



FR. JOSEPH CHIRAMEL S.D.B.

Born on 19.03.1942

Died on 04.09.2005

Rev. Fr. Chiramel Jose SDB

His Family and Early life:

Born on 19 March 1942, Fr. Jose was the sixth of the eight children (four boys and four girls) born to Thomas and Lucy Chiramel. Surrounded by three brothers and four sisters he spent a happy and secure childhood in Iringalakuda, Kerala. Tragedy struck when he lost his beloved mother while he was in his primary school. Possibly this led to the special closeness of the brothers and sisters.

The foundation of an upright character steeped in moral values was laid very early in life. Entering the seminary was just another step towards a life of self-sacrifice, dedication and monastic discipline. In the year 1956, aged 14, he left Ernakulam under the care of Fr. Joseph Marchesi SDB to join the Bandel Seminary. He had been one of the 85 boys from Kerala to be recruited by Fr Patrick J. Sheehy who was known for his great incite regarding young minds and who was able to give the right direction to anyone.

In joining the seminary he was following the footsteps of his sister, Sr. Philo who had joined the FMA congregation when she was 15 years old. He shared a special bond with her all through his life. It was clearly manifested in the vigil she kept for him in the long months of his illness. What characterized and set him apart from the rest was his indomitable courage not only during his illness but also throughout his mission.

Salesian Vocation and Mission

From the beginning of his journey into Salesian life he was known for his total commitment and dedication. His superiors all agree unanimously that his was an untainted soul. His admission into the novitiate was marked by his complete

confidence in what he wanted. His chosen goal was clear right from the early stages. He had decided for Jesus and nothing could stop him from his firm decision and it was noticed every moment of his life. His uniqueness lay in the fact that he made no compromise where his work was concerned. Diligent in studies and remarkable for being hardworking, he was described as having great determination.

His entire life was spent in the pursuit of knowledge. He was sure that he would be effective only by being efficient. He spared no effort in learning the maximum possible and acquiring many skills, which made him loved by youngsters in the various institutions that he had been.

His apostolic zeal in studies was observed in Sonada when he was a student of Philosophy there. This enthusiasm continued when he was sent to Kolkata to attend classes in St. Xavier's college. Here he completed his PUC in Science and Mathematics. Later on he also got the B. Ed Degree, which eventually made him a life long teacher.

His thirst for bettering himself was seen when he learnt Bengali while in Krishnagar just before his perpetual profession. Fr. Robert (now Bishop Robert of Tezpur) was his constant support during this learning spree. This tremendous effort to learn the language was his way of opening a channel of communication with the local people. This would enable him to minister to the people the Word of God. Such was his adoration and complete surrender to the will of God.

His desire to become a true Salesian was found in the exact observance of all the rules of obedience, poverty and chastity. His entire life was a message for every other Salesian. He was passionate about his vocation and this fervour was reflected

when he prepared himself for his perpetual profession on 24 May 1968.

“This (perpetual profession) being a more important and great step towards the religious life and to my priesthood...” he said. He had a keen desire for salvation and the perfection of his soul. His truly kind, and self-sacrificing nature was a gift of God. Yet he was aware of his limitations, constantly invoking the Lord to guide him in his path with a rare and true humility.

Missionary, Priest and Educator

He showed a lot of attachment and belonging to the church and Don Bosco thereby enriching the society. His desire for the salvation of souls is not just a pious wish. He was noted for his great apostolic spirit and hard work. Given the opportunity he would set about doing things with great diligence. He was always very meticulous in planning the various activities that he had to carry out.

He was filled with grace and mercy. Even as a student he always showed great zeal. He spent his entire life in education. He prepared himself well at every stage of his formation for a long time involvement in the field of education.

Immediately after his ordination in 1972 he was in Bandel as the headmaster and prefect of studies for five years (1972-78). I was privileged to be a newcomer aspirant in 1975 and for all of us he looked very firm and strict. There was a certain sense of fear as we talked to him, he being our headmaster. But then he was there in the football field and in all the very many activities of the house with the aspirants. I remember him well, coaching us to play football during the lunch recreation. He always encouraged us and was much concerned that we were formed well to be good and efficient Salesians.



I consider it my privilege to work with him as his secretary in the office for a year and I realized his love for the congregation and his concern for training the aspirants. He was very meticulous in carrying out the various activities of the house. He was always so very understanding.

From Bandel he went to Ranchi aspirantate as the Vice Rector. In 1979 he was sent to Don Bosco Tengra as the Vice Rector where he stayed for a year. In 1980 he became the Vice Rector and Headmaster of Don Bosco School Siliguri. He stayed there till 1983 continuing his dedicated work and was much appreciated by students and parents.

From Siliguri he was transferred to Don Bosco Liluah in the same capacity (Vice Rector and Headmaster) helping the students of Liluah for a period of 5 years where he earned profound love and respect from his pupils. He was a friend, philosopher and guide to whoever he met in his capacity as the Vice Rector of the house.

Being a practical trainee under his guidance I learnt a lot. He allowed us to organize many activities for the students. There was a time when he was sick. But he would never take rest as doctors advised him. He was always available to every parent and student.

He was very popular. Once when the boys won the interschool football competition

the students carried him after the match from the playground to the bus with cheers as he was so supportive and loving to them. The Scouts of the school won the national award (Prime Minister's Shield competition) due to his encouragement and support. Students love activities and he was right there in their midst whether be it a Sunday or any other holiday. A number of past pupils shared with me their experience in being with Fr. Jose: a wonderful headmaster, stern yet so loving, firm yet so kind.

From Don Bosco School Liluah he was sent to Don Bosco Krishnagar as Headmaster. He had a tremendous love for poor boys and he wanted to do his best for them. His contribution in Don Bosco School was much appreciated. He built an auditorium for the school. It was the need of the school and he was able to pool together lots of help from the various houses and friends and make the auditorium. It is well used by the students and they remember him with love and appreciation.

From Krishnagar he was transferred to Don Bosco School Azimganj. It was an upcoming school and he served the school with great efficiency. We can talk of him as a lifetime Vice Rector and Headmaster earning quite a number of favourites because of his commitment and enthusiastic spirit. He followed the progress of his students in a very paternal manner and helped them very personally, which made him a favourite of many young people.

In 2002 he was back again to Don Bosco Bandel. He was appointed Treasurer of the school and seminary. Things were not very smooth for him at that time. It was a new job for him. But he managed every situation with great efficiency. The teachers and students loved him enormously for his

concerned presence. He was always available to them. He was calm, understanding and sympathetic in his approach. He listened to each and every one of their problems with patience and worked hard to ease the situation.

Any one, especially Salesians, could approach him with any difficulties that they faced especially with administration of schools. With his vast experience in the various institutions and with so many varieties of people he could handle with ease any situation. All at Bandel would definitely miss that Fatherly figure, that cheerful face and that understanding approach which Fr. Jose had for one and all.

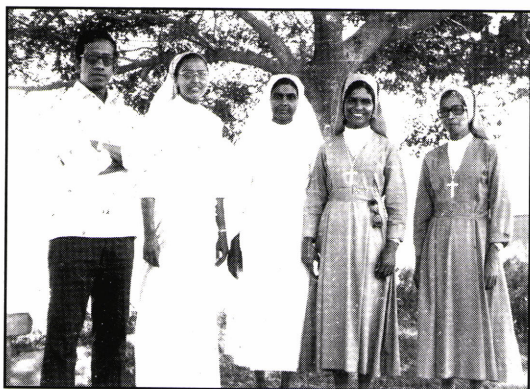
Last Days

In the last two years of his life the Lord was making in his own way the desire of Fr. Jose, "to remain bound with Jesus Crucified" a reality. The Lord accepted his perpetual offering to be "bound with Jesus crucified". Truly in the last two years the suffering of Christ became for him a very real experience - physically and emotionally.

He was diagnosed as having Hepatitis B two years ago (2003). All efforts to control it and get rid of it were futile. Everything possible was done for him. He was treated by various doctors in Delhi, Hyderabad and finally in Kolkata.

In the year 2004 he was diagnosed as having cancer of the colon, which had already started spreading to his liver and pancreas. The first doses of chemotherapy seemed to arrest the disease but finally the cancer continued its onward march making him undergo tremendous pain and intense suffering.

Obedience once again brought me to live with Fr. Jose. He congratulated me on being appointed Rector of Bandel, through an early transfer from Don Bosco Liluah before



the completion of the second term. As I reached Bandel on 24 May 2005 I spent long hours with him. He had so many things to tell me. His presence was so very useful to me to begin my 'formation journey' with the aspirants.

By 26 May he was to be taken to Kolkata for further diagnosis. Fr. James Chacko, who arrived in the morning being appointed to Bandel as Councillor and Prefect of Studies, accompanied him. We could never imagine that it was his final good bye to Don Bosco Bandel; but it was so.

When he was discharged on 7 June, he was taken to Don Bosco Park Circus. He required regular follow up by the doctors. The confreres of the house warmly welcomed his presence. For the next 14 months his home was Don Bosco Park Circus.

On 11.06.2005 Saturday, all the confreres of Don Bosco Bandel went to Don Bosco Park Circus (DBPC) and had a Holy Mass offered with Fr. C.T. Jose in his room. Fr. Thomas Gomes, previous Rector of Bandel, accepted to stay in DBPC a few days more to assist Fr. Jose. Later on 12.06.2005 Sunday, Br. Jophin, a student of theology, who was in Bandel for holidays went to Don Bosco Park Circus to look after Fr. C.T. Jose.

From then on the confreres from Bandel

took turns to visit him. Fr. Jose always said that he was well looked after by all the confreres. He expressed his concern for the Aspirantate and asked the Bandel confreres not to visit him often due to distance and the need for their presence in the aspirantate. As time passed, he was not happy to have any more visitors. He realized that he was sinking. He did not want to trouble anyone.

One day he shared his 'experience of Jesus' with me. As usual he went to pray in the chapel and he started complaining to the Lord about his sickness. He expressed his difficulty in accepting cancer, which would take his life shortly. He said that he had complained a lot. When he came back to the room he found a message in his cell phone without any mention of the sender.

The message was: "God answers prayers in three ways. (A). He gives as asked. (B). He delays to give a better gift than asked. (C). He takes his time to give the best." The message was very clear to him. And he told me: "The Lord wants to give me 'the best'; that probably is eternal life with him. But I don't know when, as he will take his time." Saying that, he asked for prayers for he believed that the Lord would not abandon him, however he needed prayers that he might not abandon the Lord when he would be in deep pain or despair due to his particular sickness.

During the last week of June when I went to see him he asked me to do a favour for him. He said that he would not be able to come back to Bandel. "The boys need a Vice Rector. Kindly ask Fr. Provincial to appoint Fr. James Chacko as the Vice Rector and he would be the right person for that job in a place like Bandel". As requested I mentioned to Fr. Provincial and by the end of June Fr. James was appointed Vice Rector of the house.

The last days were particularly painful the

crucifixion was complete. The offering total! It was these days of pain that brought out the very best in Fr. Jose. He was calm and serene in the midst of all suffering. He was a picture of faith and endurance.

With deterioration of his health one could see more and more of his hope emerging. He would say with serenity "I longed for a physical healing and prayed for it, but I feel the Heavenly Father wants something different from me. He desires that I prepare myself to go to Him." All this led to a total resignation that was not without its struggle, but which matured more and more as the days went on. He realized that he had to prepare himself to meet his Maker and he did so with a sense of thoroughness that was so much a part of his personality.

He listened to the word of God and truly did eat and drink of the Word of God all through the day in various ways. All this made him spiritually strong like a plant growing on the springs of pure water! His faith and hope kept maturing and growing strong expressing themselves in deep selfless love! He was indeed a pillar of strength and courage facing all the pain and struggle with great calmness and peace.

His elder sister, Sr. Philo FMA, was very close to him all through the months of his illness. A good number of his family members made it a point to visit him during the days of his sickness and suffering. They followed up closely the development of the illness and kept in touch with him.

His end: It was 04 September. The past pupils had gathered to celebrate Don Bosco *Jayanti* at Park Circus. The day was especially significant because of the unveiling of the 8 feet tall statue of Don Bosco in the Don Bosco circle on the public road which was in front of Don Bosco School to celebrate the centenary of the arrival of the Salesians in India.

That day was a very difficult time for Fr. Jose Chiramel. A number of confreres, sisters and past pupils wanted to meet him. But his discomfort was so great that visitors were restricted.

The one most frequently repeated request of Fr. Jose Chiramel was that he would be ready to face the ultimate moment of death courageously and that his faith would not fail! Truly we can say that the Lord who is ever Faithful and Loving heeded the prayer of our dear Fr. Jose and enabled him to be faithful to the last!

After supper, the confreres in the community were alerted by the nurse. His blood pressure had fallen badly and it could not be registered. As soon as the news that he was serious reached Provincial House Fr. Provincial and others from the house rushed to his side. They prayed the Rosary and anointed him again. Unfortunately he was not in a position to receive Holy Viaticum! After some moments of prayer the Fathers returned to Provincial House. The Confreres in the community were in and out of his room till around 11.45 p.m.

Here in Bandel we were informed at 9.15 pm that he was in a serious condition. The boys were studying and I told them about the serious situation of Fr. Jose, asking them to go to the chapel and pray. The boys prayed the rosary on their knees by 10.15 and went to bed.

In Don Bosco Park Circus all the confreres had left the room of Fr. Jose by 11 pm. A few moments after they had retired for the day the nurse alerted them again to say that our beloved Fr. Jose had passed away! He had peacefully breathed his last. He looked very serene and peaceful.

As soon as I got the news about his death, I sent messages to a number of people. Later I made arrangements to visit Provincial

House for the morning Mass. Once all the details were arranged I went to sleep. I could see Fr. Jose among the Angels in Heaven. I experienced a certain amount of peace.

Fr. Remesh Cherian, Bursar of the house who was very close to him, was away in Hyderabad making his retreat. He being a young priest had learnt a lot from Fr. Jose who was still the bursar. Fr. Remesh had assisted him during the year for the various office works.

During Fr. Jose's illness Fr. Remesh did a lot in caring for him. He experienced the closeness of Fr. Jose on the day of his death. When he returned to Kolkata to take part in the final ceremonies he recalled that he had had a special experience as Fr. Jose was departing from this world. Fr. Jose had made his presence very clear and had asked for more prayers and Fr. Remesh had assured him of his continued assistance.

The news of his death was passed on to the communities and plans were made regarding the funeral. His body was brought to the Provincial House at around 6.15 a.m. and a number of confreres and sisters from the nearby communities came over for the Eucharist at 6.30 A.M. The body remained in the Provincial House in one of the AC rooms till 9.30 a.m and then it was taken to the funeral parlour, Peace Haven.

The love, the concern, the prayers that were offered for him during his later years especially at the time of his suffering was his reward for the services he had rendered to the various communities, humanity and mankind at large.

He was a unique person and would enjoy a special place in the hearts of one and all who had the opportunity to meet him and be with him. Those who had not met him had really missed the golden opportunity to be with one of the most adorable persons of this century.

It can be said with confidence that Fr. Jose Chiramel is in the arms of the All-Merciful God. His endurance and patient suffering with absolutely no word of complaint earned him a divine place. His final resting place could not have been in a better place, under the ever loving gaze of the Blessed Mother in the Bandel Basilica.



A great educationist:

Fr. Jose had spent his whole life educating young people. All those who had been under him are highly impressed seeing his dedication and selfless service. He has been to all the schools in the province and he was there wherever the province needed him. He had guided some of the institutions in difficult times. He was always just and he worked hard for the institutions.

I can recall well his contribution to the education department of the province. When I was asked to look after same it was he who gave me the greatest support. His invaluable help can never be forgotten. With his vast experience he had been guiding many of us youngsters who were learning to administer schools. He knew the legalities very well and he was always available for help.

When Don Bosco Mirik was going through difficult times he was there to make the needed trips forgetting his weak health and I remember on one occasion we had to walk 10 kilometers to the railway station due to



the “bandh” and he did it joyously. The following day we spent together to complete the report and then only he returned to Don Bosco Bandel. What a great capacity for hard work!!!

He was a big support as the chairperson for the subcommission for the Delhi council affiliated schools. He had introduced many new things, which were very effectively carried out and have helped the institutions.

A Personal Spirituality:

Trust in God and His ways and personal responsibility were the foundations of his spirituality. A routine disciplined life, a dedication to duty, joy in life were the manifestations of his spirituality. His Salesian identity was shown by the preferential love he showed for the young who were poorer and his sympathetic attitude to them when dealing with their studies and discipline.

His past pupils never fail to recall the personal touch that they have experienced. Though he was not conspicuous for external manifestations, his understanding of individuals and their needs was evident in the way he went out of his way to help them. This quality won him many friends. His ability to remember names, and small, apparently insignificant, events in their lives made him keep his friends all through life. Even those who had only casually met him,

when they heard of his death exclaimed, “What a good friend he was!”.

Fr. Jose was an intelligent person of a rather critical bend. This combination made him see beyond the immediate, and analyze issues in the broader perspectives. His reading habits, critical analysis of events and issues, his independent judgments, and fearless expression of opinions did get him into trouble. But he did not believe in personality cult. In the different circumstances of life, he had plenty of opportunities for this personality cult, but he deliberately avoided it. Yet he distinguished himself as one who could mingle well with all kinds of people regardless of social status or religious affiliations, be it in the urban institutions or in the villages of West Bengal.

As a priest he was always available for ministry. As a young priest he had started spending his Sunday mornings in outstation mass centers. In Krishnagar he was the regular chaplain for the Junior Holy Family School and Boarding and found joy and fulfillment in his ministry as a priest. Again on Sundays and holidays he went to the remotest mission centers of the parishes of Krishnagar diocese. Though his pastoral ministry did not find its manifestation in structures or organizations, he spent time with the people. This in turn shaped his opinions and views on structures and organizations in the province. Though he held senior administrative offices in the province, he gave less importance to organization and structures than to the core of the apostolate: persons.

The ultimate proof of his indomitable personality was shown in the last years of his life, when he was able to accept the critical condition induced by the sickness - cancer. All who knew him were pleasantly surprised by the manner in which he accepted it with optimism and patience,

fought against depression and defeat with a strong will power and determined effort. Never did a word of complaint escape him, his demands in sickness were very few. He graciously accepted whatever help was given to him. He was always grateful to God and everyone who extended to him the smallest of assistance. Even in that helpless condition he was worried about the needs of others, keeping himself informed of them, consoling them whenever he could through letters or phone calls.

While accepting his condition with patience and serenity, he did all he could to become self-dependent by applying himself with perseverance to the "strenuous" life in bed.... With evident joy and a hidden hope he would proudly exhibit the progress he was making and boast about it. His only complaint was that he could not be more useful to the community that was engaged in a variety of works.

Strong conviction and a fervent interior life rooted in the Lord, were the source of his joyful and serene acceptance of a difficult situation, all the more so, when we consider that this was a prolonged period of four years. He who was Headmaster for a great part of his life had to watch in silence the routine running of the school from a verandah... With an admirable and exemplary spirit of faith he remembered from the Genesis Him who had told him at the age of fourteen: "Leave your country, your family and your father's house, for the land I will show you" (Gen. 12, 1).

At the age of 14, so tender an age, he was able to see God's mysterious ways in his life. He could say with Job "if we can take happiness from God's hand, must we not take sorrow too?" (Job 2:10). When he was reminded of the old active days, his simple reply was "I have lived my life ... now it is a new life". When he said this, his face lit up with a pleasant smile, a smile that was

characteristic of Fr. Jose, and a smile that accompanied him even in his death.

We are confident that our dear Fr. Jose is in the company of our Blessed Mother to whom he showed so much devotion, beginning his Salesian life at her Shrine in Bandel, having lived many years there climbing to the Balcony of the Shrine of Our Lady of Bandel daily and finally being interred there under the same balcony, with the maternal gaze on him lying along with his other Salesian brothers

Some Reflections

Fr. N. Lo Groi, SDB a Senior Salesian

I consider it a blessing of God to have had a very personal and intimate contact with Fr. C. T. Jose during his life as a Salesian. For about 5 years I had been his Rector and spiritual Director (one and a half years as aspirant, and three years as a student of philosophy at Salesian College, Sonada). What impressed me at that time was his singleness of purpose, his great desire and his efforts to be true to his Salesian vocation, his love for Don Bosco and for the Congregation. He was very open in his talks with the Rector and ready to accept and follow the suggestions given to him. He could be quite demanding from himself -and also from his own companions! - with regard to the exact fulfillment of duties. The above-mentioned characteristics were noticeable also in his subsequent Salesian life as a priest and educator.

I had been his Provincial for six years and I can say that I always received his full cooperation whenever I asked him for anything, even though occasionally it must not have been easy or pleasant to comply with my requests. I also noticed - from far, I can say, not as his Superior- his readiness to work with total dedication and spirit of sacrifice in the various

houses in which he was working.

The last time I met him was about a month before his death. One Thursday I went to Park Circus only to see him and spend a little time alone with him. In fact, I was alone with him twice that day, before lunch and after lunch. What impressed me was his serenity and constant smile. He told me that he was very grateful to God for having given him this time to prepare himself well for death. He told me also that he had been offering one hour of his sufferings for each community of the Province. I was told that after that day he had days of very intense suffering which must have caused him moments of depression, but the Lord must have allowed all that to be his purifying purgatory on earth.

When early morning on 5th September the Rector of Kalyani told me of his death the previous night, I said to myself, "Deo Gratias! - Thanks be to God!" his purgatory is over. When on 6th afternoon I met Fr. Provincial in the Sacristy of the Bandel Basilica before the funeral, I offered him my condolences, and I added: "Courage, Father, his death is not a loss for the Province". I meant, we have gained a new intercessor in Heaven.

Sir Subir Banerjee a teacher of Don Bosco School Bandel

Fr. C.T. Jose (Chiramel Jose) was born on 19.03.1942 in a remote village named Koratty in Kerala near Trichur. He devoted his life for the young people of our country. I had a chance to meet Fr. C.T. Jose very closely and what I saw was that he always had a smiling face and tried his level best to solve the most difficult problems of all. He really had a sympathetic attitude towards the school staff. He told me that a person should not be deprived of the money he deserves. One day very early in the morning I went to Father for the school children's day fete and I saw him working

in his night dress. I came to know that he had been working since early morning. Though his span of life was rather short yet he worked much for the benefit of all those whom he met. This generally happens with those people who are spiritual.

Just like an incense stick that burns and spreads a beautiful scent which restores peace and happiness to its surroundings in the same way Fr. C.T. Jose devoted his whole life working for the poor and giving them peace and happiness, spreading the scent of love, sympathy, compassion, humanity wherever he went.

Ms. T Amin, Teacher, Don Bosco School Bandel

On 5 September 2005 with a heavy heart, I received the sad news of the demise of our dear Father C.T. Jose, the previous night. For the past few months we saw him suffering intense pain and gradually ebbing away. However he possessed tremendous will power and faith in God, which made him endure his sufferings with great calmness and serenity. He was a symbol of Job and Christ in the crucible of sufferings, which touched our heart. Now I feel that God has relieved him of his sufferings and has called him to Himself, to enjoy the bliss of heaven. He was a fatherly figure to all of us, concerned with our problems and ever ready to advise, encourage and help us. He was very sincere, hardworking, confident, well organized, methodical and prompt in his actions and above all a very good human being. He was always cheerful and approachable. He had won the confidence and love of one and all. We felt we could rely and depend on him for everything.

After joining Don Bosco School, Bandel, as a bursar, he solved many of our controversial issues with great concern and care. His patience and perseverance

knew no bounds. He treated everyone with kindness, politeness and respect. He was unique and one of the best Salesians I have ever met. His death is undoubtedly a personal loss for each one of us. We pray that he may enjoy eternal life in heaven and bless us from above so that we may have the courage to follow his noble example.

Students of Don Bosco School Bandel

"Fr. C.T. Jose was a person of values, and he stood by his noble values till the end of his life." Gurudeep Singh Chawla

"Fr. C.T. Jose was a person who loved all and was loved by all. He had immense energy to work for and work with one and all." Rajeev Rajan

"Fr. C.T. Jose was a kind-hearted and helpful person who was ready to do anything for the well being of youngsters." Ayan Dutta

"Fr. C.T. Jose was a very hardworking and a down to earth person, who helped us students and our school very much." Abhishek Saha Roy

"Fr. C.T. Jose is above all praise". Sunmeet Singh

"Fr. C.T. Jose was a very practical and down to earth person .He was very cheerful and ever ready to help one and all." Soham Ghosh

Fr. P.V. Matthew Don Bosco Liluah

It was a hot sunny day 8 April 1956 Easter Monday, that Jose and I (two youngsters of 14 years) met on the Railway platform of Ernakulam Junction, on our way to Bandel, under the leadership of Fr. Joseph Marchesi SDB, the prior and Rector of Bandel Church, who had come down to Kerala to collect and bring up some 85 boys, who were recruited earlier by Fr. P.J. Sheehy SDB.

We became friends soon, and that relationship remained intact up to the last 4 September 05. In fact, his sister, Sr. Philo FMA told me on 5th evening that I was the last person who saw Jose alive. The fact is, as soon as my Rector Fr. Joseph Pathickal, was informed of the seriousness of Fr Jose, my Rector took me to see him in Don Bosco Park Circus. I stayed with him for an hour, and came away around 23.15, never thinking that he would die so fast. As I reached my house, Don Bosco Liluah, Fr. Rector told me of the demise of Fr. Jose a few minutes earlier. At once, both of us went to our chapel and said a prayer for him.

To a certain extent, I was happy that he was delivered of so much of suffering that he bore so calmly, and I asked him to help us in our journey, as he was a holy man. I can only say that after 49 years of life lived together, he was an asset to me and a great friend to me. It is too little for a friendship that lasted so long ... but I have no words to say anything further as I am choked with tears. May God and His blessed Mother be with him and with us, the living. May he bless us, who had the privilege of knowing him, as a Superior. Thank you Jose and be with us. Your friend, P.V. Matthew SDB

A word of appreciation

I would like to thank Fr. Provincial and all the confreres who were with him during the time of his sickness. The confreres who were constantly with Fr. Jose during his last days deserve a sincere word of appreciation particularly Fr. Jacob and the community of Don Bosco Park Circus, Fr. Jose Chunkapura, Fr. John Puthiadathuchalil, Fr. Albert Thottumkal, Fr. Jose Pampadiyil, Fr. Antony Erathara, Fr. Thomas Gomes, Fr. Remesh Panthapalackal of Don Bosco Bandel and Fr. Abraham Panackchaly who had accompanied Fr. Jose to Hyderabad,

Sr. Marceline SMI the superior of the SMI Ballygunge who supported and helped him in every possible way, and last but not the least the Doctors, nurses and special helpers who with a lot of love and affection tried their best to help Fr. Jose.

As I offer condolences to the members of his family I would like to thank all his near and dear ones especially 13 of them who were present for the funeral and expressed their gratitude to the congregation for all the love and care lavished on Fr. Jose. They will continue to remain our family members.

A special mention must be made of Sr. Philo FMA who with true sisterly love suffered with him and took care of him all through his illness, his younger brother Mathan and his brother-in-law Jay who took the trouble of being here in Bandel to attend the funeral ceremony.

All of us are grateful to Bishop Joseph Gomes SDB, Bishop of Krishnagar, for being the main celebrant for the funeral Mass. I do appreciate the funeral speech of Fr. Provincial, which went a long way in helping me to prepare this obituary. The Basilica Community of Bandel and the different groups of sisters did their best in arranging the funeral programme and we are indebted to them of making the function smooth and meaningful through their generous service.

If a last word is to be said of Fr. Jose, we can

say that he was a friend of all who came in contact with him. His memory and example will live on in our midst, and he will continue to befriend us from heaven and call for God's blessings on us all. May the Almighty grant eternal peace to Fr. Jose Chiramel. His strength of will came from a reservoir, which was truly spiritual. His demise has left an emptiness, which cannot be filled, yet the community has gained an intercessor for them in Heaven. His memory and example is indelible and his work insurmountable.

The reader will definitely notice that someone who is very close to Fr. Jose has written the matter above. He was my prefect of studies from the day I put my foot in West Bengal. He was my Headmaster during my practical training and finally he was my close collaborator...the Vice Rector and above all my mentor and guide. I do acknowledge with gratitude his life long support and encouragement. I am grateful to Ms. Shampa Chakraborty, Ms. Jayanti Mahadevan and Mr. Celestine Rozario for the final editing of this obituary.

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