

ADIEU FR. JOHN MED Architect of Salesian India

Fr. John Med, a man with a vision, passes away at 96

Fr. John Med, former Provincial of Chennai, and a pioneer missionary in the hills of Nagaland and Manipur passed away on 25 January at 10.15 in the morning at Don Bosco School, Chingmeirong, Imphal, in the state of Manipur. He was 96.

A man with a vision, Fr. John Med, had been suffering for a long time, and his condition was deteriorating day by day. Although his vital organs were quite intact, he was feeble and weak. In spite of his advanced age, he, was enjoying relatively good health till one and a half years ago, had an accidental fall in the Parish Church of Chingmeirong on 13 July 2009 which resulted in the fracture of his hip bone. Ever since, he had been in and out of hospital several times with several moments of crisis and emergency. Since doctors could not do anything more to revive his health, he was brought back to the community before last Christmas and the best of home-care was arranged for him.

On 18 January, Fr. Med was showing signs of agony. He was given the anointing of the sick by the Rector, Fr. CC Jose. After that his condition became rather stable. On 24

January, morning, he showed signs of extreme weakness. The confreres and some Sisters gathered around him and prayed the Rosary and sang his favourite numbers from his hymn book: All you Hills. The night of 24th was peaceful and he rested well. On 25 January, morning, at around 10.00 am his condition became critical.



The confreres, Sisters and others immediately came around him and the Rector led the prayers for the dying, calling on the name of Jesus, Mary and Joseph asking them to assist him in his last agony. As they whispered the holy name of Jesus into his ears and assured him of their prayers, Fr. John Med passed away peacefully with a simple sigh ending 96 years of grace-filled life.

Born on 13th April, 1916, in the Czech Republic, Fr.

John Med, joined the Novitiate in 1933. In 1935 he was asked to go to India as a missionary though he desired very much to go to China. In 1939, he went to Sacred Heart Th. College Shillong for completion of his priestly studies. Fr Med was ordained priest on 1st July 1943 at the age of 28. In 1948, the whole family of Fr. John Med was put in prison by the Nazi Government. In 1950 he was appointed the first principal of Sacred Heart College, Tirupattur. In 1958, he was

appointed Provincial of the South Province of India consisting of Tamilnadu, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Sri Lanka and Kerala. In 1964 Fr. John Med starts Kristu Jyoti College, Bangalore. In 1964 Fr Med goes to Shillong as Novice Master. In 1970 he became Asst. Parish Priest of Christ King parish, Kohima. In 1971, he became Asst. Parish Priest of Imphal & Incharge of Khoupum. In 1976, he was made Asst. Parish Priest at Punnanamai. In 1977 he took charge of the Parish in Senapati and worked there 14 years. In 1992, he was transferred to Imphal, where he remained till his death.

The Last Journey: The Mortal Remains arrive at Dimapur.

The mortal remains of Fr. John Med, who breathed his last on 25 January at 10 in the Morning, arrived at Salesian College, Dimapur, on 27 January, late evening, accompanied by the Fathers, Sisters, and representatives from the centres where Fr. John Med worked.

It may be noted that on the evening of 25 January, the day of his death, a solemn Eucharist was organized at the Imphal Cathedral which was presided over by Archbishop Emeritus, Joseph Mittathany, his long time friend and collaborator. Around 33 priests concelebrated and around one thousand faithful participated to pray for the departed soul. The Archbishop recalled how Fr. John Med, though old and feeble, was regular for all the functions held in the cathedral. He wanted to be part of everything in the Archdiocese. His

contribution to the growth of Church in Manipur is unforgettable, he noted.

On 26 January, at 7.00 in the Morning, Fr K. S. Joseph, the Administrator of Imphal, and who had seen to all the material needs of Fr. John Med, presided over a mass at the Parish Church, in Chingmeirong, Imphal, in which about 500 faithful of the parish joined. In the evening of the same day, Fr. C.C. Jose, Rector, presided over the Eucharist, joined by other ten priests, including Fr. Mathew Tharakan, his pupil. Fr. Mathew, preached the homily, in which he recalled his 14 years of life spent under the watchful care of Fr. John Med (seven as provincial and seven as Rector). Fr. Med impressed people by his love for all types of people without making any distinctions and divisions.



On 27 January, the final Eucharist at Imphal was held in the morning at the Parish Church, Imphal, presided over by Archbishop Emeritus Joseph Mittathany and the homily was preached by Fr CC Jose, the Rector of Don Bosco School, Chingmeirong. The

parish council, represented by Danny Byrne, the youth by Lawrence, the Vice president, the women by Jennifer, and the catechists represented by Catechist paid glowing tributes to the departed missionary.

At around 10 in the Morning on 27 January, the mortal remains of Fr. John Med, made the final journey to Dimapur stopping at several places where Fr. John Med worked earlier. It first stopped at Senapati, where Fr. John Med, worked for several years as the founder and pastor of the Church at Senapati. It again stopped at Don Bosco School, Maram, where Fr. John Med, served as a Pastor of the Parish. It was the last meeting with his friends and well wishers all along the way. It was a journey of hope and courage to the people whom he had evangelized and served.

Czech Missionary Laid to Rest

The mortal remains of the Czech missionary, Fr. John Med, were interred at Salesian College cemetery, on 28 January.

Most Rev. Dominic Lumon, Archbishop of Imphal who presided over the Requiem Eucharist described Fr. John Med as a committed religious and missionary in his introduction. His departure leaves a great vacuum in the hearts and minds of many, he said. Assisting him were Most Rev. Dominic Jala, Archbishop of Shillong and Rt. Rev. Joseph Aind, Bishop of Dibrugarh. Other import personalities present were Fr. James Poonthuruthil, Salesian Provincial of Dimapur, Fr. Nestor Guria, Vice Provincial, Fr. Jose Palely, Economer, Fr. Carolus N,



Vicar General of Kohima and around 100 priests and an equal number of Sisters, Brothers, and 500 faithful joined the funeral function.

There were also former Provincials Fr. Belarmine Fernando of Chennai, Fr. Vincent Durairaj of Chennai, Fr. Mathew Pulingathil of Guwahati and Dimapur, Fr. M.P. Thomas of Dimapur.

Fr. James Poonthuruthil, during the homily gave a brief life sketch of Fr. John Med and enumerated his qualities of head and heart. He said that Fr. John Med will be remembered as a great Salesian and priest for several reasons: his extraordinary humility, his high level of physical endurance, his moral stamina, his total dedication to Don Bosco's mission in India, his tenacity of purpose, his love for youth, his concern for the poor, his acceptance of all, his capacity for hard work, his unwavering love and devotion to the Church and the Salesian Congregation, his devotion to Mary Help of Christians and to St. John Bosco. He will be remembered for a long time to come for his multi-faceted



personality and the many God given qualities of nature and grace. He had a truly prophetic vision for the Church and the Salesian Congregation. He further described him as a man of extraordinary stamina who could endure any fatigue and difficulty. He had extraordinary capacity for hard work and travel, which was well balanced with his religious duties, he further noted. He was always even tempered, he would hardly lose his emotional equilibrium. His 68 years of priestly was dedicatedly lived. He was every inch and at all times a priest at the service of the Church, the youth and people. He loved his priestly ministry of teaching, sanctifying and praying for the people of God. His Missionary zeal was unfathomable. When it was question of saving souls, Fr. Med spared no energy.

In his 76 years of stay in India led him only once to see his family members in his country. He was also a prolific writer and publisher. He loved music and compiled the popular hymnbook *All You Hills*. His interest in education and literacy is shown by opening

of colleges and institutes of education of various levels and kinds. Fr. Med was an educator par excellence. He knew that the secret of development is education.

A multifaceted personality, Fr. John Med was a great leader who showed the way to growth and development of the Church and the congregation. This was evident from the glowing tributes paid by the representatives.

After the Holy Eucharist, condolence messages were given by the representatives. Fr. C.C Jose, Rector of Don Bosco School, Imphal, spoke on behalf of the community. Archbishop Dominic Jala, conveyed the condolences of the Archdiocese of Shillong. Former Provincial of Chennai, Fr. Vincent Durairaj, conveyed the condolences of all the southern provinces. Representing the first batch of aspirants at Tirupattur, Fr. Mathew Pulingathil, spoke on behalf of his batch and other batches that passed through the hands of Fr. John Med. Vice Chancellor of Don Bosco University, Guwahati, spoke on behalf of the Novices of Fr. Med. Fr. PX Francis and Fr. Nestor Guria, proposed words of thanks to all those who were close to Fr. Med, and looked after him. After the condolence messages, the mortal remains were carried in procession to the Salesian cemetery. The last rites were performed by Fr. James Poonthuruthil, Provincial, at the cemetery, after which the body was lowered into the grave.

Fr. Tarcisius Toppo