

Newsline

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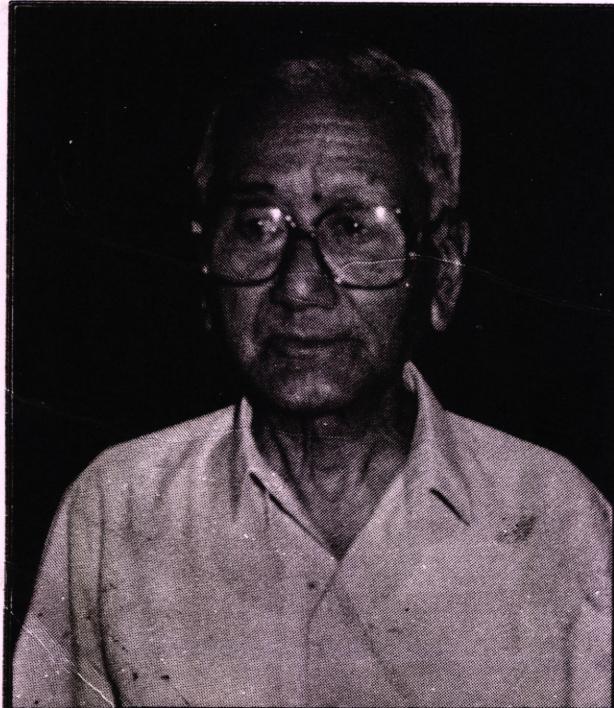
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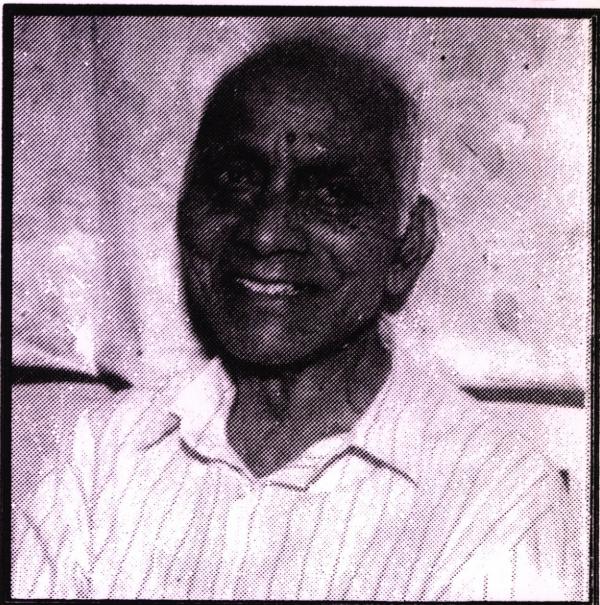
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Bro. Ignatius Sungmur SDB



Fr. Louis Kerketta SDB



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NEWSLINE

Sept. - Oct. 1998

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Adieu Brother Ignatius

Bro. Ignatius Sungmur is no more. He died just as he lived, fully committed to God and to his people. The serenity and peace that was so characteristic of his life was radiated on his face even as he lay in state as hundreds of his pupils, friends confrères came to bid him adieu.

Bro. Ignatius' return to the Lord came quite suddenly in the evening of September 19. At about 6 p.m. he complained of weakness and pain in the chest. He was sweating profusely. He had suffered a massive heart attack. Though rushed to the Wintrobe Hospital adjacent to the community, he passed away at 6.30 p.m.

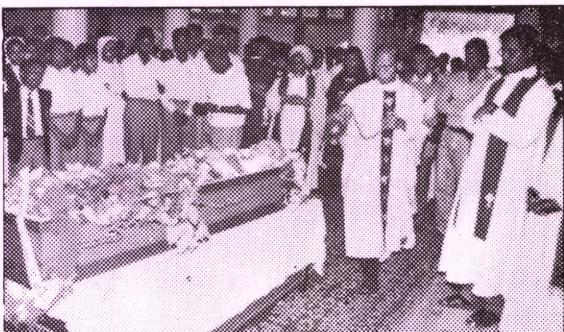
His mortal remains were laid in state at the Grotto Chapel throughout September 20. On September 21 morning there was a brief prayer service and farewell to Bro. Ignatius at Don Bosco School. The staff and students, past pupils and some parents attended the tearful farewell ceremony interspersed with Bhajans, prayers, offering of wreaths and farewell



addresses. Some young Bosconians had on their own prepared letters to Bro. Ignatius which they placed in the coffin as the body was

being taken to Shillong for the funeral. The funeral rites were held at the Salesian cemetery at Shillong after a requiem Mass.

Bro. Ignatius was born on August 17, 1921 at Singamari, North Point, Darjeeling. His



father was Joseph Giri. His mother, Phukrit Lepcha, was baptised as Anna Maria at her deathbed. Ignatius was then six years old. Ignatius was baptised by Fr. Fantin Peal S.J. at St. Joseph's Chapel, North Point. Ignatius had his early education at St. Michael's Primary School, Darjeeling, and later on at St. Xavier's M.E. School, and at St. Robert's High School in Darjeeling.

Ignatius became a teacher as a young man. He taught in his old primary school and middle school before joining the Salesians. In 1940 he went to the Salesian House at Bandel and after two years of aspirantate, he received the religious habit on 29th January, 1942. He made his novitiate in Tirupattur, Tamil Nadu, under Fr. Careño. After his philosophy studies in Tirupattur, Ignatius was appointed to Don Bosco, Shillong, for his practical training. Although his desire was to become a priest and he joined the Sacred Heart Theological College, Shillong, in

1947, due to poor health, he could not pursue his studies and decided to continue his life as a Salesian brother.

Brother Ignatius worked in a number of Salesian institutions like Don Bosco, Liliuh, (1949-1950) Naharkatia (1951-1955), Damra (1956-1957), Tezpur (1957-1960). From 1961 till the end of his life Bro. Ignatius worked in Don Bosco School, Guwahati. During the last 37 years he has educated thousands of Bosconians. He was loved and respected by his present and past pupils. Don Bosco School, Guwahati, had become for him his home, his mission field for the past years. He has been a dedicated educator and guide to generations of Bosconians.

Bro. Ignatius is best remembered for what he was during the almost four decades he spent in Guwahati. He saw himself as a Salesian teacher and assistant. His life was to be with boys as a friend, a mentor, an educator. Many of his students remember him for what may be called the 'stamp ministry' and the distribution of picture cards to his students. A holy picture, or a medal in the hand of his students was like a 'word in the ear' for him, to motivate them and to inspire these young minds. He did this regularly, generously and selflessly.

He faithfully followed Don Bosco's precepts "Love the young, and let them know that they are loved", and "to love what the young loves." Bro. Ignatius knew and understood this. He did just that and was able to win their love and confidence. He loved sports. His age or ailments did not diminish interest in sports and games. He would keenly watch the games and follow up the latest scores so that he could

share them with his pupils. For several years he personally distributed the cricket balls and bats to the students, followed up the sports activities and enthused them with his interest and knowledge of the various sports and games. He knew the rules and regulations of almost all games. He encouraged the students to take active part in games and sports.



Bro. Ignatius was *gentleness* personified. He was sensitive and caring and wanted his students to cultivate the same in their lives. Through his classes, skits and songs, he taught his students to love one

another and respect others. In his death, we have lost a gentle and yet powerful sign of the Salesian presence and witness among the students of Don Bosco School, Guwahati.

Though somewhat reserved, he was a gentleman to the core. He was sensitive to persons and appreciated any good done to him. He often lamented the fact that many traditional values in community relationships did not seem to be treasured so strongly any more. He was very regular at community practices of piety. In the community, he used to lead the prayers and the Rosary daily.

In work, he was a responsible person. At seventy seven he did not retire from teaching. He prepared his lessons meticulously, corrected the home works and examination papers with utmost care. In fact till a few hours before his death, he was correcting the answer sheets of one of the recent tests.

Don Bosco School, Guwahati, which this year celebrates the golden jubilee of its foundation has lost one of the valuable Salesians who had

served the institution for the major part of its history. The Salesian congregation will miss a Salesian who symbolised fidelity and stability.. He has been an inspiration and support for all these past years. With his demise, we have lost a great Salesian educator, a scholar and a good friend. Though Bro. Ignatius has left for his heavenly reward, he will live on in the memories of his students, past pupils, friends and Salesians.

Bro. Ignatius,
Your gentle smile
Your gift of giving
Your love for us all
Will long remain in our hearts.
Remember us Brother
As you smile on us from on high
Pray for us, that we too may reach heaven
Where you are united with God in joy.

Fr. Johnson Parackal sdb

A Tribute to Brother Ignatius Sungmur

If the Don Bosco School we know is a noble institution, then nobler still was its shining star: the Lovable Bro. Ignatius Sungmur. For nearly four decades did this frail human frame pace the corridors of this school, his home, showering the radiance of his immense knowledge to those around him. An individual, a gentleman to the core, he possessed the qualities and culture that come from the topmost drawer of a human life. A Salesian to the highest pedigree, a teacher and preacher, a mentor and a guide, he was the Almighty's instrument sent to earth to spread the music of love, learning and life.

When shall we find a heart so gentle, a mind so steady, and a soul so noble guiding the destiny of generations of the morrow? When shall we find a life of such enthusiasm walking straight into its goal - the goal of human well-being, even against the obstructing wind with the calmness and the confidence of one who knows his mission in life?

That such a soul should depart from us so suddenly may appear to be difficult for us to accept. But it was the will of God that such a noble being should find its heavenly abode before the evils and impurities could soil his soul.

The old order changeth yielding place to new
And God fulfills himself in many ways
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.

Our loving brother, as you enter the abode of God, we pray that you shower the radiance of your virtuous life on us below and help us to emulate the rich legacy you have left behind. We, on our part shall remember you for many a day to come. We pray the Almighty to give you your rightful place for the mission you accomplished as your first duty in this world: the well being of humankind.

*R.P. Barooah
Former teacher,
Don Bosco School, Guwahati*

Petrol for the Bishop

Bro. Sebastian Paul SDB was Supervisor of the Military Engineering Service (MES) in Mawlai during the Furlough of the American soldiers in Mawlai.

When the U.S. Army landed in Mawlai, Shillong, it was called the "Furlough" camp for the U.S. Soldiers. It was managed by the American Red Cross ladies. They wanted everything nice, neat and orderly! According to the agreement, the Garrison Engineer had to provide whatever the U.S. Army needed. The ARC ladies wanted six empty petrol barrels for dumping garbage from the kitchen.

The U.S. Officer (Lt. Col. Uhler) phoned to the G.E. Major McLoad to send him six petrol barrels. I was standing near him, while he was phoning. "What for"? the G.E. asked him. "For dumping the garbage from the kitchen you need empty petrol barrels? That is not to be thought of at this time of war, replied Major McLoad.

"O.K., said the U.S. Officer and hung up. Then he called one of the U.S. soldiers who was spending his holidays there and told him: "take a ten wheeler, go to Chabua and get a truckload of empty gas barrels." The Americans use the word 'gas' for petrol. Chabua was 360 miles from Shillong. The following day, the soldier returned with 20 barrels and dumped them in front of the College. Six barrels were cut open and placed in a row in front of the kitchen for dumping garbage.

As I went to see the empty petrol barrels thrown in front of the College, I perceived that there was a little petrol at the bottom of each barrel. I went and told Sgt. Matras, who was in charge

of the Furlough camp. "Joe, there is a little gas left at the bottom of the empty barrels. Could I go and take?" "Go ahead", he said. I took a rubber pipe and sucked out the petrol from all the barrels and was able to collect one jerrycan full of petrol. It was about 20 liters of petrol!

As I was coming along with the jerrycan full of petrol, Sgt. Joe met me and asked: "Did you get any gas?" "Yes, I got 20 liters of gas", I told him. "What will you do with the gas?" he asked me. I said, "I'll send it to the Bishop who is badly in need of gas." "Why didn't you tell me that before? I'll give you as much as you need from our 'motor pool'. I will phone to Dillon, he will send you gas and also a jeep to take you wherever you want to go."

He then phoned to Sgt. Robert Dillon, who was in charge of the U.S. Motor Pool, saying, "Bob, here is Brother Paul in Mawlai, who needs gas. Please send a jerrycan of gas now. And whenever he needs gas, he'll phone to you. You will send him gas as well as a jeep to take him to town. Thanks a lot."

From that time, our Bishop never ran short of petrol. He was able to visit all the institutions and convents of Shillong and take his friends to the Shillong Peak and send his car to take the sisters, who were going to Jowai upto Happy Valley. In those days there was no motor car road beyond Happy Valley. An American jeep would come to Mawlai and take Fr. Tonello to Nongpoh and leave him there and come away, and go again to bring him back on the day he would return from his tour of Bhoi country!

*(As told to Newsline
by Bro. Sebastian Paul sdb)*

Missionaries of Charity Open House in Sojong

The Missionaries of Charity of Mother Teresa opened their first house in the diocese of Diphu in Sojong, August 2. Four MCs have come to work in the Christ King Parish of Sojong where they will look after the poor, destitute and assist in the pastoral work of evangelisation and catechesis. The sisters are housed temporarily in the teachers' quarters.

Fr. Sebastian Kunathukuzhy, the parish priest, welcomed the four sisters to Sojong during a concelebrated Eucharist. About 40 Missionaries of Charity nuns and the regional superior Sr. Berry attended the

programme. The Karbis and Garos who constitute the majority of the Catholic population of the parish accorded a warm welcome to the sisters. The MCs are the third congregation of nuns working in the parish. The other two are the Apostolic Carmel nuns and the Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians.

Speaking on the occasion, Sr. Berry said the sisters have come to serve the poorest of the poor in the district of Karbi Anglong and will carry out the mandate of Mother Teresa. She hoped that the people, especially the poor would benefit by the presence of the sisters and their ministry.

DB TRYSEM '98, Tangla

DB Trysem '98, Training Youth for Self-Employment, was a unique opportunity to train and develop youth leaders of Assam. Forty youth from Tangla and the neighbouring parishes attended a two week programme, July 9-26, organised by Don Bosco Youth and Educational Services. The participants were initiated into skills like electricity, driving, screen-printing, book-binding, tailoring, banner making, animal husbandry, T.V. and Radio repairing. There were also sessions on youth leadership, social analysis, community development and tips on self-help groups.

The resource persons included Fr. V. M. Thomas, Sr. Saroj Kindo Msmhc, Fr. Philip Barjo, Fr. Santosh Minj, Fr. Chacko K.O., the Parish Priest of Tangla, several lay volunteers

like doctors, social activists etc. The Youth Day on the concluding day was attended by many youth from the parish and neighbouring areas.

Amrit Toppo, one of the participants, said he liked Trysem as it taught the participants how to do things rather than simply listening to lectures. Helen Basumatary of Udaguri parish and Carolina Murmu from Ambagoan parish shared their cultural uniqueness by taking part in each other's cultural programmes.

The parish organised a coaching class for the H.S. L.C. students of the parish. The Salesian staff of Don Bosco School and Auxilium School, Tangla, planned and carried out this programme in which the students were coached in core subjects. □

Rangblang: Cholera Epidemic Takes Heavy Toll in Laitflang Village

Fr. Teles N. sdb

A cholera epidemic which broke out in the Laitflang village of Rangblang led to the death of at least fifteen people. Fr. Leonard Kharkhongor, Parish Priest of Rangblang tried in vain to get medical help from the state and district health authorities. After repeated efforts to get help from the authorities failed, Fr. Leonard, suffering from acute gout on both legs, had to walk several hours to reach the village and distribute to them DeChane medicines and dettol.

In another village called Mawmalah, about ten families fled to the forests, leaving behind their pigs, chickens and cattle. The people believe cholera is a demon and the only way of surviving from it is to flee the village. In one of the affected families a mother of seven children died and the father fled with the son, leaving behind the others. The ten year old eldest girl is trying to look after five of her younger sisters.

A man came to the mission centre at Rangblang with his little daughter for treatment. She recovered and the man returned home happily, but the next day he and two days later his wife became victims of cholera and died. Their ten children are now being looked after by their aunt. The headman

and the leaders of Mawsaw village which is a gateway to Laitflang village have forbidden entry into their village for people from Laitflang for fear of contracting cholera. They have also closed the shops which sell provisions to the people. The people are superstitious. With lack of help from the authorities and neighbouring villages, the people are suffering a lot. The torrential rains and the sickness have made life difficult for the people of these villages. The government health workers are often unwilling to visit the remote areas and render medical help.

When contacted, all they dole out is advise to keep themselves clean and observe hygienic habits. Said Vice-Provincial Fr. Francis Cheeramban after a visit to the place: "The government discontinued preventive vaccine for cholera and typhoid two years ago. Now they do not seem to have any preventive measure or contingency plan to meet emergencies like the one at Laitflang. To ask a doctor to walk two hours or more to a remote village may be asking too much of them. And so the people continue to die. Why? Because, they are poor and they live in remote villages. It is all their own fault!" □

FR. BUCCIERI AWARDED

Fr. Anthony Buccieri has been awarded Ludovico Buglio Award for "Life Lived for Others".

This award is being presented by the

town of Mineo in the Province of Catania, Sicily. The award is given by Fr. Buccieri's home town in recognition of Fr. Buccieri's several years of dedicated service in the missions.

Maschio Humanitarian Award for Archbishop Menampampil

Archbishop Thomas Menampampil of Guwahati was awarded the Fr. Maschio Humanitarian Award for the year 1998 at Don Bosco, Matunga, Mumbai, September 9. The award presented by Fr. Tony D'Souza, Mumbai Provincial, consists of a certificate of honour and a cash award of Rs. 100,000. Fr. Joseph Casti, head of the Maschio Memorial Foundation, said, the Fr. Maschio Humanitarian Award was constituted to recognise the work of a person or institution which has made a definite impact on society through their contribution to the promotion of peace, justice and alleviation of poverty in Indian society.

The award was formerly known as "The Fr. Maschio Platinum Jubilee Award", and has been renamed as Fr. Maschio Humanitarian Award after his death two years ago. The recipients of the award in the previous years include Mother Teresa, Baba Amte and Kiran Bedi.

The award to Archbishop Menampampil was in recognition of his work for the promotion of peace and relief activities in the strife torn Bodoland in Western Assam and for his several other initiatives in promoting peace and communal harmony through his writings, reconciliation meetings and ecumenical collaboration.

SALESIANS AT WORK

*In our daily labour we are at one with the poor
who live by the sweat of their brow (Const. 78)*

In June this year the fourteen brothers of the third year philosophy at Salesian College, Sonada, went for a ten days work camp in Dhajiea tea estate. It was organised with the aim of making the young Salesians grow in responsibility, to work hard as a witness of honest labour, to be accountable and to have a realistic experience of Salesian spirituality - work and contemplation.

Of course, it was hard to put up with the inconveniences in accommodation, to cook and eat as we have never done before, to work for hours from dawn to dusk, to integrate work and prayer. But our hardships were little compared with the plight of the multitudes who struggle daily for their livelihood.

I came across a lady in the garden and I asked her " Didhi, how much do you pluck?" She

replied "Around three kilograms of tea leaves." I asked her again: "How much is the wage?" I could notice a sudden change in her face, moved by sorrow she said "Rs.3 per kilo. And I have four children to feed, I do not know what to feed them tonight."

It was a rare experience which helped us to be more practical and to know the difficulties of others. For often living in comfort we tend to forget the past and become more insensitive to the needs of the poor. It remains as a lasting memory imprinted in our minds.

We extend out thanks to the fathers who made it possible for us to have this experience, especially Fr. Thomas Ellicherail, our Rector, whose initiative and care made it all the more wonderful.

Bro. Vincent M.A. sdb

- Fr. Louis Kerketta - Catechist, Salesian Missionary, Educator, Fisherman

No more that firm hand shake. No more that perennial smile characterised by a boyish mischief and simplicity that became his trade mark. Pain or sorrow, heat or cold, these never seemed to touch him. No tensions, worry or anxiety ever on his face. The man who had played so many roles in life - catechist, priest, missionary, educator, hunter and fisherman, to mention only a few - had passed through life with no fanfare or airs about him.

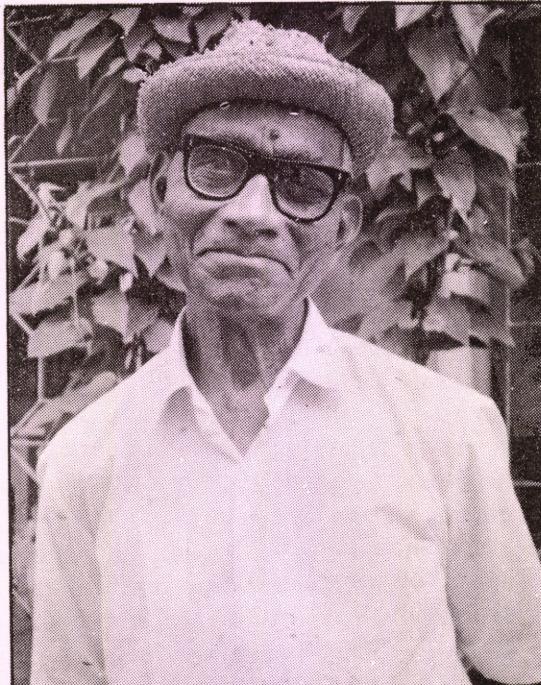
Death came to Fr. Louis Kerketta on August 31 as the crowning event of a long life of 88 years.

A requiem Mass was concelebrated at Don Bosco Tech. School, Guwahati, on August 31 evening. Archbishop Thomas Menamparampil presided over the Eucharist attended by many Salesians, priests, religious and the community of Don Bosco, Maligaon, where Fr. Louis spent the last six years of his life.

On September 1, the body of Fr. Louis was carried to Savio Juniorate, where the community celebrated a Mass for the repose of his soul. His mortal remains were laid to rest at

the Salesian Cemetery at Laitumkhrah by Archbishop T. Resto after a requiem Mass presided over by Fr. Provincial. A large number of Salesians, priests, religious, some relatives and friends of Fr. Louis attended the funeral.

Fr. Louis Kerketta was born at Bikhampur, Noatoli village in Chotanagpur on July 7, 1910. He was the youngest of the seven children of Johan Jhitia Kerketta and Maria Ana. Louis lost his father at a young age. He was baptised on December 8, and was christened Louis Sani (born on a Saturday). His brother John became a Jesuit priest. Louis spent the first 15 years of his life in his village. He attended the parish school run by the Jesuits and received a sound primary education. After completing Cl. VIII he had to discontinue studies due to ill health.



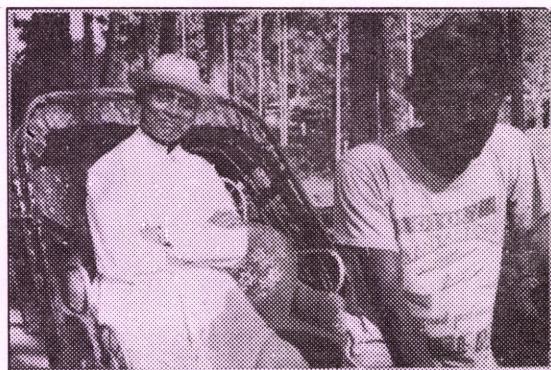
Louis' mother went to work in Bhutan on a three month work permit. At the end of this period she moved to a tea garden at Orangajuli near Tangla. Louis who had been told to rest for recovery from his illness, decided to follow his mother. There he met Fr. Leo Piasecki,

popularly known as the Lion of the Brahmaputra Valley, who got young Louis to be a local catechist in the tea garden. Seeing his zeal, Fr. Piasecki made him a head catechist and appointed him to be in-charge of a large territory in the parish. In 1930, he was invited to come to Don Bosco School, Guwahati, where he spent about a year to learn more about being a Salesian. He learnt in the company of Fr. Vincent Scuderi who took Louis on his mission tours as he knew the language well.

In Guwahati Fr. Louis was impressed by the example of the Salesians who dedicated themselves to the education of the boys. "I was very impressed by the way the Salesians joined the boys for recreation and games and the familiarity that reigned in the community", said Fr. Louis in an interview to Newsline five years ago. Louis spent a three-month aspirantate at Our Lady's House in Shillong and then joined the novitiate. His novice master was Mgr. Stephen Ferrando. In 1932 he made his first profession which he described as his "second baptism". His companions were Mgr. Mariaselvem, Fr. Colzani, Fr. A. Doro and Fr. Elias Hopewell. In 1934 he completed his school studies. From 1934 to 1936, he did his practical training in Guwahati with Mgr. Marengo as his rector.

Fr. Louis did his theological studies in Bandel and Mawlai. He was ordained by Mgr. Stephen Ferrando on June 5, 1941, on the centenary of Don Bosco's ordination. His first assignment was to Barpeta Road Parish as assistant parish priest. He next moved to Tezpur and later to Dibrugarh as assistant parish priest. In 1947 he was transferred back to Barpeta Road where he worked till 1960. In 1960 he was appointed Rector of Don Bosco, Tezpur, the first Indian to be appointed Rector in the region. In 1962 he was back in Barpeta Road as assistant parish

priest. In 1968 he was appointed the first vice-provincial of the Guwahati Province. After a year he asked the Rector Major to relieve him of his responsibility, humbly acknowledging his inadequacy for the work demanded of him. He preferred the simple life of the missions. He went to Bengtol in 1969 to return to Barpeta Road as teacher in 1970 where he



remained till 1992. The last years of his life were spent at Don Bosco Tech. School, Maligaon, as confessor.

During his years as a missionary in the Brahmaputra Valley, he toured extensively. The pioneering missionaries of Assam infused into his heart a deep love for God and for Don Bosco. His companions in the apostolate like Fr. Remo Morra and Fr. Benedict Kiro enabled him work successfully in a vast mission territory spanning the Upper bank of Brahmaputra from Tangla to the border of West Bengal. He had a tremendous capacity to reach out to people in all circumstances. He knew when to encourage and when to admonish. His unassuming ways of working and talking with people helped them tide over many apparently unsurmountable problems. He lived out the spirit of Don Bosco in a tangible way.

As Fr. Louis did not have the opportunity to complete his schooling before he came to the novitiate, he had to work very hard to learn.

But his superiors were impressed by his cheerfulness, docility and piety. He had many other qualities which would make him a good Salesian priest and educator of the young. He had a lot of good will; was ready for whatever sacrifice was demanded of him. He loved the young, and was faithful to his religious duties.

He was one of the first from the region to go to Ranchi to seek for adult recruits for the province. In 1968 as vice provincial he made extensive tours in Ranchi area contacting up to 300 promising boys. It was in Barpeta Road mission that he spent most of his life. He was a

good teacher of Mathematics. Hunting and fishing were his favorite pastimes.

Towards the end of his life, his memory failed him. Sometimes he would even forget his own name. But even in old age, his smile never left him. It was his lifetime signature to his inner nature of peace and calm acceptance of everyone and everything that passed through his life. He had not lost his stamina and his firm hand grip was one sure way of getting the response from him when words could not express what he might have been feeling. □

Salesians In India Plan For More Effective Media Ministry Among Youth

The provincials and provincial delegates for social communication of the eight provinces of the Salesians in India held a three day meeting at Don Bosco, Matunga, Mumbai, August 25-27. Fr. Antonio Martinelli, the Councillor General for Social Communications and Salesian Family was present. Mr. Walter Viera, management consultant and chairman of the International Council of Management Consulting Institutes conducted a day-long training programme on the theme: communications in management and ministry. He highlighted the role of communication in the management of an organisation and suggested strategies for management within as well as outside the organisation.

Fr. Martinelli and his team presented the objectives for a communication ministry within the Salesian congregation.

Fr. Francis Anthony presented the effects of media on young people. He also revealed the findings of a survey conducted among street children and school children in Mumbai. Fr. Thomas Polackal, the national delegate for Youth Pastoral, made an assessment of the different ways the provincial departments for communications were already addressing the needs of young people in India today. Fr. Peter Gonsalves, the National Delegate for Social Communications, highlighted the need for media education in schools. A draft of the manual for the formation of Salesians in social communication was presented by Fr. Joe Andrew. The manual is drawn up by the provincial delegates for social communication. Fr. C. M. Paul and Fr. Johnson Kottaram stressed the need to use communication technology for a more effective networking.

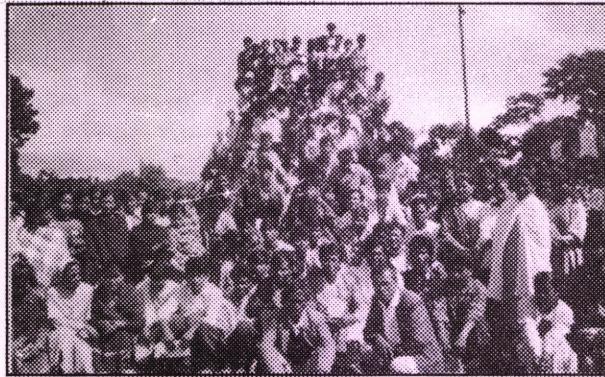
Sonapahar Catholic Youth Convention Held

The annual youth convention of Sonapahar Parish was held at the parish premises, September 11-14. the Seng Samla (Youth Association) was held during the convention.

Fr. P.M. Mathew, the parish priest, hoisted the flag and welcomed the participants to the convention. 353 youth from the four sub-districts of the parish attended the convention. The animators at the convention included

Fr. Lawrence

Nongkseh, asst. parish priest, Sr. Maristella Umdor Msmhc, Sr. Lisina Lyngdoh Msmhc and others. Besides animation talks, there were skits on various themes, debates, a Bible quiz, and other contests based on the Bible. The youth participated actively in these programmes. Election of new office bearers of



Fr. Lawrence Nongkseh presided over the Mass on Sunday, 13 September. Sixty-five young boys and girls took the promise to be in the sodalities of St. Dominic Savio and St. Maria Goretti.

Fr. P.M. Mathew presided over the concluding Mass on September 14. Robert Dkhar, the general secretary of the parish youth association thanked the participants and the organisers for making the convention a memorable one.

K.R. Fantin, President, Seng Samla Katholik, Sonapahar Parish

Costa Memorial Volleyball Tournament Held

A volleyball tournament to mark the memory of Fr. Julius Costa sdb, missionary and anthropologist among the Garos, was organised by Don Bosco Youth Centre, Tura, in mid - September. Several clubs from Garo Hills participated in the tournament held at Don Bosco School, Tura. Fr. M.C. Thomas sdb who organised the tournament said it was aimed at

honouring the memory of Fr. Julius Costa, a missionary who worked for the development of the people of Garo Hills, wrote and published books on the customary laws of Garos. Though he lives in the memory of the people of Garo Hills, we wanted to honour this great Salesian who worked hard to make Garo Hills into a prosperous society.

Naga Freshers Day Held

The annual Naga Freshers Day to welcome the new Naga students coming to Shillong for education, was held this year at Savio Juniorate, September 13. The programme was attended by about 150 students. Fr. John Kalapura who presided over a Eucharistic celebration welcomed the youth to Shillong, and urged them to be good citizens and leaders. The students participated in a lunch and get together.

Karam Festival held

The Karam Festival of the Adivasis was held at Savio Juniorate, September 20. The feast rich in symbolism marks divine creativity. Karam is the name of a tree which the Karam Raja planted everywhere because of his love for it. His reign was marked by prosperity and peace. After his death he became a deity of protection,

wealth and prosperity and people began to keep the feast of Karam. Farmers prayed for rich harvest, unmarried girls and boys prayed for becoming good spouses. The Christians have inculcated the feast and consider Jesus as the Karam Raja.

The Karam festival held in Savio Juniorate was attended by about 600 people. Fr. Aloysius Hemrom presided over the Eucharist. Mr. G.C. Munda, an agricultural scientist from Barapani, Dr. David Syiemlieh from Northeastern Hill University and Mr. Sunil Pio, President of the Karam Festival, Shillong, spoke on the occasion. Fr. John Kalapura gave a brief message in Hindi. He also welcomed the headman of Motsyar village. Savios presented two items during the cultural programmes. The feast concluded with an agape shared by all the participants.

Chris Horo sdb

Announcing!

What

Study cum workshop on the ministry of Spiritual Direction

When

5-9 February 1999 (begins at 7 am on 5th and ends with lunch on 9th)

Where

The Citadel, Provincial House, Chennai.

For Whom

Novice Masters, Rectors, Directors and in-charge of formation communities (pre-novitiate to theologate) and others in the ministry of spiritual direction.

Purpose

To reflect together and evaluate critically the experience of the ministry of spiritual direction offered to the Salesian formees in today's context.

Organised by

The National Formation Commission

Resource Person

Fr. Alwyn Fernandez SJ from Mumbai

Address all your correspondence to :

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Persecution: Real or Imaginary?

The first word that strikes one while reading the early history of the Church is *persecution*. One is reminded of the age of the martyrs, of the Colosseum, of the Catacombs, of the underground Church. The age has also been impressively portrayed on the screen.

History speaks of ten great persecutions: under Nero, Domitian, Trajan, Marcus Aurelius, Septimus Severus, Maximinus Thrax, Decius, Valerian, Aurelian, and Diocletian. I will resist the temptation to add to the list. However, on hearing of some of the recent events that have taken place in our country, I am wondering if we are also getting a taste of that so-called glorious age. The crimes committed are certainly shocking. It is even more shocking to hear a Sangh Parivar leader condoning heinous crimes against innocent Christian women. At the same time it is a matter of relief that this same man was pulled up by one of his own leaders.

History also shows that persecution was not limited to any one group or community. There were persecutors and persecuted just about everywhere. Stephen claims in the Acts with a

touch of exaggeration that all God's prophets were persecuted. Jesus warned his followers about it. Paul claims that he persecuted the Church.

Nor was it limited to religion. Think of the political persecution witnessed in totalitarian and communist countries. Oppression in its various forms has been a characteristic of the human being. The idea that "Man is wolf to man" is not without some foundation in reality.

However, it is not all bad. Otherwise you and I would not be here to speak about it. If anyone suffers from a persecution complex, remember that it is after all just a delusion. In any case it is better to be persecuted than to persecute.

Here is a piece of advice for those who would like to resist oppressors and persecutors: *You should never put on your best trousers when you go out to fight for freedom and truth.* A little unsolicited advice also to the growing number of fundamentalists and communalists in our country: *We have just enough religion to make us hate, but not enough to make us love one another* (Jonathan Swift).

Paul Vadakumpadan

Salesian College, Dimapur: Quiz for Youth

The Brothers of the Salesian College of Higher Education, Dimapur, conducted a quiz competition for the youth from in and around Dimapur, September 20. The competition organised for the benefit of the youth who attend the Sunday Oratories conducted by the brothers has been an annual feature since the establishment of the college in 1982.

Fr. Joseph Kulathunkal, in his welcome

address urged the participants to sharpen their thinking and knowledge. The quiz masters were Brothers Britto and Jose. The theme ranged from Bible, Don Bosco and General Knowledge. Fr. Jonas Kerketta, the youth animator of the College, exhorted the youth to show keen interest in competitions like the quiz which help develop personality and equip them with greater knowledge.

Bro. Vinnus Jose sdb

PROVIDENT FUND QUERIES

- Jose Kadaprayil sdb

A number of very relevant questions have been asked and clarifications sought by the readers of Newsline, as well as other interested parties, chiefly in relation to the Employees' Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions Act of 1952. Even though this is a piece of labour legislation that has immediate and direct bearing on our institutions, it is paradoxical that the level of

ignorance betrayed, in otherwise knowledgeable quarters, is nothing but monumental! And even though the temptation to launch a harangue on our shabby implementation of its provisions is very strong, the constraint of space necessitates the limitation of this column to brief answers to the queries that have been posed.. The questions are quotes from the requests for clarifications....

1. *What to do if no Provident Fund has so far been given?*

Fanciful as the question may seem, I am afraid it reflects a very concrete reality in a number of our institutions. The obvious answer to the question is:

Start the required contributions and deductions immediately at the currently prescribed rates (12% or 10% as the case may be); for employees in service over a number of years, the contributions and deductions will have to be worked out over a period of time on an instalment basis; a clear understanding will have to be had with the employee as regards the deduction from his/ her salary for the past undeducted share of his/her contribution.

2. *What to do if no contribution matching the employee's contribution has been made by the school and what the former had contributed has not been kept aside so far?*

The employer / institution will have to raise the necessary contribution as required by law and pay the same with interest and even penalties which could be imposed by the PF authorities; however, there are some court rulings that would mitigate the rigours of penalties that

could be imposed. (Watch out for more of this and other related court rulings in future C.A. Columns..)

In relation to the second part, not too many arguments are needed to understand that the amounts contributed by the employee belongs totally to him; it is a matter of simple justice that the **employer will have to replace in full the entire amount** and that too with compound interest at term deposit rates of interest.

3. *What to do if contribution from the employee has been discontinued some years back and of course what had been cut from the salary has not been kept aside?*

Provident Fund is a compulsory piece of labour legislation where **the employee has no choice to opt out if he/she so desires**; the contributions and deductions have to be made on a compulsory basis; **hence a discontinued scheme will have to be revived in line with the answer to Qs. 1.**

For the second part please see Qs. 2 above.

4. *PF contributed at 12% has been deposited in a lump sum in a single bank account....*

For institutions having 20 or more employees, it is compulsory to deposit the contributions

with the regional PF Commissioner; the exception to this rule is that the scheme of the institution should be better than the Government scheme and this needs to be authorised by the Commissioner on an application made to this effect by the institution; obviously, for the scheme of the institution to be superior to the Govt. scheme, at least the rate of contribution should be more.

A separate bank account has to be opened for each individual employee, to which are credited the respective contributions; this account could be a joint one.

5. *Are temporary and part-time employees entitled to Provident Fund?*

As per the latest rulings, **every employee**, no matter his status or category, **is entitled to Provident Fund**; this would bring within the ambit of PF even casual employees! A simple rule of thumb could be, **every person who is paid a wage on a regular basis would come under the provisions of the PF Act.**

6. *When the above mentioned staff leave after a short while, is the account to be closed and the money returned or is the account handed over to the employee, if he/she wishes?*

If it is a bank account on a joint signature basis, **the account should be closed and**

the total amount standing to the credit of the account handed over to the employee, with due documentation of course! But if it is a single signature account, the decision obviously rests with the signature holder of the account.

However, if it is an account with the PF Commissioner, the employee has the option to continue the same account in his new employment.

7. *What about religious members of the staff? Are they too bound to have PF?*

Religious members of the staff drawing salary are not entitled to provident fund; PF is essentially a social security measure for individuals not having a religious community to support them. (Kindly refer to the last issue of the Newsline with regard to the status of religious...)

8. *What are the conditions under which an employee can take out loans from PF? What percentage can he take out? How is he/she to return this loan?*

The employee cannot take a loan from the provident fund account; but he/she can withdraw part of the amount standing to the credit of the account for specified purposes like construction of a house, marriage expenses of children, etc.; **the employee can withdraw only to the limit**

Anti-Malarial Drug by CDRI

New Delhi, Sept 8 (PTI): By exploiting a compound isolated from a Chinese herb, researchers in Lucknow have developed an anti-malarial to cure cerebral malaria. Scientists at the Central Drug Research Institute (CDRI) and the Central Institute of Medical and Aromatic Plants (CIMAP) have jointly developed the drug,

'ARTEETHER' that can project people against 'palsmodium falciparum' mosquitoes.

The drug, being marketed by a Mumbai based company, can cure about 98 per cent patients with no untowards reactions, says a recent CDRI report.

of his/her own contributions to the account.

An important point to be noted here by financial administrators, headmasters, parish priests and other functionaries who deal with employees... An employee may request you for a loan, on the security of the amount standing to the credit of the PF account; please note again, **the issue here is not the question of the loan, but the security for the loan.** While the decision to grant the loan may be made on any number of factors, the decision should never be made subject to the PF account being the security for the loan.. **this would be tantamount to giving a loan with no security whatsoever because an employer cannot recover from the provident fund account any amounts due to him from the employee,** including loans and advances. Hence if an employee defaults on the loan repayments, it cannot be recovered from the PF account and the employer will have to consider other remedies.

9. **If the services of an employee are terminated on disciplinary grounds, is he entitled also to the contribution made by the employer?**

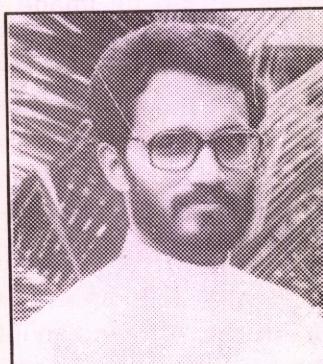
Yes. Provident Fund is not a function of

fidelity or diligence in service; if an employee has his services terminated for disciplinary grounds or for any other reasons, he is fully entitled to all the amount standing to the credit of the provident fund account, irrespective of reasons for termination of service. No amounts can be recovered by the employer from the provident fund account. **The employer has, however, the option of recovering any financial damages suffered by him on account of the concerned employee while on duty, from the gratuity payable to him.**

A word of caution or warning does not seem out of place here.. With the streamlining of the civil administration at all levels and in relation to the various legislation regarding taxes and labour, the incidence of inspections are on the increase to see about compliance with the provisions of the various laws; hence those having administrative responsibilities would do well to keep the books of account, employees-related files, the correspondence with the concerned Govt. authorities etc. in order and up-to-date, so as not to attract the penalty clauses of the various laws. More related issues and some relevant rulings of the courts as regards labour legislation will be pointed out in future issues of the Newsline. Look out for the C. A. Column and actively participate in it!!

Fr. Pampady Leaves For Overseas Missions

Fr. Thomas Pampady left the Province for Rome on September 14. After a brief course for those going to mission 'ad extra', he will be assigned a mission by the Councillor General for the Missions. During a farewell get-together in the Provincial House, Fr. C. J. Francis thanked Fr. Pampady for his services to the Province and wished him God's blessings in



his new missionary apostolate. Fr. Provincial in a circular recalled the contribution of Fr. Pampady in designing chapels: "Many village churches and chapels in the region bear witness to the liturgical artistry with which Fr. Thomas Pampady has enriched our Christian and religious communities. We wish him a fruitful apostolate wherever the Lord sends him."



Film on Don Bosco - Part II

The switch-on for the shooting of Bosco, the sequence to the film Johnny, was held at Aluva, August 11, by Fr. Thomas Panakezham, former regional for Asia. Fr. Alex Vakakumthala of Carmelgiri Seminary, Mangalapuzha, did the clap. The film is now being shot at the Mangalapuzha Seminary, Aluva, Kerala.

The switch-on ceremony was attended by Sangheet Sivan, Director, Sanjeev Sivan, manager, productions, cast and crew and

a number of Salesians. After about 20 days of shooting at Aluva the location will shift to Vagamon, Kurisumala for about ten days. The film is scheduled to be released by the year end.

The role of Don Bosco in the film is being played by Raj Susthi, a Hindi actor and brother-in-law of Amir Khan. Mini Nair acts as Don Bosco's mother Mama Margaret. The script was done by Shibu Chakroborthy.

(Courtesy: Rapport)

God, Rose and Me

Every morning as I get up and open the curtain of my

window I see blooming roses covered with dew. The sun rays falls on them and they look like glittering diamonds. Then I think the face of God must be like those roses. Thinking deeply over it, I say: No, God has made me in the image of Himself and hence he ought to be like me. I go back to the mirror and look at my face and say "How handsome I am" and "Here is God."

Whenever a novice celebrates his birthday, I take a few steps and go into the garden to pluck a rose.

How lovely they appear and what fragrance they give. They enchant my heart. With love I pick a rose and with the deepest love I present it to the birthday celebrant and how glad he seems.



Walking everyday through the garden and feeling the roses with my hands I only feel I am in the hands of God, so dearly loved and so carefully cared for that I worry about nothing but think only of Him.

Novice David Kujur



R.I.P.

Fr. John Chellenthara sdb lost his mother on August 18. She was 74 years old. We offer condolences to Fr. John and his dear ones, and assure him of our prayers for the repose of the soul of his mother.

STRENNNA 1999

**“BLESSED BE GOD,
THE FATHER OF OUR LORD
JESUS CHRIST” (Eph. 1:3)**

**LET US TURN TO HIM
WITH THE LOVE OF SONS
AND DAUGHTERS**

**SO THAT WITH OUR YOUNG
PEOPLE WE CAN BUILD A
WORLD OF FRATERNAL
PARTNERSHIP**

FR. JUAN E. VECCHI