



Don Bosco High School
Pannur 602.108
India

31st January 1974

FR. THOMAS SELVAM

WHO LEFT THIS WORLD ON NOVEMBER 8, 1973 AT THE AGE OF 52

Dear Confreres,

The string of sudden deaths that snatched away energetic salesians and stirred the province in recent years seems still active in our midst. On November 8, 1973 it was Fr. Selvam Thomas who was suddenly summoned to his eternal reward. The mourning province is forced to remember once again that the Lord is near and that we have to keep ourselves in readiness.

Fr. Thomas was born at Poomanur, of pious and God-fearing parents, Selvanayagam and Selvammal. He was sent to Coimbatore for his school studies. On completing high school studies, he joined the minor seminary,



of Coimbatore. He did his philosophical and theological studies at St. Peter's seminary, Bangalore.

Fr. Thomas was ordained on December 19, 1945 by Bishop Prunier. Almost immediately he was appointed assistant parish priest of St. Philomena's Cathedral (now known as St. Joseph's Cathedral). His sermons and apostolate among the downtrodden community of Mysore city made him popular among the people. The bishop realizing his abilities took him as his private secretary, while father was yet doing his college studies at St. Philomena's.

After his graduation, Fr. Thomas was appointed principal of St. Philomena's High School. He worked hard to improve the institution. After two years there he volunteered for the parish of Mandya. It was then that he got a liking for Don Bosco and the Salesian Congregation. At the beginning of 1952 he applied to be admitted into the Salesian aspirantate.

From the very beginning of his stay at Tirupattur he showed his determination to adapt himself to the common life of the religious community.

After a short period of aspirantate he entered the salesian novitiate. During the novitiate he had his moments of difficulties. But Fr. Thomas had made his choice and he remained faithful to it. He was exemplary in piety, his fellow-novices can testify, and exact in his duties.

The novitiate was crowned with the religious profession on May 24, 1954. Soon after that, father did his B.T. while residing at St. Gabriel's High School, Broadway. The following year he was appointed headmaster of Don Bosco High School, Katpadi. After doing M.A. in Economics he joined the staff of Sacred Heart College, Tirupattur. Later on he took his M.A. also in Mathematics from Banaras University.

Once again he went back to Don Bosco High School, Katpadi, as headmaster. It was at this time that he started a youth magazine in Tamil which is still in publication. For his meritorious service in the field of education at Don Bosco, Katpadi, the educational authorities presented him with an award.

From Katpadi Fr. Thomas came to Don Bosco, Pannur, just for one year. Then he was sent to start Don Bosco high School at Madhavaram. It was



a challenge and he braced up to it. He really worked hard to lay a strong foundation for the new school.

From Madhavaram Fr. Thomas was sent to Don Bosco, Cochin. He was there as rector for three years.

His next assignment was at Egmore as rector and principal of Don Bosco Matriculation School. Two years later he went back to Katpadi for one year and then proceeded to the aspirantate at Tirupattur, as confessor and teacher for two years. He admitted that he was very happy there to work among the young aspirants.

The last five months of his life father spent at Don Bosco, Pannur, as confessor and teacher. He was also in charge of the two neighbouring villages of Anthonyarpuram and Susaiapparpuram. He had many plans for the economic uplift of those villages. But before much of his dreams could be realised, the Lord willed to take him to Himself.

Fr. Thomas made his spiritual retreat at Kotagiri towards the end of September. Then he preached two retreats in Bangalore and at Keelachery. He looked rather tired at the end of the second retreat, but went on with his duties as usual.

On November 6 he paid a quick visit to Madras. The following day he was back at the house, quite tired but contented. However, he complained of a pain on the right side of the neck and guessed it might be due to cold as he had been driving in the cold wind.

The following morning father was not up for Mass but came for the meditation. After breakfast he worked in the garden with the boys. He took four periods of class from 9.30 a.m. to 1.00 p.m. When he came for lunch he still complained of the pain. Fr. Rector hurried to the infirmary to get him some ointment. After a while Fr. Headmaster joined Fr. Thomas in the refectory. They chatted for some time. Once again Fr. Thomas complained about the pain. At a certain moment as he was about to have a spoonful of soup, he slumped forward with a painful cry. The headmaster rushed to help him and found him foaming at the mouth. Immediately he absolved him and sent for Fr. Rector. The pulse was rather weak. While



the headmaster rushed for the doctor, Fr. Rector administered sacramental absolution (the second time) and the Anointing of the Sick. The doctor arrived in about fifteen minutes but he could only pronounce Fr. Thomas dead.

His body was kept in the chapel and people began to pour in to pay their final homage. Several of the poor people, for whom father had worked very hard, kept vigil throughout the night.

In the morning of November 9 the archbishop of Madras and Mylapore said Mass for the repose of Fr. Thomas. Towards 4 p.m. Rev. Fr. Provincial with fifty-two priests concelebrated the funeral Mass. Members of the provincial council, over hundred salesians, salesian sisters, religious of various congregations and a large throng of people took part in the Mass and the funeral rites.

Fr. Selvam Thomas was intelligent and hardworking. It was his determination that helped him become a salesian. His punctuality for religious practices was admirable. As a teacher he was demanding but his efforts were appreciated by the pupils. His spirit of obedience made him face difficulties with equanimity. He loved preaching the Word of God and he did it with such care that people truly appreciated his sermons.

Dear confreres, the Church and the congregation need salesians who will not spare themselves to bring Christ to the world and the world to Christ. Following the example of Fr. Thomas let us be faithful to our high calling as the hands, lips and mind of Christ in the world. May Mary Help of Christians inspire many young people to commit themselves to this great ideal.

I take this opportunity to thank all the salesians for the sympathy and understanding shown us on this occasion. Please continue to pray for Fr. Thomas and also for this house where many boys are trying to follow his ideal.

Yours very affectionately in Don Bosco,
Fr. SEBASTIAN VAYALIPARA,
Rector.

Fr. Thomas Selvam, born at Poomanur (India) on 4.7.1920; died at Pannur (India) on 8.11.1973, at the age of 53. He was a salesian for 19 years, priest for 27 and a rector for 5

