



RECTOR,
ST. JOSEPH'S HOME,
KATPADI, VELLORE. S. India.

FR. GEORGE CHEMMARAPALLIL

Born : 21— 1—1921

Died : 9—11—1976

It was 3 p.m. on November 9, 1976, when a telephone rang at St. Joseph's Home, Katpadi. An unfamiliar voice said : "Fr. C. C. George is dead. He expired two hours ago."

"No, it cannot be, I saw him and spoke to him only last night. He looked hale and hearty," was the spontaneous reaction of the Father who picked up the phone.

"It is God's will, Father, that it should happen," comforted the voice from the C. M. C. Hospital.

Fr. George was admitted in the C. M. C. Hospital, Vellore, on 17 th August 1976 for a heart ailment. Though it did not appear serious, he was advised to stay on there till the 29 th September. On being discharged, he went over to St. Thomas Hospital, Chettupattu, for a period of rest. On the 3rd November 1976, he returned to the C. M. C. for a check-up, little suspecting that he was going to face the grim reality of death within the space of a week. He was 56 years of age and 29 years a Salesian.

His mortal remains were taken to the Don Bosco Orphanage Chapel, Gandhi Nagar, Vellore, for public homage. Students from various Salesian institutions, priests, sisters and parishioners, friends, relatives and well-wishers of Fr. George flocked to pay him their last homage.

At 6 p. m. amidst throngs of people, priests and nuns, a solemn concelebrated Mass was celebrated by His Lordship Rt. Rev. Anthonyuthu, Bishop of Vellore.

The following day the body was taken to the Salesian House, Tirupattur. There in the presence of a large gathering of priests, religious and laity, his own relatives, confreres, friends and the representatives of the dioceses of Madras and Mylapore and Vellore, where he had mostly served, his mortal remains were laid to rest in the Salesian cemetery. Fr. Thomas Panakezham, Provincial, presided over the function. Fr. Mathew Vallicherry, Fr. Abraham Poonolly and Fr. Lourdunathan Arokiaswamy spoke at the funeral service in English, Malayalam and Tamil respectively, recalling the services of this generous confrere, who had spent himself unstintedly for the good of the Province and of the Church.

Stanislaus George Chemmarapallil was born on January 21, 1921, at Veliyanad in the diocese of Kottayam as the eldest child of C. K. Cherian and Aley after 18 years of married life. He was christened on February 1st by the Bishop of Kottayam, the late Bishop Alexander Choolaparembil.

He did his high school studies at the Sacred Heart High School as a boarder with the late Bishop Thomas Tharayil as his headmaster. Gifted with a very good memory, he used to secure the first rank in every class and was the leader in sports, games, music and drama. In the parish church, he used to teach catechism and organize entertainments. When the young man completed the S. S. L. C., pressure was put by various people on his father to let the boy secure an employment so as to help the family which, at that time, was going through a financial crisis. But to their disappointment, he opted to go to the missions and the good parents respected his decision. Following his example, two of his brothers and a sister, too, eventually joined the religious life.

He entered the Sacred Heart Seminary, Poonamallee, conducted by the Salesians, on 30th June 1941. He spent five years there. Attracted by the Salesian way of life, he came over to Mount Don Bosco, Kotagiri on 15th May 1946 and joined the first batch of novices in the newly opened novitiate, with the late Fr. O. Mantovani, as his Novice master.

He received the religious habit on 20th July 1946 from the hands of the Archbishop of Madras, Louis Mathias, and made his first profession on 24th May 1947. After one more year of philosophy, he did his practical training in the very troubled atmosphere of St. Joseph's High School, Trivandrum (1948-49), then at Carmel High School, Nagercoil (1949-50) and at Don Bosco High School, Vellore (1950-51). He began his theological studies at Yercaud (1951-52) and then proceeded to Mawlai, Shillong, where he completed it in 1954. He was ordained priest on 5th December 1954 by Bishop Stephen Ferrando.

His priestly apostolate was varied, active, dedicated and fruitful. He served as Asst. Parish Priest at Polur (1955—56), at Koviloor (1956—57), at Arni (1957—59): Confessor at St. Joseph's Home, Katpadi (1959—61), Prefect at Dominic Savio, Tirupattur (1961—62), teacher at Irinjalakuda (1962—63) Catechist at Don Bosco Oratory, Cochin (1963—65), and Director of the Oratory at Don Bosco, Cochin (1965—66); Confessor at Don Bosco, Katpadi (1966—67), Confessor at Sagayathottam (1967—68), parish priest of Ennore (1968—71), of Chingleput (1971—76), and of the Blessed Sacrament Shrine, Katpadi, for nearly a year.

He raised funds and remodelled the parish church at Chingleput on the occasion of the Jubilee Celebration of the Church in January 1976. He built chapels in Sogandi, Manapakkam, Melamanur. He showed genuine concern for the poor and was noted for his social work for the poor in the rural areas. He had wells dug in Sogandi and Reddipalayam and helped several boys and girls to go through their high school and college studies. At Chingleput, he started the 'Gospel Study Group' to create communities that would be christianizers. He took great care to have the Bible enthroned in several families, followed by the 'Rosary Crusade'. To enable the Catholics to participate actively in singing, he had a hymn book printed for them.

Fluent in Malayalam, he also acquired a good command of Tamil, and was very creative in translating plays and staging original ones.

He was a strong character, outspoken, attached to his friends, devoted to his charges, dedicated to the poor, resourceful in his many apostolic initiatives.

Fr. George was a loving and affectionate friend and ever ready to oblige his friends. Because of this, he had always friends coming to see him in the various institutions and parishes. No wonder there were about 100 priests concelebrating at his funeral Mass.

He loved Don Bosco and the Congregation. Once due to some misunderstanding some people suggested that he leave the Society. To them he would say : 'If you wish, you can leave; I want to stay on with Don Bosco.'

From the beginning of his religious life, he took to heart the saying of our Lord 'Be you perfect as your heavenly Father is'. In the novitiate, realising he was prone to lose his temper while playing games, he used to ask his companions beforehand to remind him when he was losing his calm, indicating the great effort he was making to conquer his defects.

He loved to preach sermons and retreats, and could do it well in English, Malayalam and Tamil.

We believe that dear Fr. C. C. George is already enjoying the hundredfold reward promised by Christ to those who abandon all to follow him and the heavenly recompense guaranteed by Don Bosco to his collaborators and sons. Nevertheless, with grateful sentiments, let us continue to remember this good and faithful servant of the Gospel in our prayers and generous suffrages.

A great "Community man", Fr. George will be missed by his confreres and many friends both at home and abroad. May his soul rest in peace.