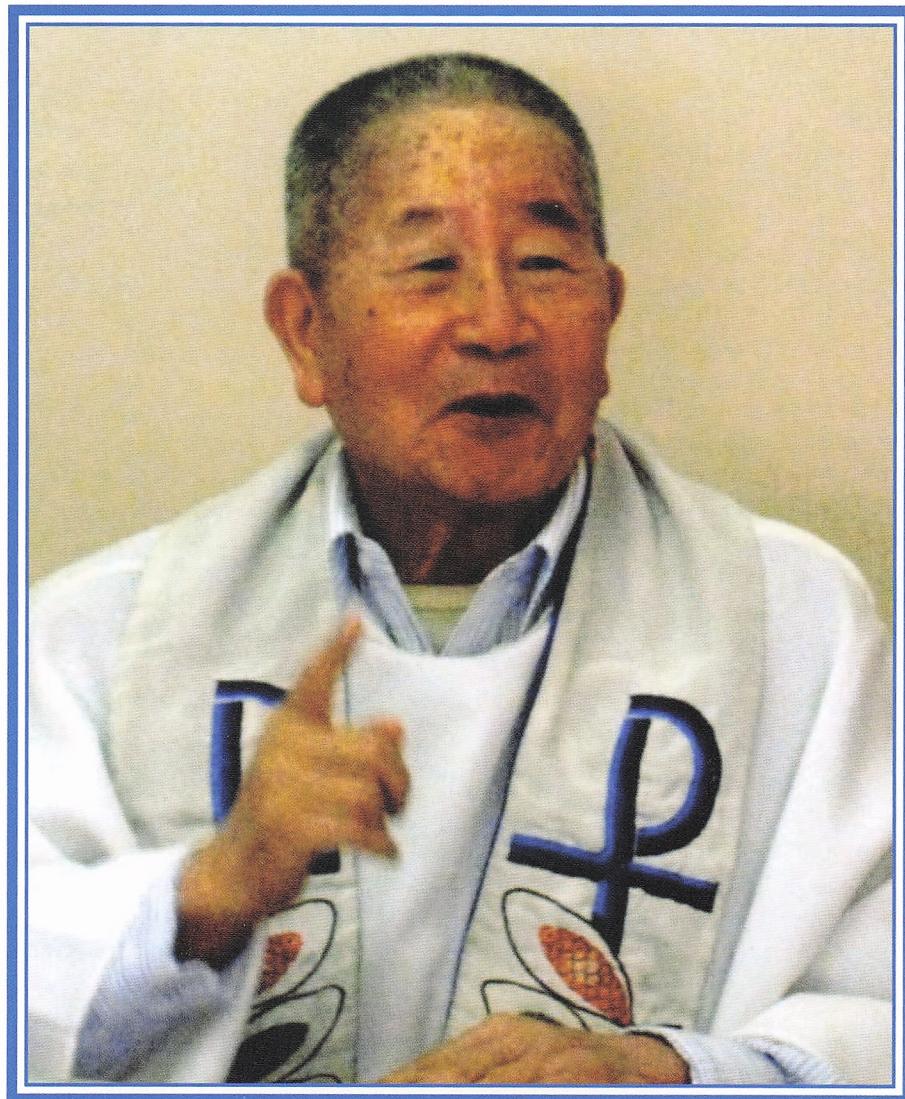


In Loving Memory of

Fr. Matthias Mo SDB



Born

Religious Profession

Ordained a Priest

Entered Eternal Life

16 February 1931 Shanghai, China

16 August 1951 Shaukiwan, China

2 July 1961 Melchet Court, England

5 March 2014 Yennora, Australia

God called Father Matthias Mo to Himself at midday on the 5 March 2014. In his life as a Salesian priest, he had been a teacher, Catechist and Youth Delegate in Hong Kong, Rector in Hong Kong and Macau, US Navy Chaplain at Exmouth in Western Australia, Bursar in Engadine and Brunswick, Assistant Parish Priest in Brunswick, Supply Priest in Western Australia, Chaplain to the Chinese Community in Parramatta and Vice Rector at St Marys, New South Wales.



Fr Mo & Future
Archbishop Savio
Hon Tai, 1950

Fr Matthias was born in Shanghai in 1931 to Hung and Mea and had one brother, Shi-Ching. His family were not traditionally catholic. He was 19 years of age when he was baptised on 18 February 1948. He began his pre-novitiate on 1 September 1949. After his perpetual profession in Hong Kong on 16 August 1957, Matthias went to England for his theology and was ordained a Priest by Most Rev Bishop J. Rudderham D.D. at Melchet Court, England, on 2 July 1961.

He returned to Hong Kong straight after ordination where he assisted with the novices, and became Catechist, Youth Delegate and Rector in Hong Kong and Macau over the next 10 years. In 1970 he returned to England for further studies. He obtained a Masters degree in Anthropology and an Arts degree at a University in Paris.



Fr Matthias in 1961

The Chinese hold a special reverence for the lotus flower. The lotus grows from roots embedded deep in the mud of a pond. Slowly and tentatively the first tiny flowers push through the mud and the plant grows steadily towards the surface of the water, always striving for the light. And there it finally blossoms.



Fr Mo and Taiwanese students in the 1950s

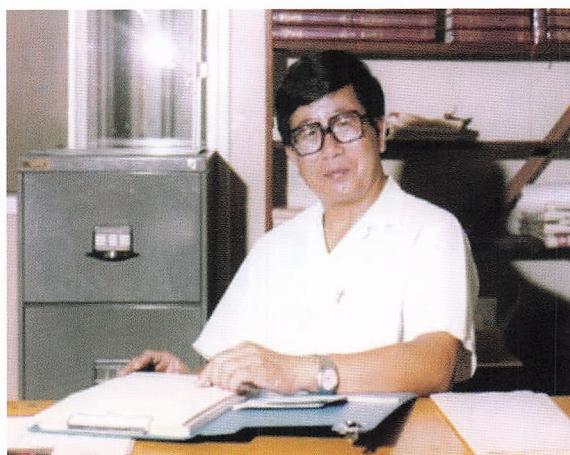
The Chinese see in the lotus flower how something pure and clean and beautiful can issue forth from the darkness and the mire. It is a symbol of how we too can work through our darkest, most painful circumstances to be reborn to something new. Once it breaks the surface, the lotus flower is transformed. It has arisen through the mud to reveal its true identity in the glory of the light.

In the Gospel, Jesus said to his disciples: 'Now the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. I tell you, most solemnly, unless a wheat grain falls on the ground and dies, it remains only a single grain; but if it dies, it yields a rich harvest' (John 12:24).

Both the lotus flower and the broken grain of wheat teach us an important lesson about love: that the risk of continuing on despite the obstacles and of losing some part of ourselves for the sake of someone else is the price of love. Through our efforts to love others as God loves, we experience the transformation of the flower and the grain. In our willingness to "die" to our fears, to put aside our own needs, to let our lives be pulled apart, we discover God's love, and then we can transform our lives and the lives of those around us. On one occasion, Fr Matthias was heard to say 'we are here to prepare people for heaven.'

Fr Matthias was a late convert to the Catholic faith and was baptised during his late adolescence. He had a spiritual awakening, possibly a St Paul experience when he was knocked down when asked by the Risen Lord, 'Saul, Saul why are you persecuting me?' From the moment of his conversion, Fr Matthias lived a life of love for the Lord, and he genuinely loved all whom he met and who came to him.

In 1970, when Fr Mo was a Rector in Macau, he wrote an essay titled, 'Communism and Christianity'. The essay was a window into his understanding about communism and Christianity, and why the communists rejected religion. His search started first with the phenomenon of socialization that is '*the coming into being of human society, it is social evolution, rooted in the social nature of man*'. Fr Matthias penned, '*As in religion obedience is given to men, who represent God, so in the communist system obedience is given to men, who represent other men, who express the conscience of history. The communist principle is that one lives completely for the party, the poor working class, the human race*'. He concluded that the Communist social system was an illusion, a false hope, loveless, power over others. However, he also concluded that it had made an evolutionary contribution to history.



Mt Newman, Western Australia, 1971

On Christianity he wrote that the key was that '*Jesus was God, coming into the world, he communicated his love*'. He understood that brotherly love was the key. He wrote that '*This brotherly love cannot be separated from that of God, and it is a guarantee of God's love. A man who does not love his brother that he can see, cannot love God, whom he has never seen. A man, who is rich and does not help his brother in need, cannot have the love of God in him. Human love is a necessary condition for the permanence of God's love in us.*' He added that '*The Christian principle of love is extremely demanding, which binds us even unto death.*'

He understood the commandment of love to apply not only for the eternal salvation of men and women, but also for their temporal well-being and better development. The Christian is also one who builds up the worldly city. The vocation to love also meant the liberation of man. Fr Matthias recognised that Christian love has the power to inspire us to create a better world in which the full potential of all people can be realized, that is to

experience one's human dignity as being equal, and so be identified as sons and daughters of God. A Christian cannot be happy with just almsgiving; the person has a duty to fight to build a better society and defend the rights of the poor. He viewed Christianity as a big human family, a vast movement of brotherly love. He understood the Christian vocation as the vocation of love. His systematic communal belief enabled him to accept the liturgical reforms of the Second Vatican Council with its strong emphasis on the participation of the laity.



Brunswick, Victoria, 1989 with former Prime Minister,
Bob Hawke

In the gospel Jesus meets Mary who took a whole pint of very expensive perfume made of pure nard, poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped them with her hair. The sweet smell of the perfume filled the whole house. During Fr Matthias' final days at Rosary Village, his many, many friends visited him. He had become a Lotus flower free from the darkness and mud, and was now making his way through the water to Eternal Light. His many visitors were perfume in his room. They loved him deeply, he had saved many souls, and still continued to offer reconciliation and spiritual guidance. He prepared many for heaven according to Don Bosco, with reason, religion and kindness. And his conversations always ended with a good laugh.

On his memorial card it reads: *Whoever serves me, must follow me, and my servant will be with me wherever I am. If anyone serves me, my Father will honour him* (John 12:26).

Fr Matthias, our dear beloved friend and father, we commend you into God's care.

The St Marys Community
August 2015

There now follow excerpts from the Homily of Father John Murphy which was preached at a Mass of Christian Burial in Sunbury:



St Marys, NSW, 2010

It was the mid-seventies and I was doing Theology at Oakleigh. I can remember we had just finished lunch and a little yellow sports car drove into the courtyard. It had the biggest bull-bar on the front for kangaroos or anything else that got in its way.

Out jumped the driver, Matthias, and introduced himself. He had driven all the way from Perth - under obedience. Fr George Williams, our regional superior, had heard a Salesian was working in Western Australia and ordered him to report to the Provincial.

Within minutes this gracious, friendly man produced a bottle of whiskey that was a sure way to make friends. We all had to drink to his safe arrival. I don't think anyone refused. It had cost him \$700.00 - the trip not the whiskey - and he never forgot it. He would often say that George owed him that \$700.00. I don't know whether George would have seen it that way.

Matthias was a free spirit whose heart, mind and soul were too big to be contained by structure. I can remember him telling me of a piece of advice the famous Spanish Artist, Picasso, had given him when he studied under him while in Europe before ordination. In one of his art lessons, Picasso said to Matthias: "Express yourself in your own way". That spoke to the heart of who Matthias was and he hung onto that advice not only for his art but the way he lived his whole life.

"Express yourself in your own way". It liberated him and that freedom was his gift to all. He accepted everyone as they were and allowed them to be who they were. This freedom was the way he lived in the community, it was the way he carried out his mission, it was the image of his God, this lived liberation was his way to holiness, live and let live, rejoice and let it be.

He gave freely, his time, his wisdom, his smile, his knowledge, his art, all that he had and all that he was scattered freely in all directions. He met people where they were and became involved. In her latter years, my mother took to making liqueurs - Cherry Brandy, Advocaat, Cumquat Liqueur. Matthias presented her with a recipe for Green Chartreuse. She tried it and was a pretty good imitation. Matthias became involved and gave. He was a true friend.

I was told recently that as Matthias began to do downhill he became depressed (even his faith in God began to wane). It made me smile inwardly. Why?

As my mother neared her end I sat with her for the whole week. A doctor was called and he informed me there was really nothing wrong with her, she had just made up her mind that now was the time for the better place. As I tried to feed her she would spit out the food - five minutes later she would ask for a drink of water. I can remember the doctor inspecting her ears and she cried in pain and yet he continued. She scratched his arm with all her strength and broke the skin. In shock, I grabbed her hand and stopped her. The doctor went off with blood rolling down his arm. My mother was the gentlest woman imaginable. The nun who was there and had seen many die informed me that often towards the end some people became opposite of what they were in life.

If Matthias became depressed and full of doubt, well he was in good company. Mother Teresa we are told was also filled with doubt as she neared her end. They became the opposite. Even Don Bosco, who assured the young of God's ever forgiving love, doubted his own salvation.

In life Matthias was always happy - the characteristic smile never far away and his faith was deep and abiding. Now as he approached the end, the opposites came to the surface. He was just going through the process we will all need to go through.

God bless you, Matthias.

Matthias, Si Chong, intercede for us all.



Brunswick, Victoria, early 1980s

