

Provincial Office
'Citadel' - Madras 10
2nd July 1968

My dear Confrères,

I present you herewith a short life-sketch of three dear confrères who left us for eternity during the past year. I sincerely regret the fact that, owing to various circumstances, this could not be done earlier. Anyway, this may be a good opportunity to recall the memory of these confrères, admire their virtuous life and deeds, and remember them in our prayers.

Yours in C.J.
Fr. L. Di Fiore
Provincial

Rev. Fr. Theodore M. Andreas
Coad. Xavier Savarimuthu
Coad. Cusini Michael

Rev. Fr. THEODORE M. ANDREAS

Father Theodore Andreas born at Usingen (Germany) on 9th September 1901, was ordained priest there on 5th July 1936. He came to India as a missionary on 14th October 1936.

He received his appointment as Prefect of Don Bosco Orphanage, Vellore, on 15th November 1936. He was appointed Assistant Parish Priest of Assumption Church, Vellore, on 4th January 1940, and at the same time Catechist and Confessor of Don Bosco Orphanage, Vellore.

During World War II in April 1942, he was interned in Yercaud where he was confessor. From there he was taken to the Concentration Camp at Satara, from where he was later on sent to Goa where he remained till 24th June 1950. After this, he went back to Germany.

On his return to India in July 1951 he was made Parish Priest of Catholic Mission, Pallikonda. On 16th July 1952 he was transferred to the Parish of Arokiamada, Vellore Old Town, where he remained till his death which occurred on 8th January 1968 in the German Mission Hospital at Chetpet, North Arcot. His mortal remains were removed to Arokiamada Church. He was buried on the 9th January 1968 in the church compound amidst the mourning of his beloved parishioners, friends and confrères.

Fr. Andreas accompanied His Excellency the Bishop of Vellore in 1958 and 1962 on his tour to Europe, and obtained for him many friends and benefactors, especially in Germany to help the poor Diocese of Vellore. His sacerdotal silver jubilee was celebrated fittingly by his parishioners, friends and confrères in Vellore on 14th and 15th October 1961. He was then made Parish Priest consultor.

Fr. Andreas was a great Salesian missionary and a zealous Priest who loved the poor and the children in a special manner. Apart from the good works which he did in Salesian Houses and other Parishes, his apostolate for

nearly 16 years in Arokiamada Mission, Vellore, has been marvellous and very fruitful.

At the time of his appointment, the parish of Arokiamada was very poor, both spiritually and materially. At the time of his death, the zealous pastor left the parish self-supporting, and flourishing spiritually. He made enormous improvements materially and spiritually.

He repaired and remodelled the old presbytery making it a fine and spacious house. He built a grotto to Our Lady of Fatima which serves also as an open-air stage for parish activities. He built a Don Bosco Youth Centre for the youth of his parish which is useful for many parochial activities. With the help of his German benefactors, he put up in his parish a Catholic Centre called "Arokia Illam". It is a big three-storeyed building. The third floor has a magnificent hall and the second floor contains many rooms for catholic students and workers. The first floor is meant for a creche to be run by some Congregation of Sisters maintained by the income of the two upper floors. He repaired and embellished the two delapidated chapels of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and St. Anthony, and renewed faith and devotion among the Christians. He showed a great love and care for the school children for whom he put up a school building at a great cost. With great intrepidity and prudence, he recovered much church land misappropriated by the people. On this land he built houses for the poor, and put up decent residential quarters which bring a regular monthly income to the parish. His last and great desire was to build a new parish church for which he was gathering funds from his benefactors, but he passed away before he could realise his cherished desire.

But all this material progress was for him, a means to the spiritual upliftment of his people. He organised several Pious Associations and Sodalities, such as the Church Council, the Archconfraternity of Mary Help of Christians for men and women, the Sodality of Mary Immaculate for young girls, the Legion of Mary, the Crusaders of the Blessed Sacrament for boys and girls, and Don

Bosco Oratory for the youth. He trained the members very well to give to the church both financial help and personal service, which helped him very much to revive the spiritual life of the parish. It is praise-worthy to mention here that through his great charity and care, he gave one diocesan priest to the Church, and one Salesian who will soon be raised to the dignity of the Priesthood. Two girls from the Sodality of Mary Immaculate have become Nuns, and few more aspirants to the Sisterhood. The good missionary had helped many poor boys and girls to pursue their higher studies and are now occupying a good position in society.

He showed great compassion for the poor and the miserable. Every day, nearly three hundred children were given free mid-day meals in the school. Every Tuesday and Sunday, he gave generous help to hundreds of lepers and poor people. During the great festivities of Christmas and Easter, the poor, especially the children, were recipients of great charity of their loving benefactor.

Feasts were celebrated with spiritual preparation and great solemnity. Annual retreats were regularly held for First Communion children, and meetings of Pious Associations and Missions were regularly conducted for the people which toned up the parish in spiritual life.

In conclusion, Fr. Andreas was a great Missionary, a zealous priest, and a good pastor. He gave all that he had, and all that he could, for the spiritual and material benefit of his flock even to the extent of his life. He died consumed by his work at his post — as the good pastor of his flock. May his soul receive the eternal reward from the Good Master whom he served so well during life.

Fr. S. Lazar, SDB

Vicar General
Bishops House
VELLORE (N.A.)

Coad. XAVIER SAVARIMUTHU

On the 28th October 1967, the soul of Bro. Savarimuthu left this world for eternity. He was the first Indian Salesian Coadjutor.

Bro. Savarimuthu was born of middle-class parents in Periakodiveri (Coimbatore Diocese) on 28th May 1887, and was taken as a boy to Taiping (Malaya). Later he came to India and entered the Salesian House of Tanjore as a weaver, in the year 1906. He came to know of Don Bosco and his apostolate in that institution. Little did that young man realise that eighteen years later, he would come back to the same house as a Coadjutor aspirant, preparing to go to the Novitiate at Shillong.

Short in stature, but virile and active in the field of sports, humble and submissive in his dealings with all, he captured the hearts of his superiors and confrères. After his first profession at Shillong in 1925, he was appointed assistant in charge of the boys and superintendent of the St. Francis Xavier's Industrial School at Tanjore. After three years in Tanjore, he was transferred to Don Bosco Orphanage, Vellore, as Assistant, and in 1931 he made his Perpetual Profession. Under the care and guidance of Salesian veterans like His Grace the late Archbishop Mathias and Fr. John Mora, he made rapid strides towards Salesian perfection. He had a keen desire to please his Superiors as representatives of God, and thus to perfect himself as a Religious. From Vellore, he was transferred to the former Archbishop's House at Armenian Street, Madras, and for a good period of eight years, took care of two Archbishops: Archbishop Mederlet and Archbishop Mathias.

From 1939 to 1955, he was at the Sacred Heart Seminary of Poonamallee, looking after the culinary needs of the Seminary and its inmates. It was certainly a period of much work and patient devotion to duty, as every ex-alumnus of the Seminary will testify. Never a harsh word or an inopportune

gesture would escape Bro. Savarimuthu. He had a quaint humour to help him tide over every difficult situation.

In 1955, at the age of 68, he was called upon to serve at the Bishop's House, Vellore. Bro. Savarimuthu, already among the seniors of the Salesians did not flag in his activity. Whenever possible, he used to trudge along the road on foot, either to the market or to the bus stands. Here he worked for nine years, till he was assigned to the Dominic Savio Orphanage at Tirupattur, where he spent the last years of his life.

Bro. Savarimuthu was suddenly taken ill. During his illness which lasted 18 months, he was always serene and happy amidst much suffering. In the morning of 28th October, he fell into a deep slumber during which he passed to eternity unnoticed even by his confrères.

On the following day, accompanied by a big gathering of confrères, boys and people, the body was taken to the church in the aspirantate. Here all assisted at a low Mass, and bade farewell to the first Indian Salesian Coadjutor.

Fr. Provincial, in his funeral oration, said that Bro. Savarimuthu performed the most ordinary actions of the day with devotion and appreciation, and thus made himself extraordinary in the sight of God. Mgr. Ferrando, Bishop of Shillong, his Novice Master, spoke of Bro. Savarimuthu as a simple and humble coadjutor.

May this valiant son of Don Bosco, who during his life time worked silently for the glory of God and for the Congregation, intercede for the youth of India that many may follow the Lord.

Fr. P. K. Anthony, SDB
Rector - Dominic Savio
TIRUPATTUR (N.A.Dt.)

Coad. CUSINI MICHAEL

Brother Michael Cusini was born in the Alpine village of Livigno, in the Diocese of Como, on the 6th September 1911. Throughout his life, he retained two chief characteristics of the mountaineering race from which he came: simplicity and hard work. His younger brother, Francis, also worked in this Province for several years, and was an example to everyone as a good, zealous and humble Salesian priest.

To external appearances, Bro. Michael never did anything extraordinary in his religious life. His was the task of the humble, unassuming coadjutor, — the classical "factotum" so rarely to be found nowadays — who worked as a gardener, store-keeper, or in charge of the kitchen etc. And yet those of us who have known coadjutors of the type of Bro. Cusini, have for them only words of praise and admiration. To them, the Master will say, as he said to "Michelino", as we fondly called him: "Well done, good and faithful servant, since you have been faithful over little things, I have great things to commit to thy charge; come and share the joy of the Lord."

A Salesian priest who lived many years with Bro. Cusini and knew him well, has this to say about him: "Apart from a few human defects from which nobody is free, Bro. Cusini was for me a source of edification. His fidelity to all the practices of piety, and to his weekly confession, in particular, is worth mentioning. During the day he would make many visits to the Blessed Sacrament and recite several Rosaries. He rejoiced when he saw the church full, and the faithful approach the Sacraments of Confession and Communion, especially on Sundays and First Fridays. He observed scrupulously the days of fast and abstinence. Even when there was a general dispensation from the observance of the law, he would feel that he should not exempt himself, even going to the point of refusing to take soup if it were made of meat broth.

Instead, he would just moisten his bread in a glass of lime-juice. We thought this an exaggeration, but it showed the delicacy of soul of this good confrère."

Bro. Cusini passed away at Naples on the 27th September 1967. He had gone to Italy for a well-deserved rest for the first time since he came to the missions in 1937. He was eager to return to India. But God willed otherwise. Since he did not feel well, he was sent for a check-up to Milan. The doctors found that he was suffering from 'silicosis', a disease which he must have contracted in the tropics years earlier. Though he was pale and run-down in health, none of us suspected the existence of a serious illness, since he never complained of it. The doctors felt that nothing could be done for his cure, and advised that he be sent to a warmer climate. The Superiors, accordingly, sent him to Naples. He stayed there only a short time before the Master came to call him home.

We wish to express our deep gratitude to the Superiors and Confrères of the Provinces of Milan and Naples, for the charity and attention shown towards this dear confrère. May God reward them.

By way of conclusion, I may recall a little incident in Bro. Cusini's life. In the early years of his Religious life, he was frequently seen walking about with a very intelligent cleric proposing doubts and asking for explanations about some intricate questions of Theology. Once he was heard to ask: "How would you explain the Mystery of the Blessed Trinity, of One God in Three Persons?" Holy simplicity! But now from Heaven, he will certainly understand things better. His child-like simplicity and sincere piety must have obtained for him a great reward in heaven. Nevertheless, let us not forget him in our prayers, good works and sacrifices.

Fr. L. Di Fiore
Provincial