stenmanns. As her African daughters, we would like to add to the work done by others in an African way, whereby she would be addressed directly as our **ancestress**. In our African context, it is not just all the dead who are considered ancestors. One should have lived an exemplary life to earn such a title. Mother Josepha was such a person, so in our reflection about her waiting, we want to do it our way where we **talk to** and not about her, in order to add that personal touch to what we know about her. This is how it goes:

Hendrina Stenmanns, Mother Josepha, SSpS, you were a woman of substance, an icon of Christian maturity expressed clearly in the virtues of **Love, Patience and Perseverance**.

Mother, you developed a special love for God and neighbour even at the early stages of your life. This love led to the deep desire in you to

follow Jesus closely in Religious Missionary life. You were so selfless that you were willing to stop schooling in order to help to take care of your younger siblings. Later when your mother died, you assumed the responsibility of “motherhood” in your family.

O Woman of Great Heart, how could you enter religious life, a life you fervently wanted to live, when you were burdened with so many responsibilities on your shoulders? But somehow, deep within you, you knew that God’s time was the best and therefore waited patiently for that time to mature.

Loving Woman of God, you were very concerned about the welfare of others, even those outside your family. Were you not the one who sponsored Lambert Welbers, your father’s apprentice, to enable him enter the seminary? Indeed, you were a loving helper to the poor and the sick in your village. Really, in your waiting, you did a lot of good deeds, so much so that even though you were young, your advice was always sought in all matters of life.

When at last your hope seemed to be close to its realization, alas the waiting took another turn that demanded from you deep faith and love for God. Waiting became one of your greatest virtues. In fact, it was not easy to be waiting all the time especially when what you desired was very intense.

Your waiting, **Sweet Mother**, was just like that of a farmer who planted her seeds on the field of faith and good-will, waiting for the Lord to bless it with good weather to enable it to germinate and bear fruit. Yes, you accepted to become a maid in Steyl provided that would help your dreams come true. In that waiting, you did not know for how long, but with **patience and selfless humility**, you laboured and served joyfully.

In your long waiting, **Dearest Mama**, you worked in the kitchen and laundry tirelessly but with a joyful heart. Physical fatigue and peace of mind took turns in your life in those days. Yet, in all these, you learned to seek the will of God.

O Gentle Woman of Perseverance, you never gave up, but with a light heart, you waited for the “D” Day to come. It is an indisputable fact that the waiting was long, but it remained meaningful to you. It became a well within you and consequently, a spring. Indeed, as the Scriptures say, “They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength...” The Lord was really your strength.

Thank you, **Dearest Mother**, for bequeathing to us your children, great treasures which are found in the word, **“WAITING”**:

W: Wisdom
A: Alertness
I: Integrity
T: Truthfulness
I: Inspiration
N: Nurture
G: Goodness

Admirable Mother who “nurtured” your children with love; even in your waiting, you **“mothered”** your companions. You were like the *“Mother earth” (Asaase Yaa)*, who nourishes whatever is planted in her to bear good fruits. *“Ayikoo” (well done)!*

Perfect example of Christian Womanhood, teach us how to wait in **Love, Patience and Perseverance.**

The Young Sisters of Ghana