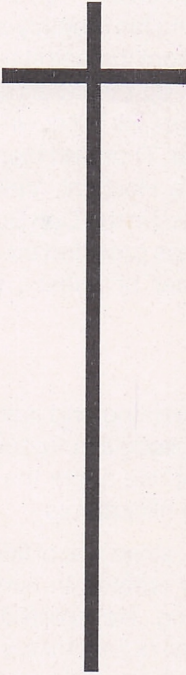


R.I.P



FR. JULIUS MARTIN SDB

Born	:	8th June 1917 (Spain)
Professed	:	31st January 1936
Priesthood	:	31st January 1946
Died	:	2nd October 1986.

REV. FR. JULIUS MARTIN SDB

(1917 - 1986)

"Here is an Israelite, in whom there is no guile"

The early morning hours of Sunday, 29th September, 1986, saw the ever active missionary, Fr. Julius Martin, driving his motorcycle to a substation of Polur for Mass. On his way back from the petrol bunk, as he was entering the parish compound to pick up the catechist to accompany him, a speeding bus knocked him down. He fell down and suffered severe head injuries. He was rushed to St. Thomas Hospital, Chetpet, and later to Christian Medical College Hospital, Vellore, where he died on 2nd October, 1986. He was buried in the Don Bosco Cemetery, Tirupattur, after a solemn requiem mass presided over by the Bishop of Vellore, at which a great number of priests, both Salesians and diocesan, concelebrated.

EARLY LIFE

Fr. Julius Martin was the fourth child of Florentino and Isabella Gomez. He was born on 8th June, 1917, at Pampligegia in Spain. He had three elder brothers and one younger sister. He spent the first fifteen years of his life with his relatives, not with his parents.

He joined the Salesian school at Astudello, Spain, at the age of fifteen. His life at the Salesian school at this early age created in him the interest to work for others, especially the young. He entered the novitiate in 1935 at Villa Moglia, Italy. Young Martin's zeal for serving his fellowmen led him to opt for the missions. He received his cassock from Fr. Zolin SDB in 1936 on the Feast of St. John Bosco.

Immediately after his novitiate, Martin was sent to India. He studied philosophy at Tirupattur from 1936 to 1939. Later he was asked to do practical training at Don Bosco, Vellore, and then at Don Bosco, Matunga, Bombay for two years. After his theological studies at Tirupattur and Bombay (from 1942 to 1946), he had the joy of being ordained a priest on 31st January, 1946.

PRIESTLY MINISTRY

Fr. Martin's first assignment was to be assistant parish priest at Wandiwash in North Arcot district. His parish priest was Fr. Constantine Vendrame SDB. Later, he worked as parish priest and as assistant parish priest in many North Arcot parishes, such as Arni, Pallikonda, Chetput, Tirupattur, Jolarpet, Polur and Tiruvannamalai. He had also

back after three days and returned the plate to him.

Fr. Martin had a special love and concern for poor children. He used to give them whatever he had with him. When he visited the villages, he always talked to the children and spent time with them.

A CHEERFUL PRIEST

Fr. Julius Martin, like a true Salesian, was always happy and cheerful. He found fulfillment in his priestly ministry. His generosity of heart and childlike simplicity kept him always happy in his service. He was usually found in a cheerful mood, humming some Spanish classical melodies.

Seldom did a spiritual retreat conclude without a Spanish song faithfully rendered by Fr. Martin, who always liked to make others happy.

Fr. Martin liked very much a Tamil hymn, 'Sumai Sumanthu Sornthiruppure..' ('Come to me all who are burdened and heavy laden and I'll give you rest). This expressed the secret behind Fr. Martin's cheerfulness and willingness to work in any situation.

AN INDIAN IN LIFE STYLE

In his fifty years of life in India, Fr. Martin lived as a Indian. He loved the Tamil language and he learnt it well. He could speak Tamil fluently and was ready to preach any number of sermons in Tamil without fear. He never hesitated to speak in public meetings when asked.

On one occasion, at a public meeting in Polur, when some educated people were struggling to find the right Tamil word for an English expression, Fr. Martin astonished all those present by coming up with the pure Tamil equivalent.

In his fifty years of missionary work in India, Fr. Martin visited his homeland just seven times - each time for a brief stay; such was his deep love for his adopted homeland South India. Fr. Martin was proud to say often in Tamil: "I'm an Indian Citizen".

When Fr. Martin was transferred from Polur, his superior, Fr. Venantius Villanova said, with tears in his eyes, "I've never seen such a loving, unassuming priest."

Archbishop Michael Augustine of Pondicherry and Cuddalore says: "Simple in style, simple in speech and simple in his living, Fr. Martin was totally a priest with childlike simplicity. We can say of him, 'here is an Israelite, in whom there is no guile.'"

contact with Fr. Martin could say that he was a simple, unassuming and lovable priest. When he was constructing the chapel at Semiamangalam, a substation of Polur, on Saturday evenings he used to say Mass in the evening and stay overnight to offer Mass on Sunday for the people. On those occasions, he used to spread a towel on the wet floor and sleep on it. The dampness of the wet floor affected his jaws and he had to suffer very much on account of it. In his moments of suffering, he said calmly, "I'm a missionary. I must be ready to suffer any inconvenience."

His simplicity and adjustability helped him to work always under any superior without any murmur or dislike. Fr. Martin never sought after big things. He was content with the things given to him. He used to share everything with the people. He was not attached to things. A couple of days before his death, the Salesian sisters had presented him with an expensive piece of material for stitching a cassock for his Golden Jubilee of Profession. He gave it away to a poor boy who approached him for help.

A remarkable quality found in Fr. Martin was that he never liked to speak ill of others, whether they are his own confreres or lay people. In fact, he used to move away from any group that spoke ill of others. He never retaliated when others spoke against him. One of the outstanding positive qualities of Fr. Martin was that he never kept grudge against anyone in his life. Even when he had to face some bitter moments in life, he used to brush them aside by his jovial way of talking.

LOVE FOR THE POOR

In every place where he served, he was fondly remembered by the poor. In his dealings with them, he was invariably kind, even when he had nothing material to give them. He seldom had any money with him, when he did it was sure to go to the poor.

Once, when a poor man came to him for help, Fr. Martin found that he had no money to give him. Immediately, he sold the coconuts from the presbytery and gave the money to the man. Fr. Martin would give even tiny sums like 25 paise or 10 paise in charity and tell the person, "I'm a poor man and I give you what I have."

One day, when Fr. Martin was the Assistant Parish Priest at Chetput, a thief entered the presbytery and tried to attack Fr. Martin. Moved with pity, Fr. Martin gave him a costly silver plate he had and sent him on his way. Touched by Fr. Martin's goodness, the thief came

worked in Goa (Valpoi) and at Don Bosco Shrine, Ayanavaram, Madras. Here it may be mentioned that Fr. Martin served the Sacred Heart Parish, Polur, as its assistant parish priest for a total of sixteen years at different times, during which he opted for Indian Citizenship.

A truly zealous priest, he went to every place of mission with joy, and served the people sincerely. He had a soft corner for the poor of North Arcot, where he spent most of his priestly life. Once, when he was asked to go to Madras to be assistant parish priest at Ayanavaram, he was not very happy to go, not because he didn't like the assignment, but because his heart was in North Arcot. Later, the moment he was told that he could go back to Polur, he got on his motorcycle (despite his age) and drove straight to Polur.

A ZEALOUS PRIEST

Archbishop Michael Augustine of Pondicherry and Cuddalore (former bishop of Vellore) writes: "Fr. Martin was always a very pastoral-minded priest. He would not hesitate to help his neighbouring priest when his assistance was sought to say Mass or hear confession." The Archbishop continues: "When the diocesan clergy were absent from their parishes for retreats, Fr. Martin was ready to go round the neighbouring parishes to celebrate Holy Mass and help the people spiritually."

Mgr. Nambikkairaj, the Vicar General of Vellore Diocese, says that "Fr. Martin was always available. At any time one could approach him. He was always ready to serve. He used to visit the villages regularly, hear confessions and offer masses. He was never tired of visiting villages. He was always ready to hear confessions."

Fr. Martin was never tired of going to say mass at any substation at any time. In his zeal for souls, he used to visit people wherever they were, relating well to all types of people without any discrimination between the rich and the poor. He used to visit all the families in the villages regularly, and he knew people by name. On his visits to the houses of poor people, he would accept willingly and with love any food offered by them.

A SIMPLE, UNASSUMING PRIEST

Fr. Martin was noted for his childlike simplicity. All those who knew him, remember him as an open person, very unassuming and cheerful. He was never after honour and glory. All those who came into

The diocesan priests of Vellore found in Fr. Julius Martin, a loving spiritual father. They sought after him for guidance and for making their confession. Bishop Antonymuthu chose Fr. Julius Martin as his confessor.

CONCLUSION

At Fr. Julius Martin's funeral, priests and people thronged to say goodbye to their Christ-like pastor, who lived for others all through his life, who shared everything he had with others. Fr. Martin lived a good, sincere life as a priest of Christ in the footsteps of his father Don Bosco.

May his soul rest in peace. May his life inspire us to live more fully our lives as dedicated persons.

Fr. S. Maria Arokiam SDB.

FOR NECROLOGY

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