



Muttu

Fr. G. IGNATIUS, S.D.B.

Born at Tiruchirapalli, January 1st 1879.

Died, aged 88 at Tirupattur, Nov. 23rd 1967.

PROVINCE OF ST. THOMAS THE APOSTLE, MADRAS, INDIA

SALESIAN HOUSE

Tirupattur, N. Arcot

30th December 1967

My dear Confreres,

This brings to you the sad news of the passing away of Rev. Fr. G. Ignatius at the age of 88. He was known as the Patriarch of this Province and was the first and the oldest Indian Salesian Priest.

Fr. Ignatius was born at Tiruchirapalli in South India on the

1st January, 1879. He had his early education with the Jesuit Fathers at the well-known institution of St. Joseph's and all his relatives thought he would join the Society of Jesus. However, on the advice of his Confessor, himself a Jesuit, he went instead to offer himself to the Salesians who had recently started their work in Tanjore under the able direction of the then Fr. Mederlet. The Salesians had charge of an Industrial School and a Parish and Fr. Ignatius was welcomed as an additional member. For his studies he was sent to Portugal and he was there at the time of the Portuguese Revolution and after that event succeeded in making his way back to India. On his return he worked for some more years in Tanjore and then when the Salesians were called to Madras and Fr. Mederlet was made Archbishop, he accompanied the new Archbishop to Madras and worked for some time in the orphanage of San Thome which in those days was linked with the School of St. Bede's. It was not long before he was transferred to the Parish of St. Francis Xavier's, one of the biggest parishes in the Archdiocese and he remained there for eighteen years. There was plenty of work for the Priests in those days as the Salesians were very few. In addition to his duties of Parish Priest he was the Confessor for several convents and an almost monthly visitor to the Novitiate and Philosophical Studentate of Tirupattur. As he always used to bring some sweets or oranges for the Brothers he was given the title of 'uncle' and he used to look upon the young Brothers as his jewels and pearls.

After serving as Parish Priest in St. Francis Xavier's, he was transferred to other places and did useful work in Palli-conda, in Vellore and other Mission stations. He was ever ready for Confessions and even when over eighty insisted on going to a

distant village about 16 miles away and on another occasion was taken in a horse-drawn cart to a village as he was unable to walk at the time. He was always an example of simplicity and cheerfulness to all. In his last years in particular, when he was no longer able to work, he used to spend long hours in the Church. He had also a great desire to do penance and he was only restrained by the prudent counsel of his Superiors. He was always very anxious to show himself submissive to the guidance of those in authority. As he had no real office in the house, he passed his final years in the house of Tirupattur and so long as he was able he would go for three or four months to the Novitiate at Yercaud for he took pleasure in being with the younger generation. He would entertain them with his stories of the early days of the Mission and also with his songs and hymns in Tamil, Latin and Portuguese.

Though he had been ordained at the comparative late age of 37, he kept himself healthy and strong and so he was able to celebrate his Golden Jubilee of Priesthood on the 31st Dec. 1966. He was ordained by Bishop De Castro of Mylapore. This same bishop had been the one who had spoken with Don Rua and had arranged for the Salesians to start their work in Tanjore. He had seen all the Superior Generals of the Society right from the time of Don Rua and he was looking forward to seeing also Fr. Ricceri when he would be coming to India in February but it was not to be.

One of his greatest achievements had been to bring peace when a big dispute had arisen among the Catholics in his own birthplace in Tiruchirapalli and he would often make reference to this incident.

Another thing he used to boast of was his great devotion to Our Blessed Lady. So long as he had been able he had gone to a famous shrine of Our Lady in South India to renew his consecration to His loving Mother and when that was no longer possible he made up for it by reciting as many rosaries as possible. No one will ever know how many rosaries he did recite and even he himself used to lose count of them.

As he had formerly been a Parish Priest and had been able to handle money, he was happy that for many years he had nothing to do with money and he would often say to those around him that now he really felt himself to be poor and he was very happy about it. He had great sympathy for the poor people and would try to save whatever he could from his own meagre meals to be able to give something to some poor person.

Fr. Ignatius has now left this world and has left behind to the younger generations that follow him a good example of simplicity, humility and piety. We hope that from heaven he will continue to help the Salesian Congregation and send many young souls to this house where he spent his last years. May I recommend his soul and this house to your prayers.

Yours sincerely in Don Bosco,
Fr. J. Murphy,
Rector.
