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Kolkata, India — March 14, 2022

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The Missionaries of Charity have elected Sister Joseph Michael, former secretary to St. Teresa of Kolkata, as superior general of order.

She replaces Sister Prema Pierick, who asked to retire for health reasons. Sister Pierick had led the order since 2009.

Sister Joseph, 68, was the current superior of the order in predominantly Catholic Kerala state. Media reports indicated she had been assistant to Sister Prema until late 2020.

Missionaries of Charity spokeswoman Sunita Kumar said Sister Joseph had served as St. Teresa's secretary for years. She announced March 14 that sisters representing 110 countries elected their new leader during a weekend retreat.

AsiaNews, news agency of the Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions, said Sister Joseph is the first Indian to hold the office of superior general.

Originally from Thrissur, she joined the Missionaries of Charity at the age of 20 and was one of St. Teresa's closest collaborators. She also ministered in the Philippines, Poland and Papua New Guinea.

AsiaNews reported that, in her role as superior in Kerala, she has been living at the Shishu Bhavan (children's home) in Ernakulam.

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