

Journey Towards Wholeness



FR. AMALA JOSEPH SDB
(1962 - 2007)



*A Loving Tribute from the
Salesians of Tiruchy Province*

Dear to God



Fr. Amala Joseph Maddhichetty SDB

(1962- 2007)

Family Background

Amala Joseph Maddichetty was born in a good Catholic family at Perambur, Chennai on 28-11-1962, his parents being Mr. M.K.Pappiah and Mrs. Philomena Mary. He was the third of the six children born to the happy family. He received the sacrament of Baptism on 08-12-1962. He spent his Secondary School years in Don Bosco School, Perambur. A number of extra-curricular activities like acting, outings, inter-school matches, etc. were very helpful to mould the young boy to be a lover of the young in the future. He joined the aspirantate in Tirupattur in 1974. After completing his Pre-novitiate, he joined the Salesian Novitiate at Mount Don Bosco, Kotagiri in 1979. With the help of his Novice Master Fr. J. Joseph, he made efforts to understand his Salesian vocation and made his First Profession on 24 May 1980.

Priestly Formation

Soon after his profession there followed a two-year course of Philosophy at the Retreat, Yercaud. On completing it successfully, Amala secured the B.Ph. degree from the Salesian Pontifical University to which The Retreat was affiliated. Subsequently he worked as a Practical Trainee. His first year (1982-83) was spent at Sagayathottam assisting the poor boys who were in that Agricultural School. The following year he was an Assistant in Dominic Savio School, Tirupattur meant for the poor boys. After completing his two years of practical training, he was sent to American College, Madurai to do graduate studies (1984-87). He stood first in the college for the Final Examination of his B.A. studies. He offered himself to the Lord in the Congregation as a perpetually professed member on 24 May 1987. Amala Joseph went to the Salesian





Theologate at Bangalore, Kristu Jyothi College for the final phase of his training in preparation for priesthood. He was ordained a priest on 11 May 1991. His ordination motto and programme of life that he took for himself was: Journeying towards wholeness.

Priestly Ministry

As a Salesian priest his ministry was directed towards young people, especially the poorer ones, the most vulnerable section of society. Soon after his ordination, he was the Dean at Pallithammam Aspirantate for a year (1991-1992). For the following two years (1992-94) he was the Administrator of the Philosophical College, the Retreat, Yercaud. By August-September of 1994 he was sent to the Salesian Pontifical University (UPS) for his studies in Youth Catechetics and he secured a Master's Degree in Youth Work.

From 1997-2000, he was the Director of DBAI (Don Bosco Anbu Illam) with a number of activities for poor boys, especially in view of their rehabilitation. For another three years (2000-2003) Fr. Amala was the Rector of St. Anthony's Church at Vilathikulam with a number of youth activities.: Rural Youth Animation, a Centre for Computer studies, Typing, Tailoring, Child Right Clubs, Dropout Centres etc. Here his genuine love for poor youth and his brotherly care for the confreres of the house made him a Superior very much liked by all. He spent the following year (2003-04) at Manikandam, the headquarters of the Province of Tiruchy as the Director of the Developmental Office. He was the Moderator for the Provincial Chapter 2004 and he guided all the discussions towards clear direction for the future of the Province. He was sent to USA for his doctorate in youth ministry in June 2004. Besides his studies, he served as Parochial Administrator of Saint John the Apostle Parish at Whitehall and Saint Ansgar Parish at Blair from June to August of 2005 and Saint Paul Parish at New Lisbon and Our





Lady of the Lake Parish at Germantown from 30 August 2005 until his death.

His untimely death

Fr. Amala Joseph was hit by a speeding car while crossing the Lake Street near Wendy's restaurant in Addison at 5.08 p.m. (American time) on June 9, 2007. He was rushed to Glen Oaks Hospital where he was pronounced dead at 5.45 pm. After a lot of persuasion with the diocesan authorities of La Crosse, USA, the body of Fr. Amala Joseph was flown to Chennai by Air India and his mortal remains were received on June 18 at 3.45 am.

The mortal remains of Fr. Amala Joseph were interred after a solemn celebration of the Requiem Mass by His Grace Rt. Rev. Archbishop Chinnappa Malayappa SDB, Archbishop of Chennai, in the presence of his sorrowing mother, relatives, the Provincials, many confreres of the Southern Salesian provinces, religious and the parishioners of Lourdes Shrine, Chennai. After the funeral Eucharist, his mortal remains were laid to rest in St. Roche's cemetery, Chennai.

His Outstanding Qualities

1) His ordination motto – his programme of life

On the day of his Priestly Ordination, he took a motto: **"Journeying towards wholeness"**. Anyone who lived with him will confidently say that his programme of Salesian priestly life revolved around it. He was in an attitude of journey, trying to grow day by day through his prayer, reading, learning and reflection. In his reflections he would often share about the need for wholeness. He saw spiritual growth as an integration process towards wholeness. In this process he was attentive to the various aspects of life, persons and unjust





situations around him. He made efforts to integrate his great intellectual abilities with loving relationship and sensitivity to the needs of others. In this sense, his life and commitment aimed at such an integration of life.

2) A creative achiever

After his Ordination, he showed another remarkable quality. Wherever he was sent, he was responding to the needs of the people in a creative and innovative way. When he was the Director of Don Bosco Anbu Illam, he gave special thrust to advocacy and lobbying that brought our street children work into lime light. He initiated our work in Tiruppur (DB Nest) in favour of the working children of the city. When he was in Vilathikulam he made a detailed socio-economic survey of the area before launching a trust known as VEMBU to empower the less privileged people and the marginalized youngsters of the area. Besides, he started Sarva Samaya Manithaneyya Iyakkam to join hands with people of different faiths to enhance cooperation in our social and humanitarian works. This was one of his efforts at networking, a concept that he deeply believed in.

3) Sensitive to the poor youngsters, their rights and needs

Another quality that stood out in the life and ministry of Fr. Amala Joseph was his special sensitivity to the sad and unjust plight of the poor youngsters. One of the external manifestations of his deep spiritual life was his preferential option for the poor children. In Coimbatore, he had organized a Mega Exhibition cum a Public Meeting on child rights issues in order to create a greater awareness in the city. Besides, he launched Child Line to cater to the children in distress. In Vilathikulam he started a programme known as SIGARAM to cater to child rights and to prevent and rehabilitate child labourers. He wrote a number of





projects to get money for the education of the poor children.

4) A man of dreams and extraordinary determination

Fr. Amala Joseph was a person of extraordinary determination. He would dream of achieving things, which would sound impossible to others. He was never discouraged. He fought his way through to make his dreams a reality. He had to resist criticisms and negative comments, but he was never discouraged. The realization of Tiruppur Don Bosco NEST and VEMBU are just some examples to prove this. His dreams never remained just dreams, he changed them into reality.

5) A great lover of learning

Besides his hard and sacrificing work, he would spend a lot of time in reading, especially at night. He had a wide range of topics in which he was interested. He constantly updated himself through his reading and participation in seminars. He used to take time to select books and equally find time to read them. He combined well an active Salesian life and intellectual updating.

6) A faithful Son of Don Bosco

Above all these, what strikes about Fr. Amala Joseph is the fact that he was a faithful son of Don Bosco. He had imbibed so well some of the important values of Salesian life, like a deep prayer life, love for Don Bosco and our Blessed Mother, working together with other Salesians and lay collaborators. He had integrated beautifully the spiritual and the social dimension of Salesian life and apostolate. He was so charitable, that he did not speak badly of others, their shortcomings and failures. He did not easily hurt people through his words, attitudes and gestures. He manifested a deep attitude of trust in his fellow confreres and lay collaborators.





What others have said about him:

1. Fr. Amalraj Susai SDB, the Provincial of Tiruchy

Fr. Amala Joseph was active, dynamic and creative and a man with a vision. He had so many dreams to be realized in favour of the young, like creating a Salesian Youth Movement in our Province, empowering the marginalized, the street and working children and the rural youngsters. A dream that began to be gradually actualized through his vision and sacrificing work has come to a sudden and abrupt stop. May his life continue to inspire us! May his soul rest in peace!

2. Fr. Maddhichetty Noel SDB, the Provincial of Hyderabad (the brother of the deceased)

Many persons who knew him have shared with me that he never spoke badly of anyone. Neither could they say anything bad about him and his life. He was truly 'Amala' – Pure and guileless person Amala was indeed a Marian soul. He was silent, but a hard worker. His work brought changes in the lives of people in many aspects, for their better living... An ardent reader, with an unassuming intelligence he worked always with a vision. Sometimes he made me and others wonder, 'Is he not chewing off more than he can digest?' But whatever he undertook he did to perfection, spending sleepless nights. He would take any risk for the true well-being of people. He was chip of the old block of my dear Dad. Amala lived the value and the ideals of my Dad. My Dad had a simple motto, 'Dear to God and Men'. Amala was a friend of all and enemy of none! The Vicar General of the diocese of La Crosse, USA told me, 'Fr. Amala was one hundred percent a good priest. ...

3. Fr. Stanislaus Swamikannu SDB, the Provincial of INM

Fr. Amala received so much love and affection from his parents





and his dear ones which he shared with others, especially the young. This formed him to be a good faith-filled religious in his apostolate. Fr. Amala was a very brilliant person. He had a great desire to learn more and he had a passion for reading books. In fact he was a voracious reader. He was also a keen listener. He would spend a lot of time listening to people. This has given him the capacity to have a clear vision and long-term planning for his ministry. Fr. Amala has left one unfulfilled dream. He would often say that we have to 'network' in many fields. He could not yet achieve this great dream in his life time. He must be handing over the dream of 'networking' to us to make it a reality.

4. Fr. Francis Camillus Fernando SDB (former provincial)

I had the privilege of being his first brother Assistant when he joined the aspirantate in 1974. He was agile, active, and full of life and good will. He had a strong faith and real filial devotion to Our Lady. He was very sensitive towards the poor and spoke regularly with the poor, and spoke in favour of them enthusiastically. He was a lover of the poor. May he rest in WHOLENESS.

5. Fr. Arockiaraj Mariasusai SDB

Fr. Amala Joseph has served the province in various capacities, shouldering responsibilities from his young age. He was the Moderator of the Second Provincial Chapter of the Province. His limitless love for the marginalized youth kept him very close to them in the places he served. His death is an irreparable loss to all of us.

6. Fr. Arul Maran SDB

Fr. Amala Joseph was a great man, a unique personality, to say in a word a 'a perfect gentleman and a Salesian priest'. I never heard him





speaking harshly or roughly with anybody, was benevolent in his dealings. Wherever he worked, he instilled community spirit and encouragement among his Salesian Confreres. He was talented and creative as a director of CAUVERI. He dedicated his entire life for the poor children and the youth at risk. he had clear thoughts and futuristic vision and created various movements.

7. Ms. T. Sheela VDB

Fr. Amala Joseph was the Director of Don Bosco Anbu Illam from 1997 to 2000. As I was closely collaborating with him during that time in Anbu Illam work, I am grateful to God for the opportunity to work with him. Within Coimbatore area as far as Pollachi and Mettupalayam, he brought in a 24 hour emergency help-line for children. Every Sunday he celebrated Mass in the Pothanur parish for the English speaking community. He had built up relationship with the authorities and because of his influence his successors are now being invited to represent DB works for the young in the Juvenile Justice system. His presence among us was a great blessing. He has touched our lives and we have grown. May the Lord grant him eternal rest!

Compiled by

Fr. Joseph Puthenkalam, SDB



C
l
o
s
e
t
o
t
h
e
P
o
o
r





Necrology :

Born : 28 November 1962 at Chennai

First Profession : 24 May 1980 at Kotagiri

Ordination : 11 May 1991

Death : 9 June 2007 in U.S.A.