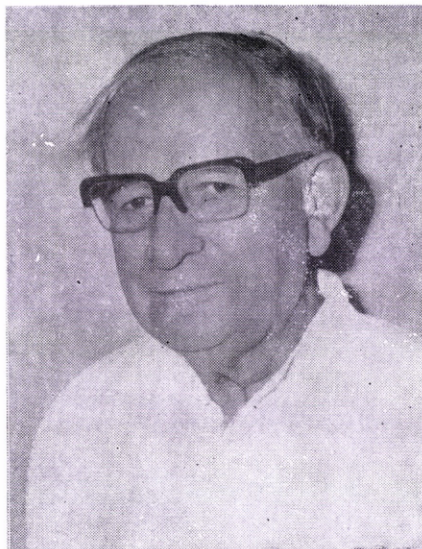


ST. JOSEPH'S I. T. I.

Kurla, Bombay-400 070.
(INDIA)

2nd November 1976

"Blessed are the poor in spirit... Blessed are the meek... Blessed are the clean of heart ... Blessed are those who suffer persecution for my sake..." If someone lived the spirit of these Beatitudes of Our Lord, then in the opinion of those who knew him intimately, it was lived by our good



Fr. ALOYSIUS CERATO

An active missionary in India for the last 50 years. He came to Assam in the year 1925, and as it was the case in those times, never to return back to his dear Italy, and to his dearest ones. This sacrifice, and the meritorious work the good Father did was surely so pleasing to God, that He sent him the final Call on the 24th May 1976, the feast of Mary Help of Christians.

Father Aloysius was born on another 24th of the month – 24th November 1908, at Fonzaso, North Italy. His parents were very pious, and from his tenderest years the young Aloysius showed signs of a Vocation. At the age of 14 he was sent to the missionary apostolic school at Ivrea. Having completed his secondary school studies, he received the cassock from the hands of the 'Servant of God' Father Philip Rinaldi, the then Superior General of the Salesian Society.

1925, being the Golden Jubilee year of the Salesian Missions, Cardinal Cagliero, the leader of that first expedition to South America in 1875, was invited to give the Missionary Crucifix to these new

missionaries. Brother Cerato was destined for Assam, and he with his group of 25 left Italy by steamer on December 9th, 1925, reaching Bombay on December 31st.

It was only 3 years earlier, that the first missionary band had come to Assam under the leadership of Father Louis Mathias, and so the new arrivals were still among the earliest. Reaching Calcutta by train, they were met by 3 Salesians who a couple of days before had come to take charge of the Catholic Orphan Press in the city. Father Vendrame, who will be remembered as one of the greatest missionaries of Assam, accompanied the new arrivals to Shillong. The joy of Father Mathias knew no bounds in seeing the new little 'army' of apostles! He was a real 'dad' to these youngsters, most of them teenagers, who had come to begin their Novitiate in India itself.

Brother Cerato spent his first 10 years in Shillong – Novitiate, Philosophy, then he went for his Practical Training to Gauhati – and returned back to Shillong for Theology. All his training at Shillong, he received from Father Stephen Ferrando who infused in his disciples, all the missionary zeal he possessed.

Father Cerato was ordained on December 8th, 1934. He was the first priest to be ordained by the new bishop of Shillong, Msgr. Louis Mathias. Soon after he was sent to Dibrugarh to be an active missionary touring villages, and supervising the Mission school. Father Alessi, who was his companion and later his Provincial, writing of this period of hardships has this to say, "In those years the whole territory now covered by the dioceses of Dibrugarh, Tezpur, Tura, Nagaland and parts of the Archdiocese of Shillong, had only one missionary station, Gauhati, with only 3 hard-working missionaries! These not only looked after the scattered 2,500 Catholics but increased them a hundredfold. It was the hard work, and sacrifices of Missionaries like Father Cerato, who gave their lives to bring souls to Christ".

Father Cerato spent most of his missionary life working in the Brahmaputra Valley. After the II world war, he opened a new mission–

ary centre in the North Lakhimpur town. In 1954 when all was ready : the buildings for the High School, the Church and the priests' residence, everything was completely destroyed by an earthquake. This is how Father Cerato himself describes what took place, "It happened on 15th Aug. 1950. I was chatting with some of the boys when we heard a great noise like that of a goods train running over a steel bridge; then came the shaking with increasing intensity, it lasted for 6 full minutes. There were shouts of the people everywhere. The houses of the people collapsed and even our own buildings fell to the ground". However, with the help of good benefactors, Father Cerato built up again what the earthquake had destroyed.

Fr. Alessi, regarding the spirit of calmness of Fr. Cerato says, "He was always calm. He was always interested in and interesting to the European Planters of the Tea Gardens, which he used to visit to say Mass for the Christian workers. In those years there were also many military officers in the district; he always had a good word for them, and so also for the civil officers of the district. His affection, above all, went to the poor people and to their children. Father Cerato was not rich. He had no money, but he gave out something much more precious: his love and the Love of Jesus."

A sad day in 1969 brought the European missionaries the Order from the Government to leave Assam. Three of them came to Bombay: Fr. Fossati to Kurla, Fr. Frassy to Borivli and Fr. Cerato to Matunga. Here he was the Confessor of the Confreres and the boys at Don Bosco's and the people frequenting the Shrine. After the death of Fr. Fossati in Kurla, Fr. Cerato was sent there as Confessor, but he would come every Sunday to hear confessions in the Shrine of Mary Help of Christians, Matunga, every Saturday evening he would go to the Holy Cross Church, Kurla and every Friday to the St. Dominic Savio Boys' Home, Andheri. He inspired trust in God and brotherly love in our communities. The work he did in the Confessional at the sunset of his life, was not less precious than the active touring he did in his younger days in Assam. He died, having lived full 50 years in the service of God and Souls as Don Bosco would expect of his sons.

May our good Father Cerato, obtain for us from God and our Blessed Mother that missionary zeal which always burned in his heart, and may he see to the sprouting of many good Vocations to continue the great work for God which our Pioneers have started.

Of your charity kindly remember the confreres of this house in your prayers.

Your affectionately in DB.,

Fr. Victor D'Souza.

Fr. ALOYSIUS CERATO

Born : 24th November 1908, Fonzaso, ITALY.

Died : 24th May 1976, Bombay, INDIA.

50 years of religious profession and 42 years of priesthood.