



Newsfine

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PROVINCE OF GUWAHATI

July-August 1998

**Go forth
Bishop Marengo**

**To the well
deserved rest**

**From the life
you lived to
the full**

**The service
you rendered
to the end –**

**Priest of God,
Herald of the
Good News,**

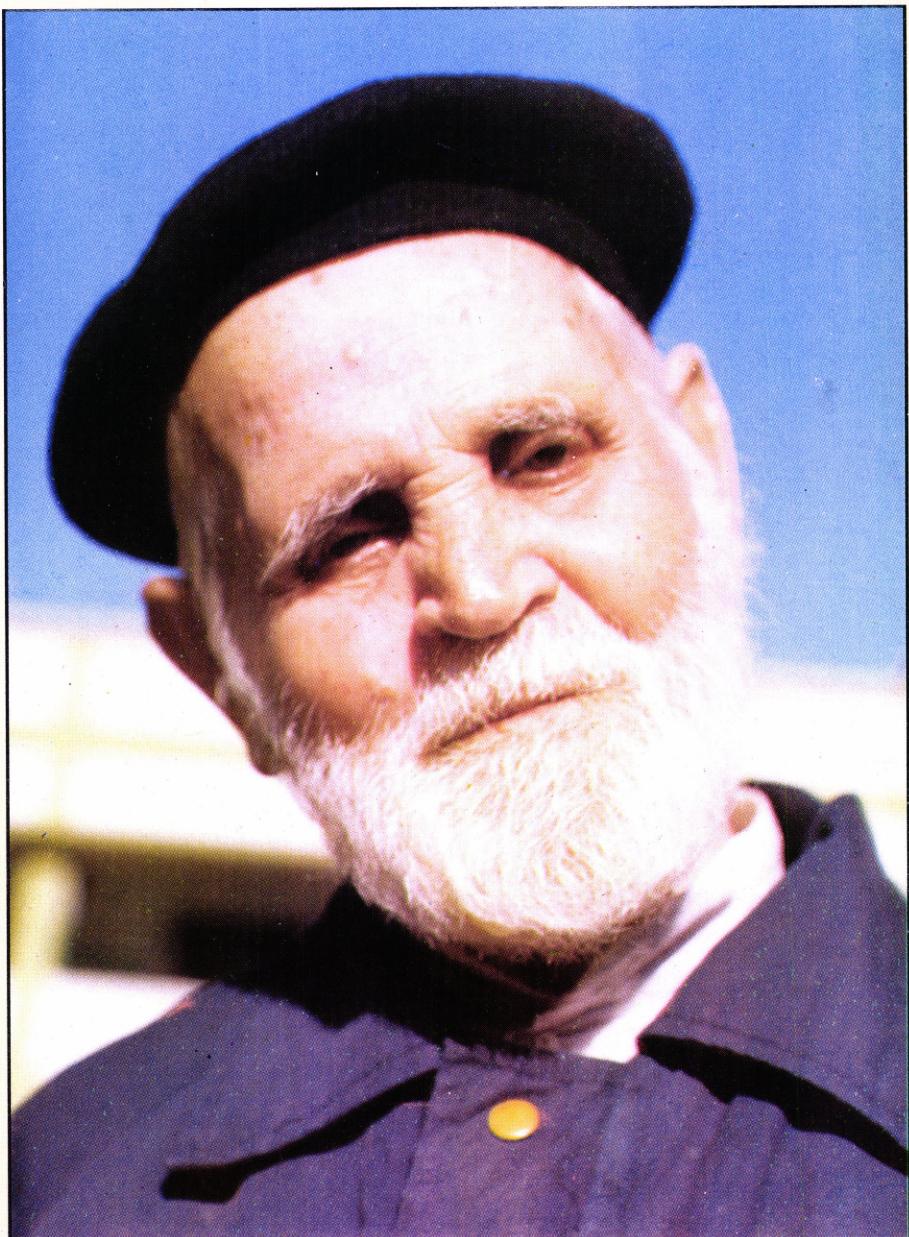
**Bishop of the
Church**

**And friend of
the poor.**

**In your life
we have shared**

**And
have become
richer.**

A DIEU



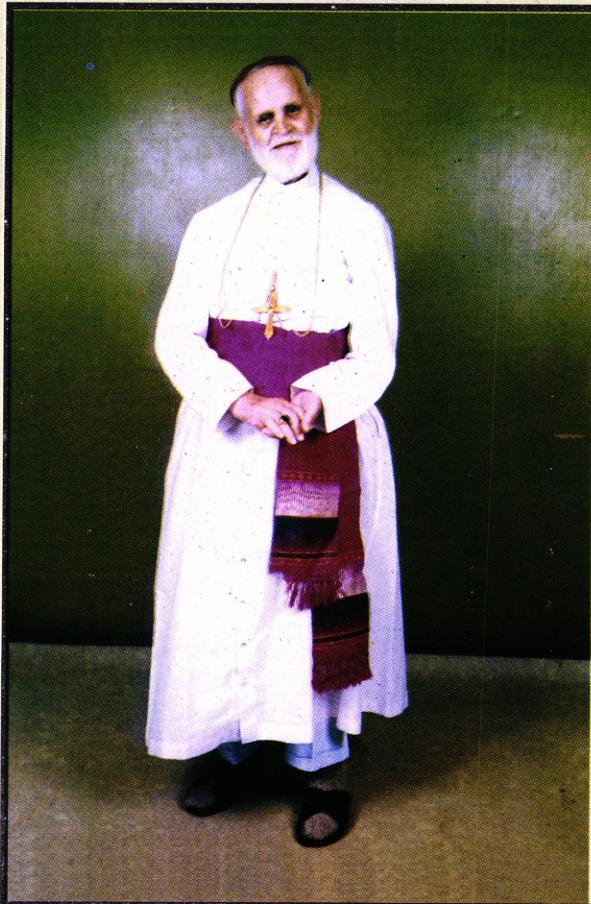
**Rt. Rev. Orestes Marengo S.D.B., D.D
(1906 – 1998)**

ORESTES MARENGO (1906 – 1998)

'Reste!

That's how Mummy and Daddy used to call him. He was the most obedient of the children and had sparkling qualities of goodness. At 13 he left Le Cecche, the hamlet where he was born, to pursue his studies at Valdocco, Turin, with a view to become a Salesian missionary.

During his four years there, Orestes asked three times to be allowed to go to the Salesian missions of Ecuador. But God had other plans for him. When finally he reached Assam (which then meant the whole of today's Northeast India) on December 22, 1923 in the first group of novices from Italy, Orestes began what became for the next 75 years an unparalleled saga of missionary commitment.



He returned to Italy for the first time only in 1951 after 28 years of uninterrupted missionary life. That too at the insistence of his superiors who wanted him to be ordained in Turin as the first Bishop of the newly erected diocese of Dibrugarh.

As Shepherd of the Diocese of Dibrugarh from 1951 to 1964, of Tezpur from 1964 to 1972 and of Tura from 1972 to 1979, and later as a retired bishop from 1979, Bishop Marengo trekked the length

and breadth of Northeast India. His untiring missionary zeal urged him to visit, mostly on foot, more villages than any other missionary in the region. The number of people whose lives he touched is countless. The poor and the sick had a special place in his fatherly heart. He suffered most when he could not help someone in need.

Contd. on page 19

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● **Victor Vas Elected international Vice President of Past Pupils**

Mr. Victor Vas, the President of the Bombay Province Federation of Don Bosco Past Pupils was elected as one of the international vice presidents of the Association. He was elected along with two others as vice president during the international congress of the Don Bosco Past Pupils held in Rome in May.

Mr. Vaz, an engineer at the Goa Medical College, had been the president of the Panjim Unit of the Past Pupils for two terms. He has proved himself a dedicated and hard-working past pupil, devoted to Don Bosco and has espoused the cause of youth development in Goa. He is also a member of the Association for the mentally and physically disabled children.

● **Fr. L.B. Anthony**

Fr. Anthony Lendakadavil (L.B.) left the Province, July 30, to attend a ten month course for religious formators in Kent, England. He will be on the staff of Don Bosco Yuva Prachodini, Bangalore, on his return.

● **RIP**

Bro. Mackley Gomes (2nd year student of philosophy at Salesian College, Dimapur) lost his Father on 20th June. We offer our condolences to Bro. Mackley and his dear ones and pray for the repose of the soul of his Father.

Mr. Paulus Barjo, the brother of Fr. Philip Barjo passed away on August 3. We extend our condolences to Fr. Philip and the family and offer our prayers for the repose of the soul of Paulus.

● **Know Your Bible Published in Hindi and English**

An illustrated chart 30x20" with brief explanations of the Bible has been published by Don Bosco Publications, Guwahati. The chart is printed in four colour and laminated. It is useful for study of Bible. The chart is available in Hindi and English.

● **Book Released in memory of Fr. George Kottuppallil**

Vendrame Publications has brought out a commemorative volume titled *Mission: a Service of Love* (Essays in honour of George Kottuppallil). The book edited by Dr. Francis Fernandez and Dr. Jose Varickasseril, contains theological, missiological, catechetical and historical articles on a number of themes dear to the life and ministry of Fr. George who died a year ago. The Sacred Heart College remembered with gratitude and love Fr. George on his first death anniversary.

● **Vocation Camp at Savio Juniorate**

A twenty-day vocation camp was held at Savio Juniorate, July 3-23. 31 youth participated in the programme. Fr. Philip Barjo was the main animator of the camp. He was assisted by Deacon Marianus and Brothers Benedict and Christopher. The participants are those who had appeared for the Matric exams. And those who finished their P.U. Exams. Since some of them had failed, they had to return. The number of those selected to the aspirantate was thus reduced to 20.

● **Fr. Fantin Remembered**

The Khliehriat Higher Secondary School published a souvenir to honour the memory of Fr. Henry Fantin on 26 June to commemorate the first death anniversary of this great Salesian educator and missionary.

● **Request**

We are preparing the obituary letter of Bro. George Sungmur SDB who passed away on May 7, '98. He was very popular wherever he went, in a very special way among the confreres of the Province. We shall be glad to receive any information on Bro. George, which information, however, should reach us by the end of September 1998.

*Fr. Roland Kharkrang sdb
Rector, Don Bosco Tech. School, Shillong*

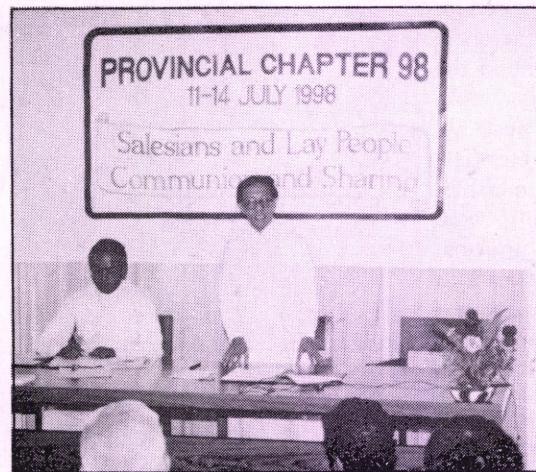
Provincial Chapter '98

The Provincial Chapter 98 on the theme: Salesians and Lay People, Communion and Sharing, was held at Pastoral Centre, Shillong, July 11-14. Prior to this the Chapter members attended a retreat preached by Fr. Francis Alencherry, Provincial of Calcutta.

Archbishop Thomas Menanparampil sdb presided over the inaugural Eucharist on 11th. Inaugurating the Chapter, Fr. Dominic Jala, the Provincial and President of the Chapter spoke of the year dedicated to the Holy Spirit. He spoke of the treasure we have inherited from Don Bosco and the obligation to hand it on to posterity - a mission which calls for close collaboration with the laity.

78 members participated in the Chapter. Besides the 69 SDB representatives, the Salesian Family was represented in some sessions by Sr. Ivy D'Souza FMA, Provincial, Sr. Bridget Jacob, Msmhc, Vicar of the Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians, Sr. Angela Kharkongor VSDB President, Sr. Elsa Joseph, Msmhc Provincial, Tezpur, Sr. Mary Thadavanal Msmhc vice-provincial, Shillong, Mr. Linus Dkhar, President of the Provincial Federation of Salesian Cooperators, Mr. Bonnie Diengdoh, President of the Past Pupils Association of the Guwahati Province. Besides these there were a few other delegates who attended the meeting. They were Mr. Allan Brooks, Guwahati, Mr. Rotneswar Basumatary, Kokrajhar.

Fr. Francis Fernandez, the Chapter Moderator, presented the working document, the Lay Project prepared by the PC 98 Preparatory Committee. The Chapter members were divided into eight commissions and each group was assigned to study portions of the document. Later the groups presented their reports. During the last session on



12 July, the Moderator thanked the representatives of the lay collaborators for their presence and contribution during the discussion on the lay project. Mr. Allan Brooks spoke on behalf of the lay collaborators and thanked the organisers for the opportunity given to them to be present and to take part in the deliberations.

Fr. Provincial presented a report on the state of the province. The Chapter members were given a handout entitled "Observations, Questions and Suggestions for More Effectivity in the Province" In the evening the Chapter members participated in the Birthday celebrations of Fr. Provincial and a dinner at Don Bosco Tech. School, Shillong, hosted by Dr. George Kallungal, a Past Pupil.

Four important points from the report of the Provincial was taken up for discussion in the assembly. These were:

1. The spiritual dimension of our life

For the revitalisation of the spiritual dimension of our life community practices of piety should be regular; retreats, recollections and animation programmes should be taken more seriously. The need of spiritual direction was felt strongly. The Rectors, Parish Priests and those in charge should be spiritual directors having moral ascendancy. We have to learn to pray and to use the Bible for prayer.

2. Working together

To live and to work together, prayer life is essential. The members of communities must sit together to plan, share and to evaluate. The role of each member must be defined. We must be able to accept one another irrespective of the background of each one, learn from and forgive each other and feel that the mission is entrusted to the community.

Deep reflection and concern for the other's good name is required. The provincial stressed the need for communication, sitting together to plan, to formulate SEEP and EEC. He also stressed the need for maintaining chronicles and the written reports of all meetings and decisions taken.

3. Accountability and Transparency

Accountability and transparency are required of all. The Provincial Economer shared some of his experiences and stressed the need for proper accounting and transparency. He urged the need to maintain the minutes books, cash and ledger books and documents related to auditing, submission of tax returns etc. The spirit of community ownership, sharing and accountability were stressed in the interventions. Fr. Provincial stressed the need to own mainly as a community and not to consider what we have as personal money. He urged the need to plan and to budget.

4. Ethnic tension and strife

Ethnic tension and strife has affected almost all parts of the region where we are present. As a province, we must be able to respond to this situation and show everyone that we are working for the welfare of everyone of them and not for any personal motives or profit. But it requires a deep study and reflection. The provincial said that the issue is complex and that studies and analysis are going on. In this situation we have to stand for the gospel values and to use the various means of communication to get our message of tolerance and peaceful co-existence across.

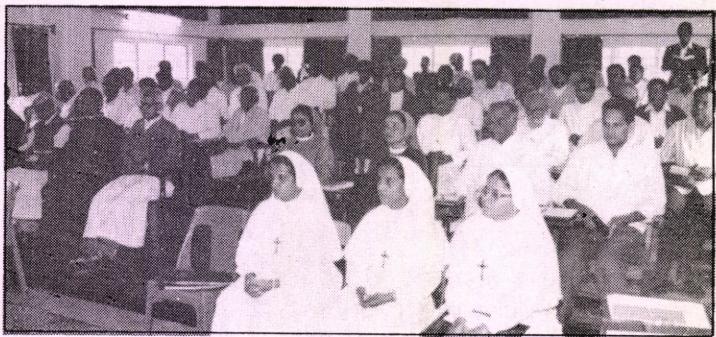
Effectiveness of the Salesian Schools

Fr. V.M. Thomas, Director, DBYES, presented the preliminary findings of the survey conducted by DBYES on the "Effectiveness of Salesian Schools" of the province. The discussion centred around the need for quality education to the poor, and the need to teach catechism in our schools and the need for moral and faith formation alongside the quest

for academic excellence.

Fr. Provincial expressed the hope that the survey report would become a source material for our apostolate.

During the fourth and concluding day, the draft of the Lay Project was presented to the assembly. The Chapter members voted section by section and approved the document. Fr. Provincial, who presided over the Chapter, hoped that this document would be put into practice and bear fruit.



Provincial's Report on the Province

Fr. Provincial presented his report on the state of the province. Recalling the growth of the province during the last 39 years, the Provincial said "we have grown, we have passed through crises and survived them. We have shared joys, victories and successes. We have celebrated memories and hopes. We stand now at the threshold of a new millennium, wondering what we as a body of consecrated people would be even a decade hence."

Summing up the major event of the last three years, he highlighted the theme of the last Provincial Chapter and the General Chapter 24 which studied the theme of Salesians and Lay Collaboration, sharing in the spirit and mission of Don Bosco. He spoke of Platinum Jubilee of Salesian Presence in Northeast India during which the province engaged in sharing and reflection.

Fr. Provincial drew attention to the situation of violence and ethnic clashes which have affected a large section of our people in the region. In spite of these, the church and the congregation have continued to grow. Where merely six religious

congregations worked in the region 75 years ago, now there are 45 religious congregations working in the zone in which our province is situated, he pointed out.

The Provincial's report spoke of vocations, formation of the Salesians and the opportunities and challenges we face today. Among the various apostolic commitments in which the province is engaged, special mention was made of youth ministry, evangelisation and parish ministry, education both in the formal and non-formal sector, vocational training, social development and social communication.

The report highlighted the religious commitment and the exemplary religious witness of many confreres in the province. However, it called for more serious introspection to review the quality of our community living and witness. The majority of our presence consists of very small "communities". This poses a very particular challenge to our life together, Fr. Provincial pointed out. He recalled the report of the Provincial during PC 92 which stressed the need to improve our prayer life. "When we see disinterest taking hold over us, we have reason to doubt the effectiveness and fruitfulness of our Salesian mission work itself" He also stressed the need for giving prominence to the Word of God in our life and ministry.

The report also spoke on the governance of the Province, financial administration, provincial animation and the Salesian Family. "The progress of Salesian mission in our region is due, in a great way, to the involvement of other members of the Salesian Family. We collaborate with Sisters of the Salesian Family in 28 of our mission centres.

Challenges

Fr. Provincial concluded his report with 12 challenges we constantly face - from within and from without.

1. To revitalise the spiritual dimension which seems to be on the wane
2. To overcome difficulties faced in community living and working together



3. To get down more seriously to draw up the Salesian Educative Pastoral Plan
4. To fight weakness in accountability and transparency especially in financial matters
5. To combat poverty of on-going formation at personal and community levels
6. To make our parishes and schools more effective centres of Salesian mission
7. To give meaningful response to situation of tension and ethnic strife
8. To keep ourselves open to ways of working with marginalized youth
9. To remedy lack of confreres proficiency in local languages
10. To meet the demand for clearer criteria for vocation recruitment
11. To promote the organization of past Pupils & Salesian Cooperators
12. To build up together a more living sense of the Salesian Family.

During the concluding session of the Chapter, Fr. Provincial said that the coming together of the Salesians and Salesian Family members in the Chapter, has generated afresh faith in our congregation, in the province and in ourselves. It has given everyone a sense of satisfaction to belong to such a large vibrant family. He exhorted everyone to go forth strengthened to live together and to share together. He thanked the moderator of the Chapter, the pre-capitular Commission members and all those who had contributed to the successful conduct of PC. □

Salesian Apex Body to Study Social Communication Ministry

Boscom-India, the national federation of Salesians in Media and Social Communications along with the Salesian Provincial Conference (SPCI), will meet, August 25-27 at Mumbai to study and plan on social communication in India both as an essential dimension of all administration and also as a chief way of Salesian mission directed primarily to the education and evangelisation of the young.

Mr. Walter Vieira, Chairman of the International Council of Management Consulting Institutes,

will conduct sessions on the pivotal role of communication in management and administration, and the use of communication to facilitate efficiency within the organisation as well as in its networking with the world outside.

The participants, under the leadership of Fr. Antonio Martinelli, Councillor General for Social Communications, will study and discuss social communication ministry of the Salesians in India and evolve plans for the coming three years.

Nongstoin Remembers Babu Mathias

On August 1, we commemorate the first death anniversary of Babu Mathias of St. Peter's Nongstoin. He died in an accident a year ago. Mathias Kharbani hailed from Warjri village under Riango parish. He studied in St. Paul's School, Nongpoh after which he joined the St. Paul's Seminary in Upper Shillong. He left the seminary when he realised that it was not his call to be a priest. He then worked in the Meghalaya Co-operative Bank, Nongstoin. In 1987, he joined the St. Peter's School as a teacher. He was very dedicated to the school as well as to the students, and was loved by all. He was a true Salesian educator and was loved and esteemed by all.

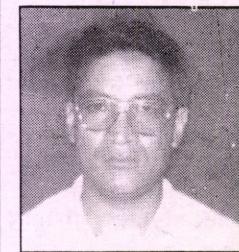
Mathias joined the Salesian Cooperators in 1990. He was very active as a Cooperator. He was elected to the Provincial Council of the Cooperators for a term from 1995-97. In the parish he was an active leader of the Seng Rangbah, the Catholic laymen's association of Nongstoin and served as its secretary. He was also very dedicated as the father of a family. Babu Mathias was also involved in many social service, sports and cultural activities. He actively guided

the Western Youth Welfare Organisation (WYWO). He had completed a meeting of the WYWO and was to proceed to a quiz competition when the Lord called him to himself.

The parish of Nongstoin, the students of St. Peter's and the Salesian Cooperators miss the dynamic leadership of Babu Mathias. As we pray for him on his death anniversary, we pray God that his example may inspire many people to follow his path of dedication and service.

***Sr. Ester Marwein FMA,
Genes Thyrniang (Salesian Cooperator)***

New Director for NERYC



Fr. Patrick Warjiri sdb of Dimapur Province has been appointed Director, North Eastern Regional Youth Commission (NERYC).

Budding Stars, Bright Promises

Northeast Inter- Don Bosco & All Assam DB Open Ranking TT Championship

Young people love challenges and like to be successful in life. Because that's how they have seen the young Martins and Ronaldos of the world make it to the top. Call them success-crazy or whatever. But the young are always there to surprise life with its own possibilities. You never know what they have up their sleeves. It could be sports, games, music or could be anything else. But the fact is that they could be most unpredictable. With their freak looks, fancy clothes and mannerisms typical of their heroes or heroines, you could easily be mistaking them for what they are actually capable of.

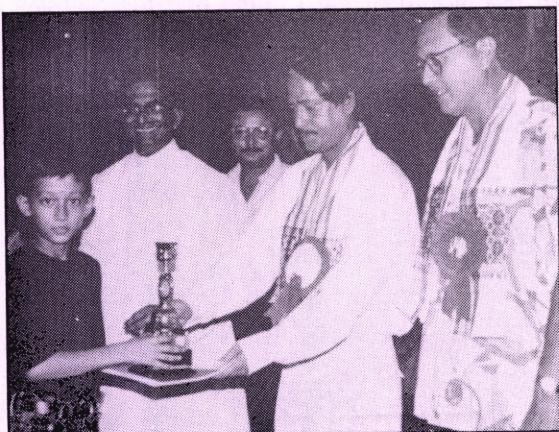
The recently concluded Northeast Inter Don Bosco and All Assam Don Bosco Open Ranking Table Tennis Championships and inter state DB Basketball Tournament was indeed a concrete manifestation of the creative potential of the young. A convincing sign of how talented and potentially rich our young people are. Despite lack of financial support, lack of facilities and the promotion of their cause, the determination and the courage seen on the faces of these growing children to excel in their own sporting field already spoke of success for tomorrow.

Organising a championship involving participants from the different states of the Northeast and all the districts of Assam was not at all easy, admits Fr. C. Kuriala sdb, Chairman of the organising committee. What made the task easy is the realisation that it is for the young, and the collaboration and support of many like-minded people.

Organised by Don Bosco School, Guwahati, under the auspices of Assam Table Tennis Association (ATTA) and Basketball Association of Assam (BAA), the championships was meant to mark the golden jubilee of the school.

Inaugurating the week long tournaments on July 1, Assam Revenue minister Zoi Nath Sharma lauded Don Bosco's commitment to the cause of sports and hoped that the event would generate great interest among the students of the region. The Speaker of the state legislative assembly Ganesh Kutum and

Deputy Commissioner, Kamrup D.N.Saikia praised the efforts of the school in promoting sports in the school and in the state. Assam Food and Civil Supplies minister Digen Bora who gave away the prizes reiterated the state government's commitment to improve the quality of sports in the state. Several past pupils, parents, referees and officials were also honoured at the function.



In the inter-state Don Bosco Basketball tournament, Assam emerged the winners. They beat Meghalaya.

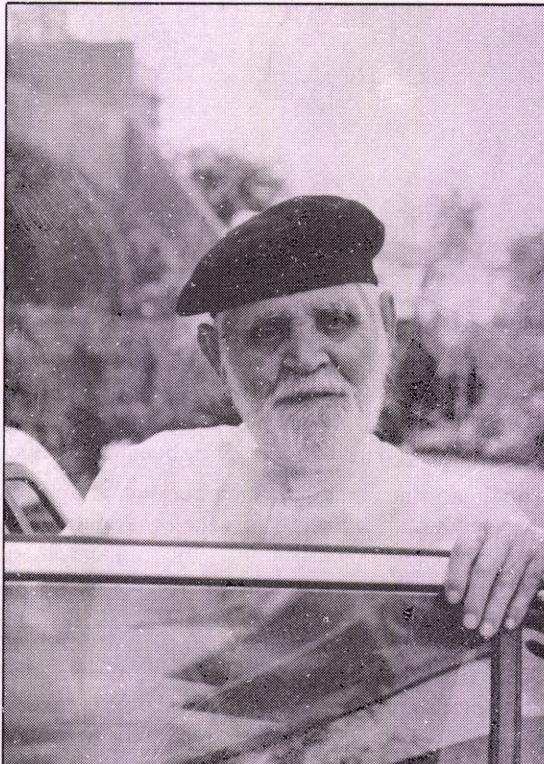
The organising committee members were happy at the successful outcome of the championships involving over 500 participants. The surging spirit of idealism in these young people to try hard and make their dream come true was proof enough that there is hope for Assam as far as sports is concerned. Sure enough, each one who came to the championship had a dream - to become someone great. And with Dickens, we certainly believe 'the bigger the dream, the greater the achievement.' Well, the determination and the dedication on the faces of these children spoke of tomorrow, when they will be our state's pride, our nation's glory. For the rest, it is upto us to lead them and support them in their journey towards excellence.

Johnson Parackal sdb

Rt.Rev. Orestes Marengo SDB,DD (1906-1998)

The End of an Era

When Bishop Orestes Marengo, Northeast India's most outstanding missionary, breathed his last on July 30 with the words "Jesus" on his lips, we were not only bidding farewell to a man who had worked 75 years in India, but also marking the end of an era in the history of the Church and the Salesian congregation in Northeast India.



Bishop Orestes Marengo died at the Holy Cross Hospital, Tura. He was 92. His mortal remains were taken to the Salesian pre-novitiate house, Bosco Mount, his home for the last six years. The community held a brief memorial service and the band led by Bro. Eligius Khain, Bishop Marengo's

faithful guardian for the last 27 years, played the last post. The body was then laid in state at the Sacred Heart Church, Chandmari, Tura. Bishop Marengo was laid to rest at the Cathedral of Mary Help of Christians in Tura, Garo Hills, Meghalaya, August 1.

The funeral was attended by eight bishops of Northeast India, more than 200 priests, hundreds of religious and over three thousand people. Besides the Provincials of Guwahati and Dimapur, several Salesians from the Provinces of Guwahati, Calcutta and Dimapur were present at the funeral.

Condolence messages were offered by Archbishops Joseph Mittathany, Tarcisius Resto, Bishops George Mamalassery, Joseph Aind, Fr. Arthur Marak, Sr. Elizabeth Pakumala, Fr. Sebastian Powath, Rev. Gilbert Marak of the Baptist Church, Mr. John D. Shira on behalf of the laity, Fr. John Mathew sdb, Rector, Bosco Mount, Fr. Andrew Marak, the Vicar General of Tura.

A Missionary in the making

Orestes had strong Salesian links. His mother was a young girl in Turin when Don Bosco died. She was among the huge gathering of people when the saint's body was transferred to Valsalice. Orestes was born in 1906 at Diano d'Alba, Italy. Fr. Falletti, his parish priest, was a great friend and admirer of the Salesians. In 1918 Card. Cagliero visited his village. Orestes studied for three years with the Salesian sisters who ran a school in Diano d'Alba. Sr. Catherine Zannone FMA, who taught him was a missionary in Patagonia, and her missionary experiences kindled in him the desire to go to South America as a missionary.

Orestes entered the Salesian house at Valdocco where he studied for four years during which he

came in contact with three of the successors of Don Bosco: Fr. Albera, Fr. Rinaldi and Fr. Ricoldone and several others who had lived with Don Bosco. Recalling the washing of his feet on a Maundy Thursday by Fr. Rinaldi, Bishop Marengo used to remark: "a saint has kissed my feet."

In 1921 during the solemn send off to the first batch of Salesian missionaries to Assam, Orestes was sitting in the sanctuary as a *piccolo clero*. Little did he know then that he would follow their footsteps soon. He was chosen to be among the second missionary expedition to Assam - seven

Missionary Bishop

In 1951, he was appointed the first Bishop of Dibrugarh, which at that time comprised of a major portion of the state of Assam and the states of Manipur, Nagaland and the present day Arunachal Pradesh. In 1964 he was transferred to the new diocese of Tezpur. In 1971 he was sent to Tura, Garo Hills, to establish the diocese there. Though he retired from active ministry in 1979, Bishop Marengo continued to tour villages, visit people and assist in the pastoral mission of the diocese.



other novices and a cleric under the leadership of Fr. Stephen Ferrando - who set sail for India in 1923. Orestes was only seventeen years old then.

Marengo was ordained a priest in 1932 in Shillong. He spent his early years of priesthood in Don Bosco, Guwahati, Dibrugarh, Our Lady's House, Bandel and in Sonada. He served as Prefect of Studies, Rector, touring missionary and novice master.

Bishop Marengo mastered more than 20 languages of his country of adoption. He had a remarkable memory for people he met and places he visited. During the past 75 years he has been in almost every part of the region. He criss-crossed the Brahmaputra and the hills and valleys of the region hundreds of times, reaching remote villages with the message of the gospel. His life of holiness, simplicity and love for the people won the hearts of all those who came in contact with

him. Together with Fr. Attilio Colussi, he was the first Catholic priest to enter Manipur.

The Last Days

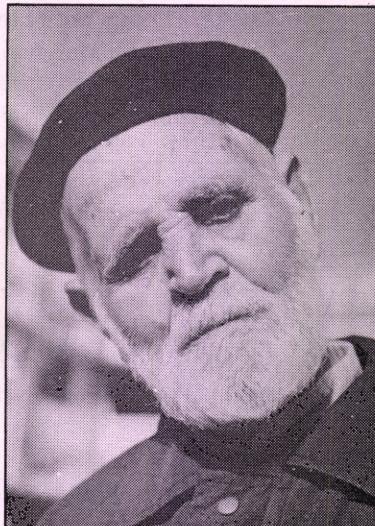
Bishop Marengo spent the last two months of his life in the Holy Cross Hospital. Describing the last two months which Bishop Marengo spent in the hospital, Sr. (Dr.) Immaculate Ullatkulam of the Holy Cross Hospital said, "the Bishop was a good patient and we enjoyed looking after him. He impressed me a lot because of his life of prayer and affection for people," said Sr. Immaculate. Sr. Julia, the superior, said the Bishop was a holy man. He never spoke ill of anyone, was always cheerful and thankful even for the smallest favour he received. On the day he died he was listening to audio cassettes on the Gospel of Luke and told us that he was making his retreat. The name of Jesus was always on his lips.

Dr. Mahesh G. Rangarajan who works in the Holy Cross Hospital said he considered it his luck to have been privileged to look after Bishop Marengo whom he described as an exemplary patient, always calm, quiet and cheerful. "I had glimpses of my own grand father in him. It will take me sometime to get used to his absence," he said.

Unparalleled Record

In the 108- year old history of the Catholic Church in Northeast India, Bishop Orestes Marengo's missionary work has no parallels. His missionary career spans seven decades and a half. He founded three dioceses, established hundreds of churches and institutions, toured almost all parts of the region. His tours often lasted weeks, sometimes a month. As Archbishop Mittathany pointed out, everywhere one went, the people would recall with vivid memories the visit of the Bishop. They used to say: "Bishop

Marengo has been here." Bishop Marengo writes in his memoirs: "my touring meant strenuous marching most of the time under sun or pelting rain. I had to cross impetuous streams in spate, which as I look back, I dared with more rashness than courage." Behind such apparent rashness one could sense the burning zeal of the kind that characterised St. Paul and St. Francis Xavier.



Bishop George Mamalassery of Tura who presided over the funeral liturgy described Marengo as a man of God, an apostle of Christ and one dedicated totally to the mission of the Church. He was loved and accepted everywhere by the clergy and people because of his outstanding qualities of holiness, humility and compassion for the poor. He won the hearts of all the people who knew him through his kindness.

Fr. Dominic Jala, Provincial, speaking at the funeral Mass said: "In Bishop Marengo's death we have lost a leader and friend. His death marks the end of an important foundational period for the Church and the Salesian congregation in Northeast India. Nine years as a novice master and rector of Salesian College, Sonada, solidified in him the heart of a religious, priest and a bishop," he said. His motto "Seek Souls" was akin to Don Bosco's. Bishop Marengo never retired. Even in illness he sang and praised God. He had a rich humour. His death is not so much a loss as a gift to us.

Archbishop Joseph Mittathany of Imphal and President of the regional Bishops' Conference called Bishop Marengo a holy man, a zealous missionary and a great pastor. Rev. Gilbert Marak of the Baptist Church in Garo Hills, spoke of the ecumenical spirit of Bishop Marengo and said he played an important role in bringing out the ecumenical Bible in the Garo language.

With his death the Church in Northeast India marks the end of an era. His most outstanding

qualities were love for the poor and the sick, a man of deep faith and life of prayer, he gave himself up completely to serve the people entrusted to his care, learnt their languages and visited them in their own villages, becoming all things to all people.

The condolence messages frequently recalled the words of the great missionary of the Church, St. Paul.

"I have done my best in the race
I have run the full distance
and I have kept the faith.
And now there is waiting for me
the victory prize
of being put right with God

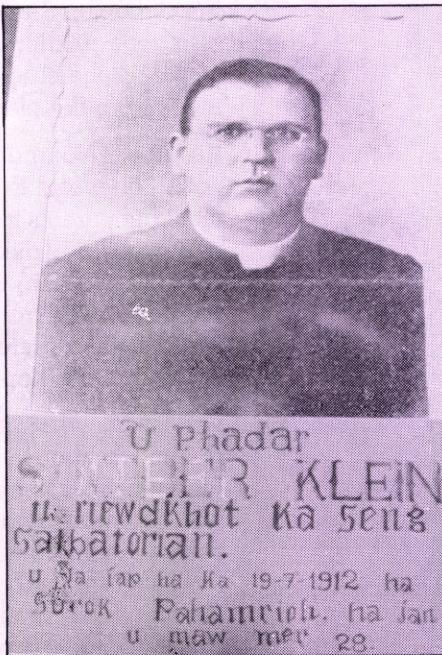
which the Lord,
the righteous Judge will give me
on that day-
and not only to me,
but to all those who wait with love
for Him to appear. (*2 Timothy 7-8*)

These words addressed to another Bishop of the first century Church seemed apt as a final tribute to the oldest and the most outstanding missionary of Northeast India, Orestes Marengo. Though Bishop Marengo has left us for his well deserved rest, the legacy he has left for the Church in Northeast India will continue to inspire and guide us in the years to come.

George Plathottam sdb

Remembering a Missionary

Eighty-six years ago on 19th July, Fr. Suitbert Klein, a German Salvatorian Missionary died on his way to Shillong. People of Pahamrioh, the village before Nongpoh where Fr. Klein died leaning against a rock, remember the incident. They have named the rock *U Maw iap Sahib*, the stone where the *Sahib* died. As we commemorate the 86th death anniversary of Fr. Suitbert Klein, we recall the valiant pioneers whose sacrifice has been a source of blessing for the church in Northeast India.



coming to Assam he spent sometime in Liverpool to learn English and to study the British method of running schools. As soon as he reached Shillong, he went to Bondashill in the Surma valley accompanied by the Mission Superior. There he began to learn the Bengali language. Fr. Klein was also given the charge of organising the whole school system of the Catholic missions in Assam.

The Mission Superior invited Fr. Suitbert, as he did with all other missionaries in the plains, to spend a few weeks during summer in Shillong which is cooler. On 18 July, he left by train from Badarpur for

Fr. Suitbert Klein SDS came to Assam as a missionary in the beginning of 1912. Prior to

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Gauhati. On 19th he continued the journey from there. In order to spare the expense of high -priced tickets in government cars, which in those days used to run between Gauhati and Shillong, the missionaries generally used the cycle. The journey from Shillong to Guwahati could be completed in one day, since the road is always descending to the plains. But two days were needed to go up from Gauhati to Shillong. There is an altitude difference of 1600 meters during the 100 kms. Between the two towns, and the traveller was compelled to push his cycle one third of the distance.



At the 30th milestone at Nongpoh, the midpoint of the road, there was a rest house where one could spend the night and get meals. Fr. Suitbert wanted to reach Nongpoh on 19th July. But he did not reach his

destination. He was found dead a short distance away at the 28th milestone, leaning against a rock. Though he had a strong constitution, he suffered a heart attack which put a sudden end to his life. The great fatigue of the journey and the heat of the day hastened his death. At night his body was brought to Shillong by some of the missionaries and on 20th July, he was buried at the Catholic cemetery at Laitumkhrah. The whole mission and the Christians of Surma valley mourned the sudden death of Fr. Suitbert. He had been in the Assam mission, the land of his dreams, for only six months.

The village where Fr. Suitbert died is called Pahamrioh. People still call the rock against which he leaned and died, *U Maw iap saheb* (the rock where the saheb died). About 30 % of Pahamrioh's 1200 population is Catholic.

Fr. Nicholas Tuligi sdb, the Parish Priest of Nongpoh, erected a cross and put up an inscription on the rock where Fr. Klein died. He also got a painting of Fr. Suitbert which hangs in the village chapel of Pahamrioh, a few feet away from the place where he died.

Ka Kheit Nongrum from the village and a parishioner told Fr. Tuligi that she remembers what her parents told when she was a child that a sahib had died on the stone. Another Catholic woman, Ka Pil Thangkhiew said: "I too have heard from my husband the story that a saheb died there. My husband was a small boy when this happened. He saw the body.

Fr. Tuligi, who has a penchant for history, points out that by a strange coincidence the German title of Fr. Suitbert, **Klein** is also a title common among the Karbi and the Bhoi tribes who inhabit the area. To prove the point, Fr. Tuligi showed me several names ending in Klein in the baptismal register of Nongpoh Parish. Some people think he is a priest of the Khasi tribe because of his title.

George Plathottam sdb

Fr.Victor Hits a Century

At the inauguration of the Provincial Chapter, the moderator announced that one of the participants, namely, Fr. Victor Ampanattuvila, had just hit a century: hundred attacks of malaria. Congratulations to our veteran missionary who remains unbeaten at Garobadha.

Lest you think it is exaggerated, here are the facts. Fr. Victor got the first attack of malaria in 1968. Ever since he has had three or four attacks every year. That makes at least a hundred during the past thirty years. He has become a well known patient in all the hospitals of Guwahati. Now with more hospitals in Tura, he has become a well known patient there too.

As a missiologist, recently my attention was drawn to a new subject, Money and Mission. Now I am thinking of introducing another new subject for our M.Th. Course at Sacred Heart College, Malaria and Mission. They have much in common. Both begin with M. Both have seven letters each. Jesus himself seems to have been aware of this connection. My proof is this. When he sent his apostles on mission, he specifically told them not to take spare tunics or haversacks but he did not forbid mosquito nets or chloroquin tablets.

In fact the other day I met a missionary searching in the market for a new brand of mosquito net, which he said was advertised in the papers. I asked him its name. "Internet", he said. I have not the slightest doubt that however useful the internet may be, mosquito net is even more useful. I am not quite sure if this is the same missionary who recently brought out Boscafe in the place of Nescafe.

However, I am not physically qualified to organize a my M.Th. course. I have never suffered malaria. I shall ask 'Victor Father' to see to that part of the study. Of course, there are many other missionaries too who could help us out. Welcome!

So here begins the course: "Who then can separate us from the love of Christ? Can trouble do it, or hardship or persecution... or malaria? For I am certain that nothing can separate us from his love: neither death, nor life, neither angels nor.... mosquitoes."

Paul Vadakumpadan sdb

Month - long Assamese Course Held

Guwahati: A month-long course in Assamese language was held at the St. Joseph's Church premises from July 1. The course was organised by Fr. Lukose Cheruvalel sdb to enable pastors to learn the most widely spoken language of the region. 37 participants who attended the programme were priests, religious and seminarians.

Archbishop Thomas Menampampil sdb who inaugurated the course said learning a language helps to win the hearts of people. Fr. Lukose invited the participants to put their best into learning the language of the Brahmaputra valley spoken by more than 15 million people.

The course was conducted by a team of seven teachers: Fr. Lukose, Sr. Anna Minj Msmhc, Sr. Lucy Kindo fma, Mr. Gauri Shankar Sharma, Mr. Tankeswar Kalita, Ms. Kabita Medhi, Mr. Jyoti Prakash. Fr. Thomas Pullopallil conducted a session on the Assamese culture and religion and spoke about the Vaishnavite saint of Assam, Srimanta Sankardev, Assam's leading religious and social reformer. Fr. Joy Pallikunnel from Sibsagar shared his experience in evangelising the Assamese community and his efforts at inculcation.

The course was marked by a memorable visit to Bordua in Nagaon District, the birth place of Srimanta Sankardev. The students were able to witness the Borgit and Kirtan, (chanting of Assamese devotional hymns). During the course the students acted out skits in Assamese, learnt hymns and attended prayers and Holy Mass in Assamese.

Bro. Teron Langne sdb

FINANCE AND LAWS....

- Jose Kadaprayil sdb

1. Minimum Rates Of Wages For Teachers Of Private Schools In Assam

Those of you who have been reading this column will be aware of the above topic and its implications for our schools in Assam. The process for the fixation of minimum wages for the above category of teachers began in late 1997 and the final decision has been arrived at recently.

At a meeting of the designated Sub-committee of the Minimum Wages Advisory Board (Govt. of Assam, Labour and Employment Deptt.), held on 8th June 1998, the final rates of minimum wages for teachers in schools run by private organisations have been fixed. The final rates fixed takes into consideration the distinction between Urban and Rural areas of the State, and the rates apply to five categories of employees in the concerned institutions. The final rates that have been fixed are listed below:

Minimum Wage Rates for Employees in Schools / Institutions run by Private Agencies.

	Category of Employee	Urban Area	Rural Area
1.	Graduate Teacher with B.Ed.	Rs. 2,300	Rs. 1,700
2.	Graduate Teacher	Rs. 2,200	Rs. 1,600
3.	Under Graduate Teacher	Rs. 2,000	Rs. 1,400
4.	Office Clerks	Rs. 1,800	Rs. 1,200
5.	Peons/Chowkidars	Rs. 1,300	Rs. 1,100

The new rates are to be implemented from 1st January 1999, and the notification to this effect will have been issued in the Assam Gazette by October 1998.

While fixing the above minimum rates, the sub-committee considered and took into account the following points:

- a) Post Graduate Qualification does not warrant a higher rate of wages for teachers in High Schools.
- b) Payments of arrears of wages and DA are not contemplated.
- c) All Municipal Areas fall under the Urban Area category.
- d) Only the above five categories of employees are considered for the minimum rates.
- e) The above rates could be revised after three or more years.

It is interesting to note that the Government has only fixed the Minimum Rate of Wages; no pay-scale has been issued. And hence it will now enjoin upon various organisations concerned which are running schools and other educational institutions, to draw up adequate pay-scales for the above five categories of employees before implementing the revised minimum rates of wages. The scale of pay should include the salient features of a pay-scale such as the annual increment, the necessary rate of DA to be paid to offset the increase in cost of living, allowances, if any, to be given, the compulsory Provident Fund contributions and deductions etc. If the above pay-scale could be fixed on an All Assam level, lots of unnecessary hassles and problems for the future could be obviated.

2. Permanent Account Numbers And Compulsory Filing Of Income Tax Returns By Certain Categories Of People.

By now I am sure that the authorities concerned are aware of the need for applying for Permanent Account Numbers from the Income Tax Department. Attention is invited to the last issue of Newsline as regards details of the same, the procedure for application in Form 49A etc. The Income Tax Department has since in a separate notification extended the last date for filing of applications in Form 49A for the assessment year 1997-98 to 31st

August 1998. Those who have not made the application yet are strongly advised to take advantage of the extended deadline for submitting the required application in form 49A.

For the information of all, it is clarified that members of religious congregations cannot claim status as individuals before Income Tax law, having to file their return of Income as an individual tax payer. The Income Tax Department has accepted the over-riding claim of the religious congregation to which an individual religious belongs, to any income that may accrue to its members. Hence any income that may accrue to a religious is not income in his hands and has to be made over to the congregation which has accepted tax liability for all incomes of its members. In terms of practical realities, it is clarified that the salaries drawn by religious personnel teaching in Government aided schools and colleges, must be recorded in the accounts of the concerned religious house and reflected in the Income Tax return filed by the society in form 3A. Hence, the question of individual religious who are drawing a salary having to apply for a permanent account number does not arise. Should the Income Tax Department enquire into the matter of salary income drawn by the religious personnel who are not submitting tax returns, the individuals concerned are strongly advised to seek legal clarification from knowledgeable sources.

The Budget for 1998-99 has made further amendments to section 139 of I.T. Act. Under the above section, certain categories of people are compulsorily required to file a return of income even if they did not have taxable income; four categories of people were mentioned earlier, as listed below:

- i) those having a house property, exceeding a specified floor area;
- ii) the owner or lessee of a motor vehicle;
- iii) the subscriber to a telephone;
- iv) one who has incurred expenditure for himself or any other person on travel to any foreign country;

Earlier, those qualifying for any two of the above were compulsorily required to submit a return of income. The new budget has amended the above section and added two more criteria, as under:

- v) the holder of a credit card, not being an add-on of a card, issued by any bank or institution;
- vi) the member of a club where the entrance fee charged is twenty-five thousand rupees or more.

While adding two more criteria, the new budget has reduced the qualifying conditions from two to one... that is, a person satisfying any one of the above six conditions, is now compulsorily required to file a return of income.

What could be of practical application to our situation is condition (iv) above, namely, expenditure on foreign travel. Individuals undertaking foreign travel in any year will now have to submit a return of income in the relevant assessment year.

However, from what was said above about individual religious members of congregations not having to submit a return of income, it necessarily follows that those who undertake foreign travel must have documentary evidence to prove that they are not undertaking the travel at their own instance and paying for the concerned expenses as individuals.

In other words, there must be documentary evidence to prove that the expenses incurred for the foreign travel have been defrayed by the agency or individual sponsoring the travel, or have been paid for by the religious society concerned. For further clarifications and details you are always welcome to contact yours truly.....

(A number of queries have come in and clarifications have been requested from interested circles, dealing mostly with the topic of Provident Fund for employees. It is proposed to deal with these in the next issue of Newsline. You are welcome to send in your topics for discussion to the undersigned or to the Editor.)

A Tribute to Bro. George Sungmuri

Brother George! You have won the race!
You did go through this world
Its lanes bright and dark you did see
The brightness you cherished
The darkness you chastened
So that its' grip may not crush the young.

In your own style, in your own way
You did bring home the truth and only truth.
Truth, Love and Joy were on your face
But it had its deep, unshakable roots in your heart!

I did meet you whenever I came to Shillong.
To see you, to talk with you,
To stroll a distance with you was energising.

You would pierce the inner man like
The sunshine that pricks the woodworms!
A word here, a word there
But all truth when one reflected in quiet
And none would protest the way you did it!

Brother George, I can't meet you in Shillong
When I come next - oh yes, it's a fact.
But then you are so close to our Father in Heaven!
Talk to Him about us too!

Chibai!

*Fr. P.A. James sdb
Saiha, Mizoram*

The Three S's of Don Bosco

Don Bosco gave the following advice to Mgr. Bertazzoni, who was a boy at the Salesian Oratory of Turin. He was consecrated Bishop of Potenza in 1931.

Remember my boy, the three S's of Don Bosco. A pupil of mine ought to be inspired in all he does by three words that begin with the letter S: He ought to be SANTO, STUDIOSO, SALESIANO (Saintly, Studious, Salesian).

SANTO: Practising virtue and doing everything for

the love of God.

STUDIOSO: To make himself capable of doing great things for the glory of God and the salvation of souls;

SALESIANO: In order to speak, animated by the spirit of gentleness, of holy zeal, of respect for all authority and with love for his country.

(Source: Salesian Bulletin vol. XXIII, n. 2, March-April, 1931, p. 64)

Salesians attend course for Psycho- Spiritual Growth

Eighteen Salesians of different age groups from 40 up attended a course on Psycho Spiritual Growth and Transformation conducted by Fr. P.O. Jose of Don Bosco Professional Service, New Delhi. The course was held at Sacred Heart College, Shillong, July 16-25.

The participants were given a process of discovering "who you are" in your own uniqueness as an individual. It demanded passing beyond the superficial level one's own controlled consciousness in order to pass into the inner most core of one's being. The course created a new awareness into the

epigenetic phase of the various human developmental stages of Eric Erickson, with special reference to the Mid-life transition periods of identity, intimacy, generativity and Ego-integrity.

Fr. Jose Parappilly, who is trained in clinical psychology, gave the participants an integrated presentation into the human life, through intensive journal, entrance meditation, interpersonal relationship, conflict resolution and social life.

Fr. T. Edamattathu sdb



The number of languages he learnt or attempted to master so as to come closer to the heart of the people astonishes us - Khasi, Hindi, Assamese, Sadri, Santali, Kharia, Oraon, Munda, Mikir, Bengali, Nepali, Tibetan, Tangkhul, Rongmei, Manipuri, Zoe, Boro, Lotha, Garo, Apathani - all these in addition to his fluency in English and Italian, and a working knowledge of French, Spanish, Latin and Greek, and a smattering of Sikhinese!

Bishop Marengo is undoubtedly a legend of a missionary. A man of deep faith and extraordinary spirit of prayer, to all those who came in contact with him he was a holy bishop. His humility was genuine. He sought no honours. His only desire was to serve the people by offering them the Good News of Jesus Christ and help build as many Catholic communities as possible. The growth and well being of the Church

was uppermost in his heart. In his dealings with people, he made no distinction based on caste, creed or nationality.

With his remarkable ability to listen coupled with a compassionate heart, he was the beloved of all. Affable and smiling, he encouraged

everyone. He overlooked the faults of others and saw goodness where others would fail to find it. Everyone longed for his company as he was accessible to all. He had a sparkling sense of humour, enjoyed jokes and was ever ready to share freely from his own rich stock.

In Bishop Marengo the worldwide missionary Church has a powerful intercessor in heaven, the Salesian Congregation a valiant son of Don Bosco, the Church in Northeast India, an unparalleled example of missionary zeal.

J. Puthenpurakal sdb

(Fr. J. Puthenpurakal's researched work on the life and mission of Bishop Marengo is nearing completion. Those who would like to contribute information, share experiences or impressions about this great Salesian missionary may address them to Fr. J. Puthenpurakal sdb, Sacred Heart College, Shillong 793008 so as to reach him by 15 September. Ed.)

