



February 2

Fr. ALCIDE SEEBER

1909-1996

Birthday:	01-12-1909	Italy
First Profession:	06-01-1927	England
Ordination:	07-07-1935	Italy
Died:	02-02-1996	Madras

EARLY LIFE

Alcide Seeber was born on 1 December 1909, at Castello di Fiume, Italy. There were five children in the family, but three of them died in infancy. In 1914 the Seebers migrated to the United States, but returned to Italy in 1920. Through the help of Father Giacomuzzi, young Alcide went to Valdocco. Regarding his Valdocco-experience, he said in an interview, "I knew very little about the Salesians. But while at Valdocco I came to know a lot of people who had known Don Bosco personally, including Father Francesia and Cardinal John Cagliero". When asked about his initial formation, Fr. Seeber said, "I did my novitiate and my philosophy in England. It was an excellent experience...I perfected my English there, getting rid of my American accent. I came back to Italy for my practical training at Castel Nuovo. I did my theology at Crocetta, Turin. One whom we remember well, is Fr. Vismara. We used to call him 'the presence of God' because if ever we were in the wrong place, he would be there. But we had very good superiors". On completing his theological studies at Crocetta, he was ordained a priest on 7 July 1935 in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians, by His Eminence Cardinal Maurilio Fossati, Archbishop of Turin.

MINISTRY

Although originally he was destined for Japan, he was asked to come to India because of his knowledge of the English language. On reaching India in 1936, Fr. Seeber was posted at Bombay as the Assistant Headmaster and a year later, he was transferred to Madras as Headmaster of St. Gabriel's High School. After school hours he used to reach out to the poor youth of the locality by arranging for them recreational facilities and night study. Thus he laid the foundation of the flourishing Broadway Youth Centre. It was Fr. Francis Schlooz who made it into a full-fledged Oratory.

Fr. Alcide worked as headmaster also at Don Bosco, Vellore and St. Joseph's, Trivandrum. Wherever he worked, the students learnt a lot from their headmaster. At school and during the study hours, he was a strict disciplinarian, but at all other times he was a loving father and a brother. The rapport he was able to build up with the boys,

was certainly the result of his deep understanding of Don Bosco's life and methods. He was an excellent teacher, a good musician and was interested in games, especially football, hockey and ping-pong. In fact, he used to play even as a septuagenarian.

Fr. Seeber served as assistant parish priest at Palmaner and Vepery. At Lourdes Shrine (Perambur), he gathered the funds necessary to construct the upper Church.

CHARACTERISTICS

1. **Availability for the ministry of confession:** While he was staying at Pallikonda he used to cycle 25 km every Saturday to Don Bosco Orphanage, Vellore, to hear the confession of our boys. He was also a much sought-after confessor at St. Bedes, Kotagiri, Adyar (St. Patrick's) and many other places.

2. **Knowledge and love of Don Bosco:** Fr. Seeber used to read the Biographical Memoirs of Don Bosco regularly till he was hospitalized. When asked for a message for young Salesians, he said, "First, let them read the life of Don Bosco and then try to practise his method. Nowadays I don't think they read the life of Don Bosco very much. There is a good book in English, by Fr. Auffrey, a Frenchman...It gives you all the facets of Don Bosco's personality. Secondly, work hard and go in for less amusements like TV, films...instead, be always with the boys and show that you love them by being always very kind. Obedience - work - prayer".

3. **Sense of gratitude:** Father Seeber had a very sensitive and grateful heart, that helped him to remember anyone who did him a good turn. He remembered good Fr. Arduzzo affectionately, for having volunteered to wash his clothes while they were in the concentration camp during the war. He was grateful to Fr. Mannath, the former Rector, Fr. Clive who took care of him, and in a special way, to Mr. Balu, who was, so to say, his 'guardian angel' right from 1984.

4. **Inculturation:** Fr. Seeber was fluent not only in Italian, English, French and German, but he mastered also Tamil and Malayalam, the local languages. Often he used to say that "the best way to love people is to learn their language". He spoke and preached in Tamil eloquently and made it interesting with the use of jokes and stories. It can be said in all truth that he enjoyed his missionary life and had no regrets for having come to India. He used to say, "There is nothing as good as India, there is no place like India".

5. **Spirit of forgiveness:** Fr. Seeber could pray the 'Our Father' with a clear conscience since he always forgave offences and was ever ready to ask pardon of those he offended. Hence we can be sure that the Heavenly Father has forgiven him his trespasses, since Fr. Seeber forgave those who trespassed against him!".