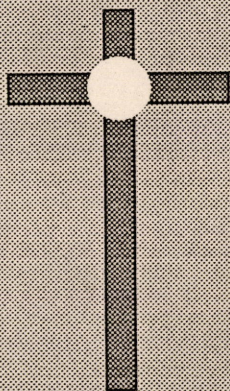


RIP



**REV. Fr.**

**ANTHONY POOTHARA**

**S.D.B.**

DIED ON 1st JUNE 1989







*It needed strong faith to see the will of God in the sudden and tragic death of the dynamic and lovable Fr. Anthony Poothara in a road accident at 4.30 p.m. on 1st June, 1989, at the age of 50.*

## **THE TRAGIC DEATH AND A TEARFUL FAREWELL**

Fr. Anthony was the administrator, chancellor and Vicar General of the Diocese of Tura. He was on his way to Guwahati in connection with some work for the Diocese when the jeep he was travelling in collided with a speeding truck near Mirza, some 30 km. from Guwahati. Fr. Anthony sustained a fatal injury on his throat from the shattered windscreen. The driver of the jeep who was his sole companion was in shock but tried to help. However, in a matter of moments, Fr. Anthony was no more.

The unbelievable news reached the Provincial House by 6.00 p.m. through the police. It was a heart-rending sight that awaited the confreres and sisters who rushed to the site of the accident. The body of Fr. Anthony was in the jeep in a sitting position with a blood-soaked towel covering his face. A crowd of people and some policemen had gathered at the spot. The body was brought to the Provincial House at Guwahati by 11.00 p.m.

On the following day, at 6.00 a.m., there was offered a Requiem Mass for him. At 10.00 a.m. the body was taken to Sacred Heart College, Shillong, where a large number of confreres, priests, religious and other sympathisers came to pay their last homage.

The Funeral Mass at the Cathedral Cemetery of Shillong was presided over by Rt. Rev. George Mamalassery, Bishop of Tura, with a large number of priests concelebrating. A big crowd of religious and laity too was present. The last rites were very moving. Uncontrollable sobs and sighs of grief testified to the deep affection and sincere appreciation everyone had for Fr. Anthony and the loss each one experienced at this death. By his characteristic ways he had won the hearts of all who came into contact with him.



## **YES, LORD !**

Born on 17th November, 1939, Anthony was the 3rd child among five sons and four daughters of Chacko and Mary of Champakolam in Kerala. His father was a businessman. From his mother, a religious woman, he learned about priestly and religious vocation.

After elementary studies in his native village, Anthony came to the Salesian aspirantate at Bandel in June 1954. He was an intelligent and industrious student as evidenced by the fact that he was awarded the Rai Radhikaprasanna Mukherjee Bahadur C.I.E. Gold Medal for the year 1959, for securing the highest number of marks in English among the successful candidates at the School Final examinations of that year.

Having completed his High School studies, Anthony proceeded to the Novitiate at Sunnyside, Shillong and on 13th June 1960, made his religious profession.

His Philosophical studies, along with his university graduation, were completed at Salesian College, Sonada, Darjeeling. In 1963 he began his Practical Training period in Don Bosco, Guwahati, spending three years there.

The four years of Theological studies which he began in 1966 took him to Mawlai in Shillong, to Kottagiri in Tamil Nadu and finally to Bangalore in Karnataka. He was accompanying the theologate that was in search of a permanent abode. His priestly ordination took place on 20th December 1969 at Ernakulam in Kerala.

Fr. Anthony was first appointed as Assistant Parish Priest of Tangla in Assam. Before he could complete the year there, he was brought to the Provincial House at Guwahati in 1970, where he worked as Administrator, Assistant Headmaster and Secretary to the Provincial. From 1975 to 1977 he served the Congregation as Rector of Don Bosco School Maligaon.

In 1977 Fr. Anthony came to Tura in Meghalaya as Rector of the Bishop's House. From then till his untimely death, he served



the Diocese as Procurator from 1982, and from 1983, as Procurator and Vicar General.

## AS WE KNEW HIM

Fr. Anthony was a man who abhorred show of any sort. It could almost be said that he took pains to put on a rough exterior and be thought of as a rather easy going person. But he had a soft corner for those in trouble. For them he did not mind being branded as a leftist, unorthodox, easy going. He could help them without making any fuss. Contrary to what a casual observer might be tempted to note, he was deeply religious-minded and very observant of his religious duties. He was a great devotee of Our Lady. He seems to have died with a Rosary in his hand as the Rosary bits found in the jeep reveal.

Fr. Paul Kuttala, one of his close companions recalls: "Those of us who knew him intimately and had lived with him from our childhood, admire his capacity for work." Fr. V.M. Joseph, another companion of his narrates, "Tony was a person who would never hesitate to do his work - whatever that work may be - to the best of his ability and that too, at the earliest; and he would make sure that it was done well. The output of his work is something to be admired and imitated."

In spite of his work, Fr. Anthony had his list of priorities. "Countless times" recalls Fr. Paul Kuttala, "I have seen him at Guwahati at 8.00 a.m., for which he had to start from Tura not later than 3.00 a.m. and, from what I know of him, he would have finished his Holy Mass and some reading from the Imitation of Christ, besides the Breviary. After completing his works, often he would go back to Tura by 6.00 p.m., reaching there between 11 p.m. and midnight. I also know that the next day he would start as usual at 4 a.m. or so". Fr. V.M. Joseph, another companion of his remarks how Fr. Anthony "would do all the *funny things* - such as the breviary, meditation, celebration of the Holy Eucharist and his regular confession" before starting his work or his journey.



"As a man dedicated to his responsibility, he would not carry his personal problems to his work or to his relationship with others, be it confreres or others, nor would he allow them to affect his work", notes Fr. V.M. Joseph.

Bishop George Mamalassery, with whom he spent the last ten years of his life, attests: "A wise counsellor and a faithful helper. He was my right hand man." A wise counsellor and a faithful helper. That is what he was to many a confrere and to very many priests, sisters and people of the Diocese and elsewhere.

" He worked together for ten years", continues the Bishop, "During which time a lot of work was done for the development of the Diocese. We opened several parishes, convents, dispensaries, schools and boarding houses. Whatever we started was also completed during this period. We were only two in the Bishop's House, assisted by an ever ready Bro. Eligius Khaiñ. So all these demanded a lot of hard and continuous work and strain on the part of both of us. In all these he never failed me. He was always ready to carry out any work I entrusted him with and he carried it out well".

The task he fulfilled and the post he held never went to his head. By worldly ecclesiastical standards, the post Fr. Anthony held as Vicar General, Chancellor, Administrator of a Diocese, are all prestigious posts. Fr. Paul Kuttala noted how in June 1989, when he went to visit the family of Fr. Anthony after his tragic death, he made it a point to search for photos where he would be posing as a Vicar General; some souvenir to make people ask about his whereabouts or posts he occupied; some signs of money having got stuck to his hands. As we all knew him, there was no sign of any. His friends who knew him found the same old house (a little worse for the wear), the same people (none the better from the important post of their son).

"...It was during a journey in fulfilment of his duty that he met with an accident and died. So I must say that he died like a soldier in action, keeping faithfully the post he was given to defend".



## IN CHRISTIAN FAITH

A traveller to Tura will note a bus stop shelter nearing completion at a spot on the left side of the road before reaching Mirza. The bus stop stands as a memory of the man that Fr. Anthony was: Friendly shelter.

May the Lord now grant him the reward reserved for the faithful and wise servant.

At this moment, the assurance bequeathed by Don Bosco to his sons naturally comes to one's mind: "when it happens that a Salesian yields up his life, whilst working for souls, you can say that our Congregation has registered a great triumph and that on it will descend in abundance the blessings of heaven."

**Fr. JOSEPH PUTHENPURACKAL, S.D.B.**

Rector,

Don Bosco, Tura.

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### Necrology

<i>Born</i>	: 17 . 11 . 1939
<i>First Profession</i>	: 13 . 06 . 1960
<i>Ordination</i>	: 20 . 12 . 1969
<i>Died</i>	: 01 . 06 . 1989

RIP



