

Our aim is to
please Him always
in everything we do.
2 Cor 5, 9



Don Bosco Agricultural School,
Sagayathottam,
Takkolam 631151 S. India.

Fr. GEORGE PAJETTA S.D.B.

BORN: JULY 30, 1900

DIED: NOVEMBER 2, 1978

Dear Confreres,

Father George Pajetta, one of our beloved missionaries, passed away on November 2, 1978 at the St. Thomas Hospital, Chettupattu, following a cerebral hemorrhage and partial stroke. He was 78 years old.

His body was taken to Tirupattur, about 160 km away, via Polur, Vellore, and Pallikonda — the places where he spent most of his life as a missionary. Though late in the night, people waited in large numbers at these

places to pay their last respects to this great benefactor of theirs. It was a glorious return to Tirupattur where he started his novitiate in 1933 and where he later worked as parish priest.

He was laid to rest in the Salesian cemetery on November 3, after a solemn funeral Mass in which over 80 priests — Salesian and diocesan — concelebrated with Mons. Anthony Muthu, the Bishop of Vellore, in the presence of a large gathering of faithful.

In his farewell address at the cemetery, Fr. Egidius Sola, a companion of Fr. Pajetta, gave a vivid account of the life of this saintly salesian.

Father George Pajetta was born at Varzo (Novara) Italy on July 30, 1900 as the second of the three sons of Augustus and Pellegrina Pajetta. His elder brother Guido, now 81, writes thus about George's early years; "Though Georgio was younger to me, I considered him my senior because he showed himself very able and experienced in life. He obtained a degree in accountancy by attending classes at night since during the day he had to help dad in his pharmacy. George grew up the hard way, but at the same time in an atmosphere that saw the flowering of his priestly vocation. He was a very active member of the parish Oratory in Turo, Milan. In the Oratory, Don Georgio is remembered even today with great admiration."

George Pajetta was 31 when he sought admission in the Missionary aspirantate of Cardinal Cagliero at Ivrea. Father Egidius Sola who was then at Ivrea tells us how Pajetta got admission: "The rector of the house, Fr. Joseph Corso, was reluctant to take Pajetta. He was afraid Pajetta who came from a well-to-do family and who had a successful career in the world, would not be able to adapt himself to the simple and rigorous lifestyle of the aspirantate. Therefore, he advised him to look for some other religious congregation. George was very sorry.

However, before returning to Milan, he went to Turin to pray in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians. Then he went to receive the blessing of Don Rinaldi, the Rector Major. The brief conversation George had with Don Rinaldi became the decisive factor of his Salesian vocation. Discerning the signs of a good Salesian missionary vocation, Don Rinaldi wrote a short note to the Rector of Ivrea. With this note young George Pajetta went back to Ivrea and

move out of his room, he wanted me to go regularly to him to receive his manifestation. He was a great asset to the house, linking us with God by his incessant prayer. His arrival here changed the spiritual atmosphere of the house.

On his 70th birthday, he wrote in his diary: "Today I am completing 70 years. Comparing my life with that of many others, confreres and others, I must acknowledge that I have done very little as a missionary. The little I have done is the work of the Lord and the good benefactors. I was just a simple instrument in the hands of God. Now I begin the last part of my life. Only the Lord knows how many years more I have in the world. Help me Lord, to spend them in a more holy manner and to be more united with you. Help me to be ready at any moment to answer your call."

Father Pajetta was always proud of his Salesian vocation. Everyone knew him to be an exemplary religious and a great lover of the poor. Though sparing in his personal expenses, he was extremely generous to the poor. The meticulous way he kept his accounts became proverbial in the Province. Once, when he was told that taking advantage of his generosity, some persons were cheating him, he replied: "It is better to be cheated than to cheat. You see we have our meals, but many people have nothing to eat so it is natural for them to behave in such a manner. With an empty stomach, one cannot behave properly."

He was conscious of his limitations, but never unhappy about them. In his spiritual diary we read: "I shall be satisfied with the few talents that the Lord gave me. Only help me, Lord, to make use of them properly. The Lord did not grant me promptness and efficacy of words in proclaiming the word of God that I asked of him. I was not given this grace. Let God's will be done. I want to become a saint without external appearance."

In 1967, when he was asked to be the rector of the Bishop's House, Vellore, he wrote thus: "In spite of my age and poor health, I am asked to be a rector, a responsibility that I never expected considering my very few and insignificant talents, my inability for such a task and the absence of those virtues so necessary for such an office and responsibility. I find it difficult to force myself to accept this decision."

was to this practice;) 3) I propose every day to do some mortification in honour of Our Blessed Mother and to recite the entire rosary.

After completing his philosophical studies at Tirupattur, cleric Pajetta went to the North for Theology, first at Bandel, and later at Shillong. In 1938 he made his perpetual profession. A few days before receiving the subdiaconate he wrote the following prayer in his diary: "I am almost on the eve of my subdiaconate and I rejoice at it, though trembling. One special grace I ask of you, O God, through the most sorrowful passion of your Divine Son, through the sorrows of Mary most holy, the grace of dying before I receive the subdiaconate if in your infinite wisdom you know that I would become either a bad priest or one who is negligent and careless. On the other hand, if it is your will that I become a priest, grant me three gifts: angelic purity, perfect humility and love and diligence in the recitation of the Divine Office."

On October 26, 1940, deacon Pajetta was ordained a priest by Mons. Louis Mathias. After his first Mass he wrote the following resolutions in his diary: 1) I shall celebrate Holy Mass throughout my life with the same fervour, faith, love and care, and, if possible, with greater attention than I had while celebrating my first Mass; 2) I shall start every priestly ministry with a short prayer; 3) In discharging my priestly ministry I shall not spare myself.

In January 1941, Father Pajetta was sent to St. Francis Xavier's parish, Madras, and a year later to Tirupattur. In January 1943, along with the other Italian confreres, he was taken to the Concentration Camp at Deoli and Dehra-Dun. In 1945, he was appointed parish priest of Pallikonda, in Vellore diocese. The next 33 years of his priestly life — excepting a short period in Kotagiri and Yercaud — were spent in this diocese. He was Procurator of the Diocese from 1962 to 1970 and Rector of the Bishop's House from 1967 to 1970.

In 1970, Father Pajetta came to Sagayathottam. His presence here was a source of edification and encouragement to one and all. Though I was 23 years his junior, he would come every month for his manifestation and would kneel down for my blessing. When I told him that there was no need to kneel down, he would reply that I was the Rector and the blessing should be received kneeling down. Towards the end of his life when he was not able to

was admitted as an aspirant. (This note with the autograph of Don Rinaldi was jealously preserved by Father Pajetta and is found among the souvenirs he kept).

According to the testimony of his fellow aspirants, from the very beginning Pajetta showed his determination to overcome all difficulties in pursuing his vocation. His choice to follow Christ as a Salesian was the fruit of personal conviction and this was evident in the way he lived his life.

From the beginning Pajetta kept a diary in which he wrote down whatever he considered important and useful for his spiritual growth. Most of the details in this letter are taken from this spiritual diary.

At the conclusion of the spiritual retreat made hardly a week after entering the aspirantate, he took the following resolution: "I shall make every possible effort to acquire a piety that is deep and authentic. I shall take part in all the activities of the community, convinced of the fact that community life is the best means for observing the rules. I shall avoid every act of disobedience to the rules and thus I shall renounce my own will."

On September 19, 1933, he received his clerical habit from Don Ricaldone. After his death, that cassock was found among his personal belongings with a request that he be buried in it. This request, however, was not fulfilled since the note was discovered only after the funeral.

In November 1933 Pajetta left for India and reached Tirupattur after a brief stop at Bombay. That was the year the Novitiate was started in Tirupattur with Father Joseph Careño as the Master of Novices. Though Pajetta was five years older than his novice master, he was very obedient and open to him. As a novice he was noted for his kindness, charity, patience and spirit of service. At the end of the novitiate, in all humility, Pajetta told his novice master that he was prepared to postpone his profession by some months in order to be even better prepared for it. On January 29, 1935, Pajetta made his first profession. His determination to live his religious life is seen in the resolutions he took on this occasion: 1) I resolve to strive throughout my life to acquire true humility; 2) I propose to read every day some articles of our holy Constitutions. (Going through the pages of his much-used book of Rules, one can see that he has ticked off every third article, showing how faithful he

During the last eight years of his life, he suffered much due to poor health. In June 1970, on leaving the hospital after his first attack of acute arthritis he wrote in his diary: " I leave the hospital today. The doctors have said that my sickness cannot be cured. Dear Lord, you made me share in your priesthood, make me similar to you also in suffering." Though he suffered much due to arthritis, he never complained. After 1970, he had been hospitalised on eight different occasions. His great trust in Our Lord and Our Blessed Lady enabled him to bear patiently the sufferings he had to endure due to this long illness.

One cannot but be struck by the deep spirituality of Father Pajetta. All who knew him were impressed by his serenity, constancy, regularity and cheerfulness. The Testament he wrote before making his first Profession in 1935 shows with what dedication he wanted to spend his religious life: "I wish firmly to die in the bosom of the Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church in which, through the grace of God, I was born, and lived throughout my life. I leave my soul to God by whom and through whom I was created. I leave my heart to my beloved Congregation as a sign of my gratitude. I leave my body to India, my country of adoption and my field of apostolate according to the divine plan."

That was our dear Father Pajetta, a man of God, a holy priest, a zealous missionary, a humble and dedicated Salesian, a loving confrere and a guileless soul as all who knew him would attest. We miss him badly here, but the great example he has left is a constant source of inspiration and encouragement for all of us. May his soul rest in peace.

Yours sincerely in Don Bosco,
Father John Nedumpuram, S. D. B.
Rector

Data for Necrology: Father George Pajetta, born at Varzo (Novara), Italy, on July 30, 1900; died at Chettupattu, North Arcot Dist, India on November 2, 1978; 78 years of age, 43 of Profession, 38 of priesthood. He was Rector for three years.