

FR. CANDIDUS VALLOGGIA (1914 - 1988)

The 7th of February, 1988 would have been like any other day for Fr. Valloggia, but for the fact that on coming out of his room early in the morning around 6.00 a.m. he vomited blood in front of his room. He did not consider it as anything serious. Fr. Mullore, one of the Professors and Fr. P.D. Thomas, the Administrator of the Sacred Heart Seminary, Poonamallee realised its seriousness and immediately rushed him to St. Thomas' Hospital at St. Thomas Mount. Doctors were called in and after some tests were done, it was diagnosed that Fr. Valloggia had suffered a rupture of blood vessel in the intestines. He was advised bed rest and medicines were administered.

The day being a Sunday, several of the staff of the seminary were out for Sunday ministry and hence Fr. Rector and a few others could visit Fr. Valloggia in the hospital only by noon that day. Fr. Valloggia responded well to the treatment under the care of Dr. Sr. Rexiline and the other sisters of the hospital. In fact he wanted to be discharged the next day. He was however kept in hospital and on Monday night at about 10 p.m. Fr. Valloggia reached up blood twice within the space of an hour. Dr. Sr. Rexiline immediately informed the Provincial at the Citadel as well as the Rector of the Seminary and requested that he be shifted immediately to a better hospital in the city. Accordingly the Provincial arranged to have him shifted to Vijaya Hospital and by mid-night Fr. Valloggia was attended to in Vijaya Hospital by a team of doctors. While at Vijaya Hospital several x-rays were taken and tests were carried out on the advice of Dr. Victor Solomon. However, it was necessary to shift him once again to Lady Willingdon Nursing Home in the city on 11th February, in order to get a specialist attend on him. Though the doctors felt that surgery would be necessary, they tried to avoid it because of Fr. Valloggia's advanced age. They wanted to arrest the bleeding by treatment. On 18th February, however, it was found that surgery was absolutely necessary and Fr. Valloggia was prepared for the operation. But at 5 p.m., just an hour before the scheduled time of the operation, Fr. Valloggia suffered a cardiac arrest. The doctors did their best to revive him and on revival he was put on the respirator. From that moment onwards Fr. Valloggia lost consciousness and surgery was ruled out. Fr. Valloggia was on the respirator the whole of the 19th and on Saturday, 20th February at 1.40 p.m. he succumbed to his ailment and breathed his last.

Fr. Provincial, the Rector and the staff of the seminary decided to have the body embalmed and kept it for the night in the mortuary of the General Hospital in order to give time for those who would want to be present for the funeral and burial on 22nd February at the Sacred Heart Seminary, Poonamallee.

The body was removed to the Sacred Heart Seminary in the evening of Sunday 21st February and laid out in the Seminary Chapel. At 7.15 p.m. the whole community of the seminary as well as the sisters of the nearby convents and the people of the villages among whom Fr. Valloggia had worked so much assembled for a concelebrated mass presided over by the Provincial. After mass the body lay in state the whole night and the following day in the seminary chapel. The seminarians and the neighbouring institutions took turns and kept vigil and prayed for the repose of his soul. It was a moving sight to see so many poor people coming to pay their last respects to the mortal remains of Fr. Valloggia. The seminary had never seen such a flow of so many people of the nearby villages into its campus in all its history.

The following day, Monday, 22nd February at 4.00 p.m. Fr. Rector blessed the body and it was carried out in solemn procession to the playground where a stage had been erected for the funeral rites. The funeral mass was presided over by Most Rev. Casimir Gnanadickam, Archbishop of Madras-Mylapore. Concelebrating with him were also the Bishops of Cuddapah, Kurnool, Nellore and Vellore. More than 300 priests from the various dioceses of India and especially Madras joined in the concelebration to express their sympathy and to honour and pray for the soul of their one time Rector, Professor, Spiritual Director and Confessor. A number of religious sisters, well-wishers and friends and a host of poor people of the villages around also participated in the funeral mass. Rt. Rev. Aruliah, the Bishop of Cuddapah spoke in Tamil and Rt. Rev. Matthew Cherian-kunnel, Bishop of Kurnool in English during the homily. The large gathering of Bishops, Priests, Religious and the numerous poor people from the villages around was a loud testimony to the holiness and benevolence that Fr. Valloggia had brought to his priestly ministry in the years that he had spent at the Sacred Heart Seminary. At the end of the mass Fr. Rayappa gave the farewell oration to our dear deceased. A student and also a priest past pupil spoke in glowing terms and with deep sorrow about Fr. Valloggia. Fr. Vincent Durairaj, the Provincial gave the final blessing to the body and conducted the final obsequies at the graveyard. Around 6.00 p.m. the mortal remains of Fr. Valloggia were laid to rest in the Seminary cemetery.

Dear Confreres, I wish to point out some of the sterling qualities of this great Salesian, for our admiration as well as emulation. Fr. Valloggia was a man of hard work. He loved work in all its forms, whether it was intellectual or manual. He was faithful to the daily one hour of manual work, till the day he was hospitalized. After the hours of manual work, people used to find him sitting at his desk writing letter after letter to his friends and benefactors, appealing to them to come to the rescue of the simple and poor people in the immediate vicinity of the seminary. He gave little rest or diversion for himself and would invariably refuse to go for a picnic with the staff members when invited to join them. Though he had a feeble voice and looked weak in stature, he was capable of a heavy schedule of teaching, listening to seminarians for hours on end, getting down to manual work in the garden, peddling on cycle to the nearby villages to meet the poor, and so on. The sight of Fr. Valloggia in a soiled cassock with garden tools in his hands was something that could not fail to make an impression on the staff and students or even the passing visitor to the seminary.

Fr. Valloggia was a man of prayer. He was capable of maintaining a constant union with God, in a quiet, recollected and unassuming manner. He was up everyday very early in the morning and in the chapel long before others came in. He was scrupulously regular for the practices of piety of the community. His love for prayer reflected in his endeavour to put up chapels in a number of villages around Poonamallee.

A man of poverty and detachment that Fr. Valloggia was, he had very few material possessions. He was not the man for modern gadgets, like the radio, tape-recorder, etc. though he had helped several communities of sisters to possess them and make use of them. With Fr. Valloggia around nothing would go wasted, destroyed or lost.

Fr. Valloggia was a man of great charity. He had been the refuge of all those who were in need. To begin with he started a dispensary in the seminary campus to provide good and cheap medicines for the sick

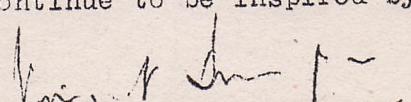
in and around Poonamallee. Later he moved the dispensary to a building in the seminary campus and got the help of three religious sisters to run it. Daily more than 200 patients were treated for various ailments. At the time of his death, he was building a dispensary close to the Sacred Heart Convent at Kummanachavadi with more rooms to cater better for the patients who frequent the dispensary. It has to be completed still.

Though he had worked all his life in the Archdiocesan Seminary training seminarians for diocesan and priestly ministry, Fr. Valloggia remained a salesian through and through. He brought to his work the Salesian pedagogy of kindness and patience. He would give the seminarians in his charge every possible opportunity and time to discern his vocation in all calmness. He was not one who would rush the dismissal of a seminarian. His love for Don Bosco and the devotions that Don Bosco cherished most were invariably the theme of his talks, conferences and good nights at the seminary.

His love for the poor and little ones was evident from the way they waited at the gate of the seminary to see him. He used to send some of these poor people, when they were sick, to hospitals for special help, giving them also the money needed. He had a particular love for the leprosy patients. He had built a small chapel for them in their colony in which 30 families, not all christians, lived. He had given each family some amount of money to invest it in something or other and earn their living. The school going children were the apple of his eye. He made sure to give them books, uniforms and all the other requirements at the beginning of every scholastic year to help them study.

The Franciscan Sisters of St. Joseph. His special care to these sisters was due to the fact that he had been asked by the late Archbishop Louis Mathias of Madras-Mylapore to take care of them. Several buildings put up by him in their Sacred Heart novitiate at Poonamallee and one of them still under construction with the help of his friends and benefactors testify to the seriousness with which he took up the directive given him by the late Archbishop.

Dear Confreres, all of us have reason to be grateful to God for having given us in Father Candidus Valloggia, a hard working missionary, a saintly priest, an exemplary Salesian, a lover of the poor and above all a man of God and a master of the spirit. We will continue to pray for his soul. We will also do well to continue to be inspired by his life and example.

  
Fr. Vincent Durairaj, sdb  
Salesian Provincial - Madras.

<u>Necrology:</u>	Born	11.09.1914
	1st Profession	29.01.1935
	Ordained	30.01.1944
	Died	20.02.1988

Served as Assistant, Professor, Rector, Spiritual Director & Confessor at Poonamallee Seminary for nearly 46 years.

