



**Don Bosco Matriculation School
Casa Major Road
Egmore, Madras - 600008**

Born on 10th June, 1931

Professed on 24th May, 1956

Died on 15th August, 1975

Dear Confreres,

On the 15th August, the Feast of the Assumption of Our Lady, the Lord called

Bro. THOMAS PULINGATHIL S.D.B.

to his eternal reward. While the Salesian province of Madras mourns the loss of a dedicated and enthusiastic confrere in the person of Bro. Thomas, it rejoices in the hope that he will be for us a powerful intercessor in heaven.

Bro. Thomas was born at Ayarkunnam, Kottayam, Kerala, on 10th June, 1931, the third child in a family of five sons and three daughters. His elder brother, also a Salesian, is at present the Provincial of the Province of Gauhati and one of his sisters is a member of the Congregation of the Sisters of Mary Immaculate. After completing his high school studies at St. Mary's, Kidangoor, he was one of the first from his locality to attend St. Thomas College, Palai. Enthusiastic and energetic by nature, he was the accepted leader among his equals. He could muster his friends around him and get things done without making himself bossy or unpleasant. These qualities he readily displayed when he was the president of the Legion of Mary in his parish.

On completing his studies at St. Thomas College, Palai, a number of attractive professions were open to him. He chose the one which was noble and challenging—to serve God and man as a religious Brother. He joined the House of Aspirants at Tirupattur in 1957, and there he was asked to be a tutor to his own junior companions. Already at this time he was appreciated as a teacher and

his pupils affectionately called him, "Sir Thomas". He completed his novitiate at Yercaud and professed the Salesian Constitutions in 1959, thus committing himself totally to the education of youth. Indeed he always felt at home among young people and endeared himself to them wherever he went.

His first obedience was as assistant and teacher at the House of Aspirants, Tirupattur. The following year he was appointed as a teacher at Don Bosco Matriculation School, Egmore. After completing his B. Ed. at Bombay, Bro. Thomas was sent, in 1963, to Don Bosco High School, Irinjalakuda. As a teacher and assistant, he was very much appreciated by his pupils. After six years, he was appointed headmaster in the same school. Under his able guidance that school rose to be one of the finest in the state, academically and otherwise. It was an annual feature to see Bro. Thomas's photograph in the leading newspapers in Kerala together with the state SSLC results, for his school would always be at the top.

More than for these and other achievements, the boys will always remember him as a personal friend who cared for each one of them. The confreres with whom he worked will always esteem him as a model Salesian assistant — he was never tired of being with the boys. Everytime the boys were out for recreation, he was there too. And he never missed an opportunity to whisper a good word to a boy who needed it.

In spite of many obstacles, he served the school for full ten years until 1973 when he returned to Don Bosco, Egmore. In the short time that he spent here, he became very familiar with all the boys under his charge. It is said that within two or three months he knew the names of almost all the students. His understanding and unassuming manners won for him the deep affection and respect of staff, students and parents. They knew that he was ready to make any sacrifice to make himself available to them. After school hours, it was a familiar sight to see Bro. Thomas with the boys on the playgrounds until the very last student went home.

Bro. Thomas was always blessed with good health. The only and final time that he fell ill was on the 3rd June, 1974. There was an apparent recovery and though he was back in the house on 8th June, the 8th July saw him again in the hospital. On the 18th July, Dr. P. J. Alexander, Superintendent of Philipps Hospital, Tambaram, who had been generously taking care of him, took Bro. Thomas to his own residence for personal attention. After consultation, he was taken to the Christian Medical College, Vellore where he was to be operated upon for cancer of the pancreas by the famous Professor and Head of

Surgery unit, Dr. G. Shead. The news shocked everyone. However, it did not break Bro. Thomas's spirits. He remained calm all through.

In December Brother was taken to St. Thomas Hospital, Chetpet, where, under the efficient care of Dr. Aschroff, Brother gradually improved. This brought fresh hopes to everyone. He was able to fulfil his long cherished desire to visit his anxious family. This he did on 25th March together with his brother, Fr. K. M. Mathew. After a few days at home, he wished to be taken to Don Bosco, Irinjalakuda, where he had worked the longest as a Salesian. Here he was under ayurvedic treatment for about a month.

There was a serious relapse on June 1st and on the 2nd he received the Anointing of the Sick. On the same day he was admitted in the Sacred Heart Mission Hospital, Pullur. There he was given the maximum attention and care by the self-sacrificing Good Samaritan Sisters.

On the 15th August, in the early hours of the morning, he once again received the Anointing of the Sick and Papal Blessing from his own brother. Then, after looking around at all present, as if to wish them good bye, he commended his spirit to the Lord. According to his own desire, he was buried at the new House of Aspirants at Mullakara.

Anyone who has known Bro. Thomas will remember him as an outstanding educator. His whole Salesian life was spent as a teacher. He made a lasting impression on all his pupils. Many will recall how he moved and mingled with all, spreading joy everywhere. And when he came to the class, he brought his whole personality into the subject to illustrate a point. The class was for him never an amorphous mass of human beings, but individuals needing personal attention and attention he gave without counting the cost. Fr. George Arimpoor, his one time Rector at Irinjalakuda used to say that Bro. Thomas was "too good" in substituting teachers. It was not rarely, even as headmaster, that he had to teach from the first period to the very last one.

In the many tributes paid to him by his students here at Egmore, soon after his death, there was one constant refrain: "He was patient and understanding". One may ask what made him so. What was the secret force within that made him such an outstanding person? Part of the answer may be found in the absolute dedication he brought into his work. But the more profound reason may be the many hours of prayer and meditation during which he gained that added insight into the working of the human heart, particularly the hearts of the young. It kept him in constant rapport with them and helped him to understand their problems, even before they could bring them to him.

Dr. G. Shead who operated on him writes:

"Bro. Thomas was a model patient and a continual example of fortitude, patience and peace in the midst of his long illness. I am sure that he will be greatly missed in the school. Undoubtedly his character and personality must have been a great influence for good amongst the boys under his charge."

During his illness Bro. Thomas manifested a remarkable attachment and devotion to Bl. Michael Rua, and would exhort us to have devotion to this saintly Salesian. Another characteristic of Bro. Thomas was his joy and optimism. Nothing could disturb his serenity. Even during his last illness, he was always cheerful and very positive. He acknowledged and appreciated every gesture of affection and care shown to him. He never had any complaints whatsoever. On the last two days of his life, when the acute pain could not be relieved even by strong tranquillizers, his confreres saw him in agonising convulsions repeating "God's will be done". In moments of unbearable pain he would always repeat the sweet name of "Jesus".

His joy and optimism were strengthened by his trust in the Lord. He was certain that the Lord would never fail him. His whole life was guided by this belief, and can be seen mirrored in Psalm 23, "The Lord is my shepherd, there is nothing I shall want." This was his favourite prayer which he was fond of reciting throughout his life. Often during his illness he would ask someone attending on him to read it aloud slowly so that he could pray to the Lord, his shepherd, his guide. It was certainly most fitting at the end of such an exemplary Salesian life that he could say with the psalmist,

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever" (Ps. 32, 6).

Dear, Confreres,

May the example of Bro. Thomas inspire us to be better religious. There is no doubt he will help us from above. Let us also have a fraternal remembrance of him in our prayers. May the Lord continue to inspire young men to embrace the vocation of the Salesian Brother.

Please pray for this institution that bears Don Bosco's name and for your affectionate brother in J.C.,

Fr. Stanislaus M. Fernandez, S. D. B.
Rector

Necrology:

Bro. Thomas Pulingathil born at Kottayam, India, on 10-6-1931, died at Irinjalakuda, on 15-8-1975 at the age of 44. He was a Salesian for 16 years.