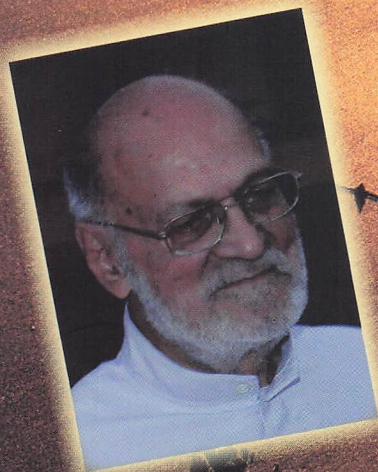
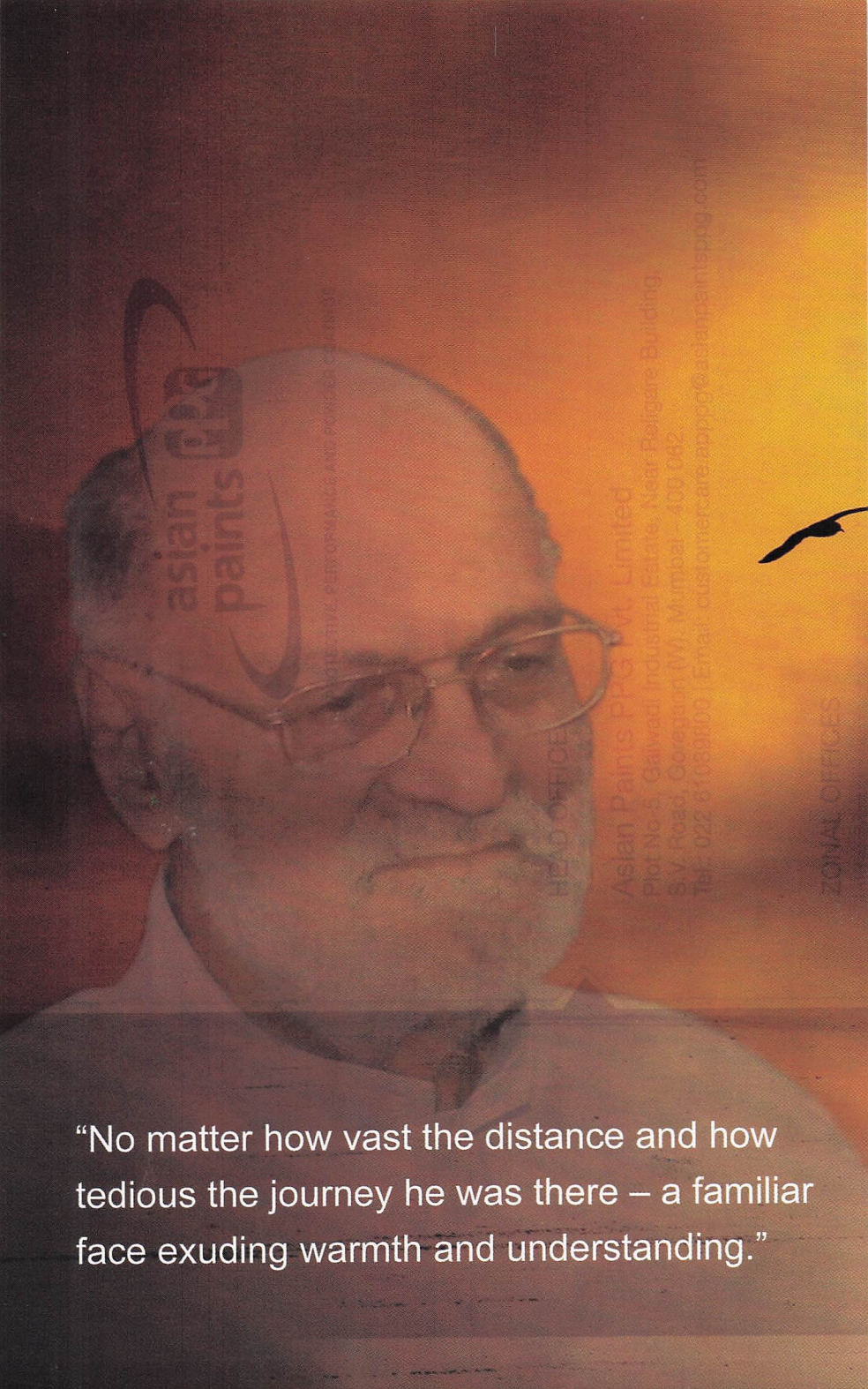


In
Generosity
is
Love



FR. RICHARD D'SOUZA, SDB

1929-2014



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ZONAL OFFICES

“No matter how vast the distance and how tedious the journey he was there – a familiar face exuding warmth and understanding.”



His Last Evening with Us

It was late that Friday evening when the community had just finished praying Vespers and the Rosary was making its way from the chapel to the refectory passing Fr Richard's room. He was rather weak and could barely sit up. Those last few days were truly his Calvary. He could take very little by way of any sustenance but he constantly sported a weak smile to any and everyone who dropped by. We had finished supper and were dispersing for the night when we found Fr Richard struggling to breathe. The end was near so the community gathered around him in his room. Fr Matthew, his companion and friend was with him praying the Office of the dead in a strong voice during which he silently breathed his last. I believe he left us hearing the encouraging words with which the Church bids farewell to a Christian soul after a life of generous fidelity. So, fortified with this consolation Fr Richard D'Souza, aged 85 left us for his well-deserved eternal reward on the night of Friday October 17, 2014.

On hearing the sad news, the boarders of Don Bosco Matunga, came across to join the Salesians praying the Rosary for our dear Fr. Richard. He was their confessor and friend for many years.

It was only a few months earlier that Fr. Richard came to the community of the Provincial House because mobility would be easier since there was a lift in the building. During the night hours, Salesians from the nearby communities came in to pray by his mortal remains. A sense of great admiration prevailed because of the grace that Fr. Richard had received having the consolation of the Church and his Salesian family around him during his final moments. I'm sure, like Don Bosco, he must have whispered: "I'm waiting for you in heaven!"

Into the D'Souza Family

Fr Richard was born on January 29, 1929, the third of a family of ten; seven brothers and three sisters. Two of his brothers are priests and one sister is a nun. He always held that his vocation came because of the religious ambient that prevailed in his family and the lively faith and sacrifice of his dear parents. Philomena Pinto, his younger sister reminisces: "Our father was very proud that one of his children decided to serve God and the Church. Our parents, brothers and sisters were very proud of him. Richard was the first to join the seminary." Fr Lionel Xavier from Monrovia, West Africa who knew Fr Richard as a young seminarian mentioned him as a gentle personality who was rather shy at first.

The Lord Calls, Richard Follows

He joined the seminary in Mangalore where his uncle Victor Fernandes was the Bishop. It was in the diocesan seminary that he came across a copy of *Don Bosco's Madonna* and was inspired by the anecdotes and thoughts of Don Bosco. Regularly reading the magazine that came to the seminary, his desire for the Salesian way of life grew. When he expressed his desire to join a religious

order that worked for the poor, his spiritual director, a Jesuit priest, suggested that he join the Salesian Congregation which looked after poor youngsters. Pursuing his desire to become a Salesian was not easy. He had to get the permission of the Bishop and also the permission from Rome to join a religious congregation. On his insistence, the Bishop dismissed him from the seminary, but the Rector of St Joseph's Inter-diocesan Seminary, Kankanady, Mangalore, permitted him to go ahead with his plans (as the rules by that time had been changed).



Into the Arms of the Salesian Family

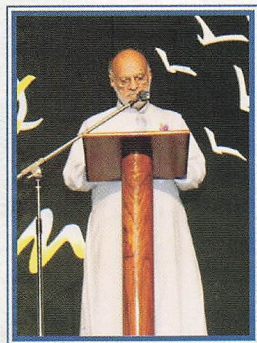
Permission to join the Salesians arrived from Rome on May 22, 1948. With that in hand he contacted Fr Josè Carreño, then Provincial of Madras and was admitted to Tirupattur a year later. He was (what we call) a 'late vocation.' Being already an adult he found some difficulty in adjusting to the customs, traditions and timetable of the Salesian house, but he had a strong determination and stuck it out. He made his first profession in 1950 after completing his novitiate under the revered Fr Cogliandro. From there he was sent to

Kotagiri where he completed his philosophical studies. "He was a very candid person and even enjoyed the jokes that others played on him," Fr Mathew Thalanany, his companion recalls: "In fact, he almost wanted them to 'tease' him, such was his happy disposition." The years of theology at Mawlai in Shillong that followed, were not easy for him but again his determination to persevere prevailed. He owes his vocation to the great encouragement and affection of Fr Josè Carreño.

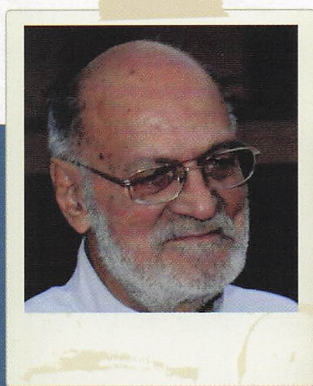
God's Priest Forever

On July 1, 1960 he was ordained a priest by Bishop Selvanathan at the Retreat in Yercaud. A few days later he offered his first Thanksgiving Eucharist surrounded by his loved ones in Mangalore. He took as his motto: *In Generosity is Love* remembering affectionately his dear departed father. Looking back one notices that Fr Richard's life has been a constant living out of that motto. At his funeral Fr Wilfred his previous Rector said: *One way to*

esteem a person is by what he says. A better way is by what he does.



The best way is by what he gives. Blessed are those who give without remembering and take without forgetting. We might say that that was the sum and substance of Fr Richard's life. From now on, the new priest Fr Richard D'Souza's life would be all about giving, to the congregation, to those entrusted to his care, to the members of his family and extended family, to his



parishioners, patients and people in general, in short trying to be (in St Paul's words) "all things to all men" (1 Cor 9:22).

Once more after his ordination he was assigned to the Salesian community at Tirupattur as a teacher and Fr Lawrence D'Souza then an aspirant, remembers that "he was placed at Sacred Heart Aspirantate and together with his many responsibilities he was also a teacher, teaching the aspirants. I remember him teaching geography. Teaching was not 'his cup of tea' yet he made tremendous efforts to give to his students what they were prescribed. Though at times he was a bit gruff he always

One way to esteem a person is by what he says. A better way is by what he does. The best way is by what he gives. Blessed are those who give without remembering and take without forgetting.

-Fr. Wilfred D'Souza

attempted to do the best he could." And Fr Lawrence affectionately concludes: "His efforts were what counted, because he gave all he had."

Later he was appointed Assistant Parish Priest at Vellore and then Parish Priest in nearby Arni where he picked up Tamil "a difficult language to study" as Fr Mathew Thalanany adds, "to which he applied himself with great dedication." This enabled him to visit the poor homes of his parishioners, giving himself totally to his mission. He always accepted life as it came with great faith and a spirit of prayer, being an example of goodness to all his companions." Fr Salvador D'Souza, another companion

remembers with much admiration: “He took no time for holiday or recreation and outings.” From there he was transferred to Matunga.

A Gift to the Bombay Region

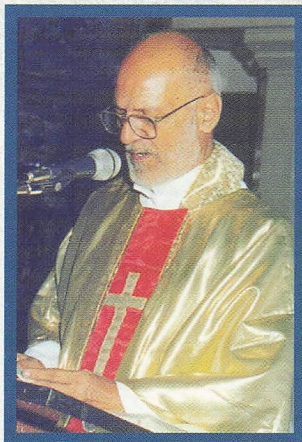
Once in Bombay he offered to minister in several pastoral settings such as Priest-in-charge of St. Jude’s Church, in Malad East from 1975 to 1983. It was not an easy appointment but he made a significant contribution to the parishioners there. Recalling that appointment Fr Salvador adds: “He knew all the parishioners and took care to faithfully celebrate the liturgy in the open air for Holy Week. The people were very fond of him. Most of the time he was alone but Fr. Salvador would often assist him willingly. As Principal of Don Bosco High School, Borivli, Fr John Samala remembers: “During this period whenever he was in need of any special assistance for the parish, we from the community would assist him. He used to request me to help him out on certain occasions such as important religious feasts.” With all his experience, he was able to muster the cooperation of his parishioners in tactful and gentle ways. He was close to all of them who admired his simplicity and the practical solutions he had to problems.

Affectionately remembering Fr Richard the parishioners of Malad noted that “he delivered excellent sermons. He was truly a people’s priest who cared for and served the poorest of the poor. He was dearly remembered for his infectious smile, his warm greeting and his signature blue rubber *chappals* or leather slippers and a *jhola* (a simple cloth shoulder bag) that were his trademark. He was one of the priests who served our parish for the longest duration – approximately seven years.” In conclusion, they added, after enumerating all that he had done for the parish, “What was so special about Fr Richard was that he was a very down-to-earth, humble person, so much so that when he lost his temper with someone, he would visit the home just to apologize. He always had the words *thank you* or *sorry* on his lips. Fr Richard believed in living a simple life, spending very little

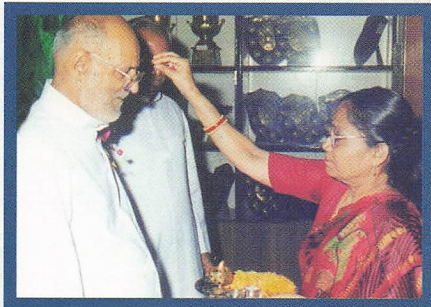
on himself. He lived his life for others to the very end," a beautiful testament to a zealous pastor.

The People's Priest

He was the people's priest and wherever he was, people came to love him for his frequent visits to their homes and his total availability to meet their spiritual needs. He exercised a very fruitful pastoral ministry in the Sacred Heart church at Yervada, Pune and Our Lady of Dolours, Wadala where parishioners remembered him with fond affection and when they came to Matunga would want to visit him



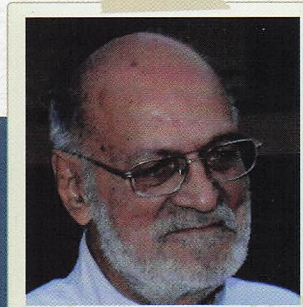
and find out how he was doing. He had certainly left a lasting impression on their spiritual lives through his dedicated ministry. Adaikalam Fernando, the sacristan of Our Lady of Dolours Church, Wadala recalls: "I always



remember him with pride and gratitude. He always treated me as his own son during the eight years I worked under him as sacristan. Father always remembered my birthday and sent me greetings from wherever he was."

Fr Richard was involved in a variety of ministries because he enjoyed good health and a long life. Latterly though, he was inhibited by his deteriorating ability to move around as much as he would have liked. Reflecting

on this Fr Wilfred in his funeral homily said: True to the words of St Paul when he talks about the tent in which we live in is being folded up it can be very painful (2 Cor. 5:1). During his last months, Fr Richard was not himself because of his painful suffering. He suffered physical weakness and then his troublesome dentures prevented him from eating regular food which compounded his weakness and finally his tired heart was giving in. All these took their toll on him, but he bore it with a spirit of Christian resignation and serenity. He earned the respect, admiration and affection of all who knew him in the communities where he was placed. Fr Godfrey D'Souza our provincial in his own special tribute wrote:



"The death of a priest is unlike the death of any other: we feel it differently, deeply. We sense that in losing him, we have lost not only a man but also his unique way of manifesting God. The voice that spoke of God has been silenced; hands that once blessed are impotent. Since a priest is one who takes on the person of Christ, his leave of us is somewhat of a loss in our very communication with the Lord. No one will ever again exemplify Christ for us in the singular way that Fr. Richard has done."

Too often, as religious, we fail to be fully realise the sense of loss that his loved ones experience and so he addressed Fr Richard's relatives:

"The loss that you experience is however a testimony to and a recognition of the good that he did and the love that he showed when he was among us."

A Family's Priest

The words of his sister Philomena aptly sums up the sentiments of his family:

“Those were old days and our parents, brothers and sisters were proud of him. Our parents were very prayerful and strict. God was the first in all our lives. All his priestly life Fr Richard was very loving and he loved the poor. He always visited us on our birthdays when he came to Bombay. He took great care of my son Herman and

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–Fr Provincial

daughter Veletta when she was at Sophia boarding school. He was an angel to look after us whenever we needed him.”

And Veletta remembering her uncle Richard wrote:

“Fr Richard...ever since I can remember I have known him as Richie Uncle. He knew me from the time I was born – that’s over fifty years ago. Despite being in Goa and in other places in India, doing God’s work, to me, he always seemed to be around. Whenever he was came to Bombay he always turned up – for every birthday, communion and other family celebrations. He always seemed to be in Bombay when you needed him. No matter how vast the

distance and how tedious the journey he was there, a familiar face exuding warmth and understanding.

Fr Richard was a humble man...a man of prayer and deep faith. He demonstrated this in his tireless commitment to build churches and parishes, in his readiness to travel in all different directions, to the remotest places just to celebrate Mass, distribute Communion and administer the last rites.

I am deeply grateful that he was there to bless my marriage to Norbert, baptize our children and bless my day in his last hours. He's been our rock, our shoulder to lean on in times both happy and sad. Our children Julian and Declan as well as my husband Norbert and me cannot imagine visiting India and not being able to see him at Don Bosco Matunga. It'll be a strange and sad feeling."

Vitus Pinto another nephew of his adds:

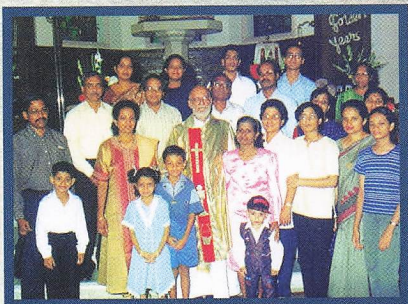
"Fr Richard, my favourite uncle: He was instrumental in my faith growth. He would visit us from Don Bosco Matunga bearing gifts of medals, calendars and books always with Saint John Bosco's face prominent on the cover. I would devour the illustrated books on the life of Don Bosco. My fondest memory is of the time he got me a compass and tried to explain to me, a class III student how to use it. To this day, I remember his instructions whenever I use my GPS.

I was privileged to visit him at one of the orphanages where he was. After spending two days there I was so impressed by the boys at the school that I decided that I wanted to be a priest. Uncle had a deep influence on my spiritual life. Our Lord had other plans for me but thanks to Richie Uncle, I have continued my ministry with youth and the less fortunate."

Generous and Dedicated

His spirit of generosity was as proverbial as his ordination motto: *In Generosity is Love*. That was seen wherever he went and

even during his last years at Matunga, every Wednesday, come rain or shine, Fr Richard made his way to Trombay and that too by the BEST bus from King's Circle. He seemed drawn to perform this regular act of charity once a week. He would go to **Nirmay**



Niketani at Mankhurd to celebrate the Eucharist and hear the confessions of the HIV/AIDS patients and the inmates of the leprosy home which was run by the Daughters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul. It was only a few months before he passed away that his superior had to prevail upon him to discontinue this act of charity, a decision he accepted in a spirit of obedience but with a heavy heart.

As the chaplain to the Salesian Sisters he would celebrate the Eucharist for the community on weekdays, taking pains to prepare a little daily reflection. One admired his sense of duty and commitment with which he embraced this responsibility. He would



make his way down three floors, which was no easy task, and sit at the entrance waiting for the transport to take him to the convent.

On weekends he was at the Shrine in his favoured confessional hearing the confessions of penitents well into the celebration of the Eucharist. When it became difficult

to walk he would use the assistance of some good soul to bring him there. On Thursdays he would set aside time to hear the confessions of the boarders.

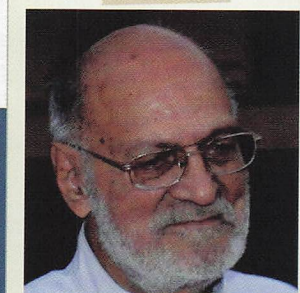
A Fervent Religious

On July 1st 2010, Fr Richard presided at the Eucharist in the Shrine of Don Bosco's Madonna, in Matunga together with over sixty concelebrating Salesian priests from the far flung regions of the province, many Salesian sisters and members of the Salesian family. At the homily, Fr Richard confided that he shared the sentiments of our Blessed Mother when she said: "The Almighty has done great things for me, holy is his name."

Fr Richard lived a simple life, with no demands and was always a Salesian at heart. Regular in his community practices of piety, Fr Richard had a simple remedy for perseverance – a strong faith and devotion to the Mother of God.

Fr Salvador adds: "He showed no great ambitions in the simple way he lived, except to be faithful to his religious life and especially to celebrating the Holy Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours. He always kept as his companion a book on Moral Theology, consulting it regularly, to make sure he never strayed from the right path."

He dedicated his life to the work of the Church and within the Church. He discussed the Church and perhaps debated about issues of the Church, but in the depths of his priestly heart he deeply loved the Church. His devotion to the Holy Eucharist became the daily nourishment of his spiritual growth in this life and the bread that



gave him nourishment became the promise for the life which lasts forever.

Fr Provincial attests to this when he wrote: “A significant trait that stands out in Fr Richard was his fidelity to prayer, especially before the Blessed Sacrament. Fr Richard had a more direct and visible contact with people through his sacramental ministry.”



His devotion to the Holy Eucharist became the daily nourishment of his spiritual growth in this life and the bread that gave him nourishment became the promise for the life, which lasts forever.

He did not draw attention to himself or accomplish fantastic feats that would be regarded great by this world's standards – notwithstanding, he was deeply appreciated and loved by so many. One would think that his apparent difficulty in communicating would distance him from others but that was not to be. His limitations were more than compensated by the person he was and the love he exuded.

He seemed satisfied with the little that he possessed and with the difficult and stark places in which he worked, he never complained. The abstemious way in which he lived, with the minimum in the matter of dress, food, entertainment or possessions, he is truly an inspiration for us. Philomena, his sister recalls: “I remember in those

days, in the late 1940's and early 1950's we were not well off. We never had shoes. We would walk barefoot to school and back. My father worked on the ship and he went out and bought Fr Richard a new pair of shoes and taught him to walk in shoes. It was funny seeing him walk up and down in the compound learning to walk in shoes." One can confidently conclude that this was because he was totally immersed in the things of the Lord which were the only things that truly mattered to him.

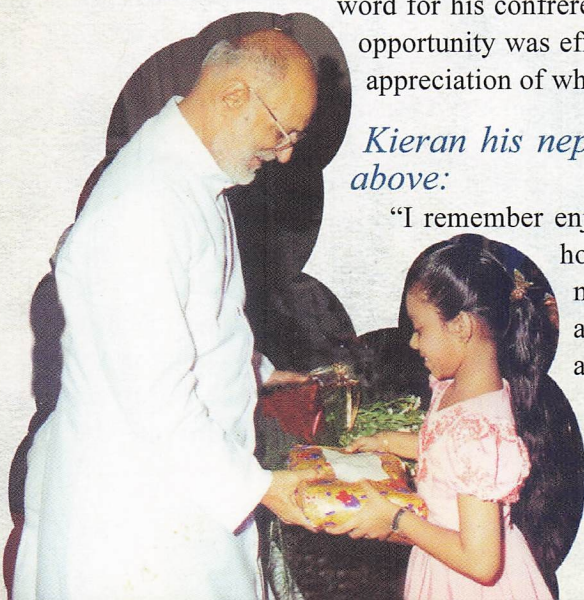
An Affectionate Human Being

He was also so human in so many ways. He loved a good party and to watch an exciting game of cricket or football. He knew the names of the cricketers on the back of his hand and the scores they ratcheted up. He was up-to-date with news be it political, local or ecclesiastical.

His erstwhile rector, Fr Wilfred D'Souza recalls nostalgically: "How often he could engage in a lively conversation at table, whether about politics or sports, especially cricket or football. He never failed to accompany us on community outings notwithstanding his age and difficulty in moving around. He always had a good word for his confreres and when offered an opportunity was effusive in his praise and appreciation of what he observed."

Kieran his nephew attests to the above:

"I remember enjoying his visits to our home. He was always my favourite uncle. He always wore a smile. He always visited us with gifts and entertained us with jokes. He had



a very sharp memory, even in his old age. He kept up with the times and was still relevant in his topics of conversations with us. He was very strict with us when we were kids while saying our prayers. The life he led was a prayerful life without attachment to worldly objects and was only preoccupied in giving either time, or money in charity or prayers. That was his personality. He was always there for us, my parents, brothers and sisters when we needed him. I can say that Fr Richard was a good uncle, brother, son, brother-in-law to all he was related to.

He was also a good friend to those who were in need and to those who were his friends. He was generous, kind and loving. Apart from God's word he spread God's message through his kind deeds, joy



and laughter. From what I remember, Fr Richard, he had a great impact on me. He had tremendous energy, visiting the poor, the under-privileged whenever he had the time. A couple of times he took me with him when he was in his hometown. He would visit his childhood friends who were in old-age homes with no one to take care of them, bringing them gifts, spending time, talking to them and cheering them up. He was constantly doing God's work.

Till the last few months of his life he remained active and full of energy and joy. The youngsters at his parish church likened him to Padre Pio, the way he led his life, the way he prayed and fervently heard confessions. I'm very proud to be Fr Richard's nephew."

Conclusion

The death of a holy person is a glorious phenomenon of grace, as was his life. The slow painful disintegration of the body gave way to a complete transformation into another Christ. He strove all his life to live such a life, and his death was now the ultimate consummation of his love for Christ and his Blessed Mother.



I will leave the last word to Fr Provincial:

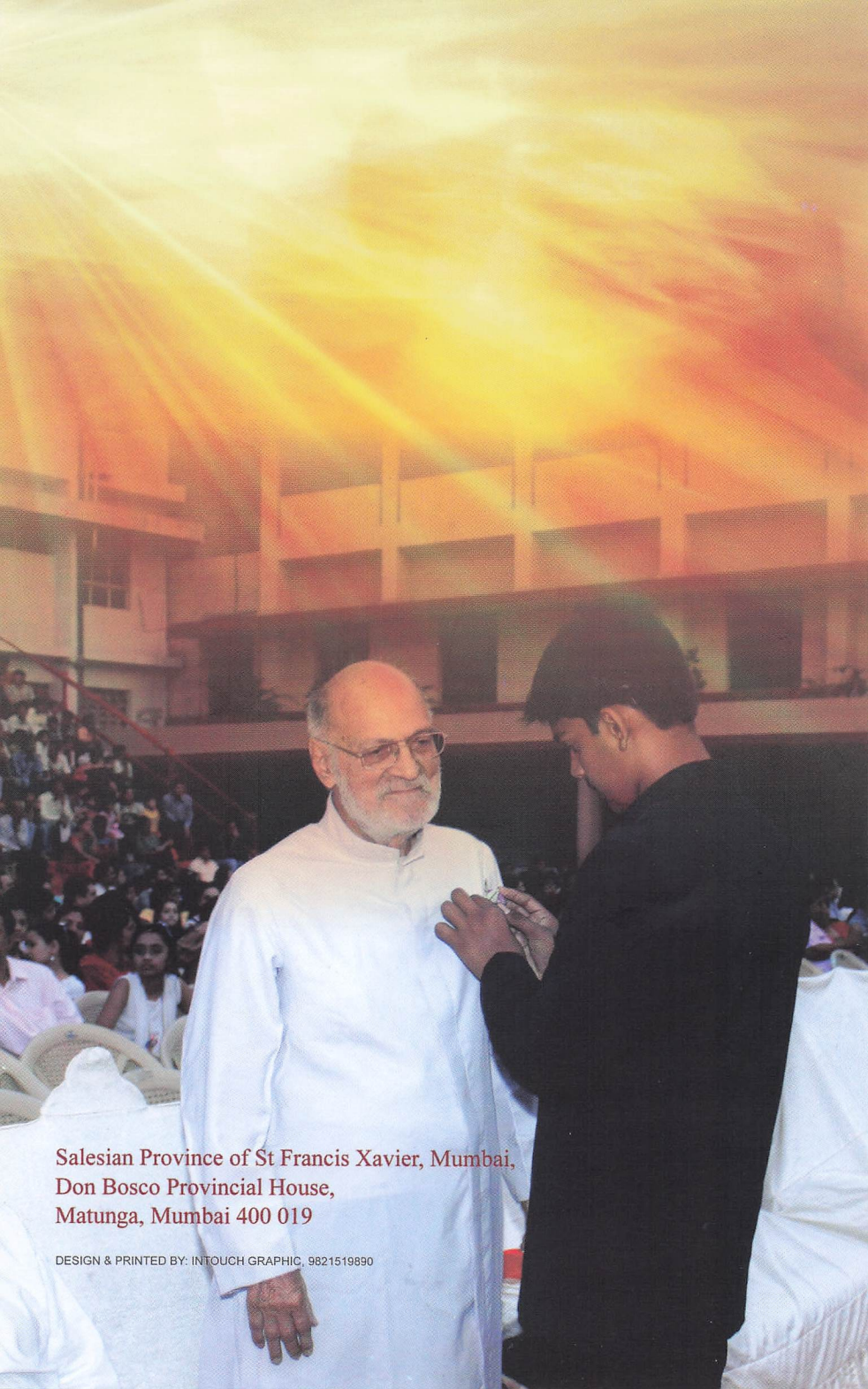
“I wish to thank Fr Richard, for his life as a dedicated priest and a steadfast Salesian. We will all miss him but we can rely on his continued help from the great beyond. We yet have much to learn and as Christians we are given a certain time yet to live as Christians-in-the-making. In the meantime, we will remember him in our prayers and other pious suffrages, never presuming upon his merits, imploring the good Lord to grant him fellowship with the saints and the unbounded happiness and everlasting union with Jesus and his beloved “Blessed Virgin Mary.”

And to us who are left behind he adds:

Dear Fr Richard, we realize that in reminiscing your life, like every life, is an unfinished symphony. It is left to us to complete that symphony and hand it over, to the next generation. The symphony will remain unfinished until Christ returns to bring harmony to all of creation. We are grateful today to you, Fr Richard, for making this symphony sound that much sweeter through the gift of your life, your priesthood and your Salesian vocation.



On the Occasion of his First Death Anniversary
17th October 2015



Salesian Province of St Francis Xavier, Mumbai,
Don Bosco Provincial House,
Matunga, Mumbai 400 019

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What was so special about Fr Richard was that he was a very down to earth, humble person, so much so that when he lost his temper with someone, he would visit the home just to apologize. He always had the words *thank you* or *sorry* on his lips.

-A Parishioner
St. Jude's Parish, Malad, Mumbai

