

# OBITUARY LETTER OF

## FR. ZACHARY PANAMATTAMPARAMPIL SDB



**Born : 12.4.35 Karoor (Palai)—Kerala  
Died : 24.11.85 Tinsukia—Assam**

1 Thes. 4:14: *We believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will take back with Jesus those who have died believing in Him.*

Is 25:8 : *The sovereign Lord will destroy death for ever! He will wipe away the tears from everyone's eyes and take away the disgrace his people have suffered throughout the world. The Lord Himself has spoken.*

Job 19: 25—26 : *But I know there is someone in heaven who will come at last to my defence. Even after my skin is eaten by disease, while still in this body I will see God.*

The Word of God read with faith in the above scriptural passages gives us the meaning of life and death as we try to accept God's will in the quite sudden death of Fr. Zachary Panamattampampil, which occurred on 24.11.85 at Tinsukia.

### **His illness and death :**

Fr. Zachary was going about his work with his usual routine upto November 21st Thursday night. He retired to bed with no external signs of any illness.

On the 22nd Friday morning he rose at the customary hour at 5 a.m., but found that he could not stand or attend to his normal duty of offering the Mass as Chaplain to the Missionary Sisters of Charity. He was feeling giddy, and vomiting. He managed to call a boy and told him to inform the Sisters that he would not be going for the Mass and that they could attend the Mass at the Parish. The Sisters came at once to see him. By 9 a.m. he was shifted to the *St. Luke's Hospital*, Tinsukia, where the Doctor diagnosed nothing serious.

On the 23rd Saturday, at about 10.30 a.m. Fr. Zachary felt something unusual on his right side. He raised his hand and began moving it, but it was a sensation of paralysis that was creeping on him. The doctor was called and he administered an injection which relieved him of the paralysis, and he felt much better. In the mean time confreres were informed and sensing the seriousness of the illness, his own dear ones were contacted and informed of the situation by 3.30 of the same day (23rd). By this time Fr. Zachary's right side was paralysed. It also affected his power of speech. He could not speak at all and when he tried to speak the sound was unintelligible. He made signs to those standing by his side to pray for him, to absolve him and to anoint him. He received the sacraments of reconciliation and anointing of the sick. In the mean time the sickness worsened and father Joseph Variathukalayil (V.M.) rushed to Dibrugarh to seek assistance from the Medical College.

He was blessed and absolved, and as the sickness worsened he was anointed. By midnight on Saturday, it became clear that the doctors could not do anything more for the patient. While Fr. V. M. Joseph the V.G. was away in Dibrugarh to

Fr. Zachary was transferred to St. Paul's Seminary as Counsellor. In 1978 Fr. Zachary was sent to Tangla as Parish Priest, and in 1979 he was made Rector there. In 1981, Fr. Zachary was sent to Tinsukia as Parish Priest of the St. John Bosco Parish there. He worked there till his death.

### **Fr. Zachary, the Person :**

He was a cheerful and sociable person, who brought joy and good cheer into the group of his peers. He was hard working and alert. He always lived an austere and frugal life as regards food, clothing and living conditions. He was concerned about the missions and especially the boys. He kept a boarding house even when it was not easy to find accommodation for them. Fr. Zachary was remarkable for his thriftiness and austerity of life, that he might put everything for the good and at the service of the Church.

As a religious, Fr. Zachary was obedient and willing to accept whatever duties assigned to him by holy obedience. If he remained in places of responsibilities, it was because religious obedience had demanded that of him. He often expressed to me his desire to take on a work under someone else. As a priest, he was very concerned with the all important task of saving souls.

He knew his parish well and toured it assiduously especially when he was younger. He loved the young, and kept a boarding at Tinsukia though the conditions were not what they should have been. He was convinced that by an early training given in the boarding, the young could become leaders of the society.

His memory will remain fresh in our minds for a long time. He had worked in the Archdiocese of Shillong, in the diocese of Dibrugarh, Tezpur, and Kohima-Imphal. He spent his life for the Lord, for the sake of saving souls, and for the growth of the Church.

### **Conclusion :**

"I have fought the good fight to the end, I have run the race to the finish; I have kept the faith; all there is to come

Holy Mass was offered by Bishop Thomas Menampampil, with concelebrating Bishops Abraham of Kohima, Mittathini of Imphal and Kochuparampil of Diphu. Over 65 Priests con-celebrated; and many Religious Sisters and faithful participated in the Mass. Bishop Mathai Kochuparampil gave the homily and spoke about Fr. Zachary whom he as the provincial of Guwahati had known.

At 3.30 p.m. the body was taken to the grave yard and amidst great sadness all round, the mortal remains of Fr. Zachary was interred.

Fr. Zachary's youngest brother and his first cousin were present at the Mass and burial service.

We offer our sincerest condolences to the bereaved family, and we assure them that our sorrow is no less, since he was one of our own since last 34 years.

#### **A short life-sketch :**

Fr. Zachary was born on April 12, 1935 into the respectable family of Panamtaampampil, Palai. He had four brothers and four sisters, of whom one is a Nun. His mother is still living.

Fr. Zachary came to the Salesian Aspirantate of Bandel on February 11th, 1950, and completed his High School studies at Sonada. He entered the Novitiate in 1955 at Yercaud and made his first Religious Profession on 15.8.1956.

He did his philosophical studies at Sonada and did his practical training at Don Bosco, Shillong. After his Theological studies at Sacred Heart College, Mawlai, he was ordained a Priest on April 9th, 1967.

As a priest, his obedience was to *St. Paul's* Seminary, Upper Shillong, as Counsellor of Studies for two years. Then he was transferred to Naharkatia as assistant, and later on he was made Parish Priest there. For a time he was alone when Fr. Thomas Kolacheril was transferred. In 1973 Fr. Zachary was asked to take up the responsibilities of the Holy Cross, Dimapur, when the new diocese of Kohima-Imphal was erected and it became the Bishop's house. From Dimapur,

look for help among the doctors, Fr. Zachary's condition worsened. Fr. Jerome Minj the assistant priest, Fr. T. T. Thomas and Fr. Chacko Kakkanatt and the sisters were keeping watch over Fr. Zachary by his bed. Other fathers visited him and stayed with him trying to be of help to him on those difficult moments. Fr. P. K. George spent his time in the Telephone Exchange to contact all the people concerned. The news reached Dimapur by 7 p.m. on Saturday that Fr. Zachary was seriously ill and sinking. Fr. Scaria, the Vice-Provincial and Fr. V. J. Sebastian the Economer set out immediately for Tinsukia, along with Fr. P. V. Joseph from Bishop's house Dimapur.

In the meantime, Fr. Zachary could not speak at all, and his throat was congested and breathing became difficult. However Fr. Zachary was peaceful, prayerful and calm. Towards 1.30 a.m. 24th November, feast of Christ the King this valiant missionary breathed his last. It was a fitting crown to his life as a missionary to be going to meet Christ the King for the spread of whose kingdom he spent his whole life.

#### **A shock for all :**

When the news of the death of Fr. Zachary splashed across the Province, it was hard for all to believe that Fr. Zachary was no more. I had met Fr. Zachary on Nov. 16th as I made the visitation of the Parish on that day. We had a long pleasant conversation during which he explained to me his work and his future plans for the apostolate. I met him again on the 18th and 19th and I found him in his normal health and on the move. So it was a shock beyond belief when the sad news came over the phone across to North Lakhimpur Parish on 24th at 10.15 a.m. just as I reached there from Harmutty. On reaching Jorhat I learned that Fr. Zachary had died of Cerebral Trombosis.

#### **Burial service :**

Fr. Zachary's body was transferred to the Parish of Tinsukia and a Holy Mass was offered for his soul. In the afternoon, at 3 p.m. another Holy Mass was offered at the Cathedral Church by His Lordship, Bishop Thomas Menampampil, assisted by several concelebrating Priests. At 4 p.m. the body was taken to Dimapur Philosophate. On 25th at 2.30 a Solemn

now is the crown of righteousness preserved for me, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give to me on that day; and not only to me but to all those who have longed for his appearance". (*2 Tim. 4:7-8*).

Fr. Zachary was with us sharing our life and mission and thus was one of us. Now that he has passed away let us not forget him in our prayers. May his soul rest in the peace and joy of the risen Lord.

For this young Province this is the 3rd death in the last three years and the second death in the last three months. It is truly a great loss for the Province. Please pray much for the Province that God may bless us and send many good and generous young men to be Salesians to be signs and bearers of God's love to the young.

Please pray also for me.

Ever yours Affly. in Don Bosco

**Fr. Matthew Pulingathil SDB.**  
*Provincial.*

Dimapur

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