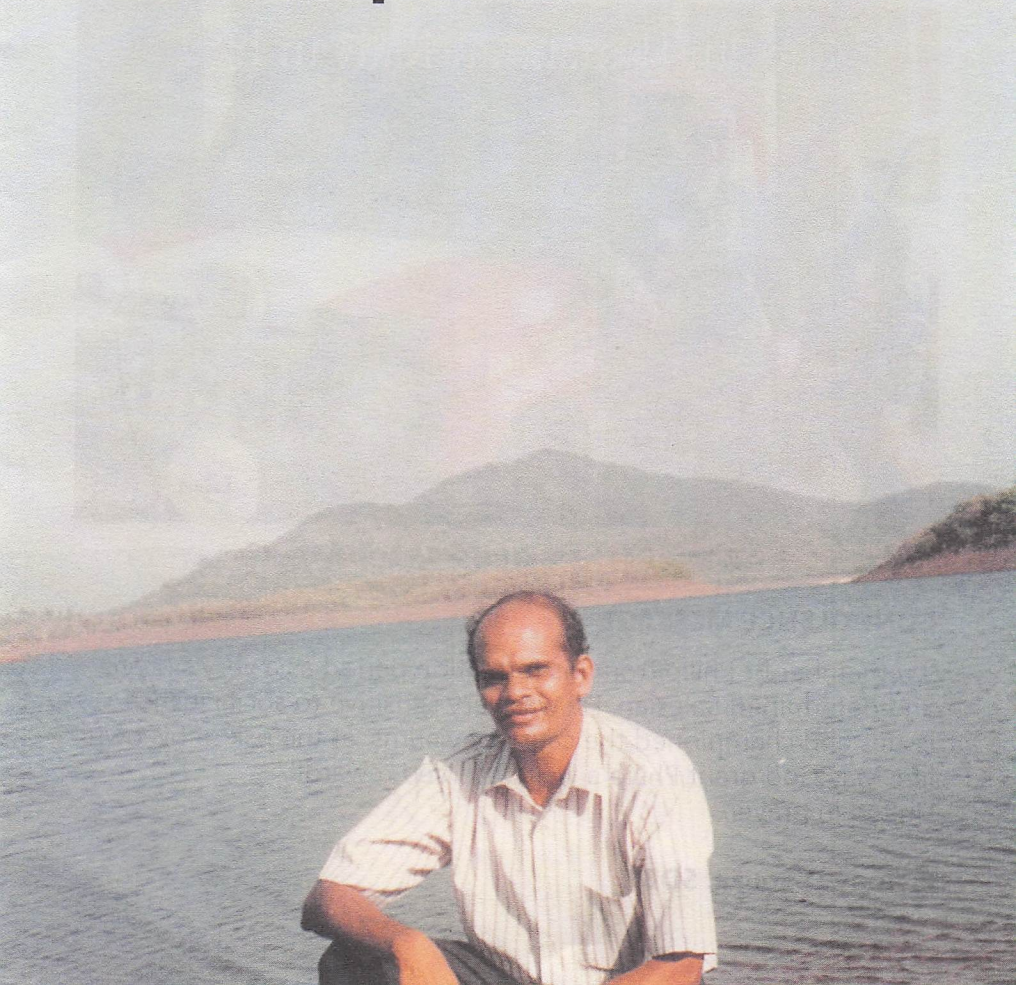


## **The Salesian Province of Panjim Remembers with Love**

# **Br. Philip Neri De Souza**





**Br. Antonio Philip Neri De Souza** was born to Mr. Aluisio Neri De Souza and Mrs. Theresa Viegas Neri De Souza on 24th April 1960 at Margao in South Goa. Around the year 1987, Philip made a request to try out his salesian vocation and was placed in the community of Bosco Boys Home, Borivli, Mumbai, under the guidance of the Rector, Fr. Nelson Carvalho. He was 28 years old at the time and had completed a two year course in Motor Mechanics at Don Bosco Technical Institute, Fatorda after his SSC. Thereafter, he had worked for 6 years in Goa and one year in Mumbai. Being an accomplished mechanic on the Maruti vehicles, during his stint at Mumbai, he was hand-picked to accompany drivers on their mountain rallies through the Himalayas.

While at Borivli, Philip taught school drop-outs the Motor Mechanics trade. By March 1989, he applied for permission to join the Salesian



*To Philip Neri de Souza in gratitude from Geoff Stone and Jack Davidson*

## **CONDOLENCE MESSAGE**

'I remember Br Philip from his formation period as a very sincere and determined Salesian. He was very sensitive to social justice issues and championed the cause of victims, at the risk of his own life. May God grant Philip a well deserved reward!'

United in prayer,

**Fr Tony D'Souza, SDB**



Novitiate at Nashik as a Salesian Brother, attracted by the salesian way of life and apostolate. The assessment of Philip at the time of joining reads hardworking, cooperative, respectful, shows a sense of belonging, open to directions, very skilled in motor mechanics; prayerful; sensitive, tends to overwork, sometimes insists on doing things his way. These were characteristic traits that marked the life of Philip all through.

Philip began his Novitiate year on 24th May 1989. During that period, and through the later years, Philip displayed a lack of interest in study, academics and intellectual formation as well as a tendency to have the last word in discussions, though he showed great talent in the technical field, garnered especially from his years of work experience, was obliging and self sacrificing. Of one thing he was determined, viz., to be a Salesian Brother.



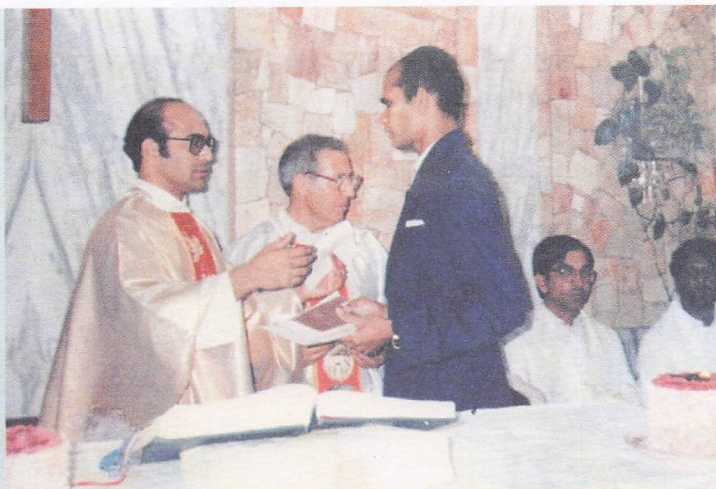
### **CONDOLENCE MESSAGE**

'I am truly sorry for the death of Philip Neri at 55 years of age. Sincere, hardworking, courageous, good for relationship with people and officials, and a great lover of the poor. He also suffered in silence. May his soul rest in peace,

**Fr Maria Arokiam Kanaga, SDB**



From Nashik, being a Brother, Philip was sent to the Don Bosco Vidyaniketan, Kalyani, West Bengal for his post-novitiate formation in May 1990. Once there, his dislike for studies became very pronounced for which his Provincial, Fr. Loddy Pires, expressed his understanding of the situation, Br. Philip being a late vocation, but also urged him to do something about the matter. By November 1990, Br. Philip writes urging the Provincial to get him back to the Province as he was not happy with the way things were in the community. He even consulted Fr. Nicholas Lo Groi and the Provincial of Calcutta. In that letter he writes, I have still kept the habit of personal prayer which I learnt in Nashik. It is only Our Lord who is helping me to carry on and keep the flame that I lit six months ago burning and to be faithful to my Yes to God. On the other hand, his superiors felt differently. They surmised that Br. Philip was neither



## CONDOLENCE MESSAGE

'The Provincial and Salesians of Guwahati Province extend to the Provincial and all confreres of Panjim Province our heartfelt condolences at the passing away of Br. Philip Neri SDB. He believed in legal advocacy for realization of the rights of children and the marginalized persons. He was a courageous Salesian who loved the poor. He worked in the province of Guwahati for more than two years. We thank God for the gift of his life and services to ING. May his soul rest in peace!'

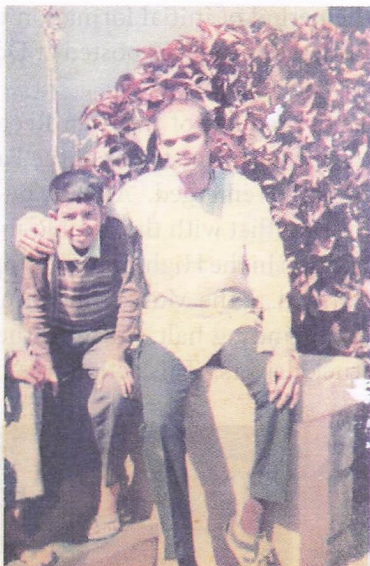
**Fr Zachary Varickasseril, SDB**

Provincial House, Guwahati



interested in studies nor in the community programs and was having a difficulty with adjusting to a regular life in a formation community.

The Provincial, intending to help him, called Br. Philip out of Kalyani and placed him at Divyadaan, Nashik to continue with the post-novitiate phase (1991-1992). In May 1992, Br. Philip was posted at St. Josephs Technical School, Kurla as a practical trainee, took charge of the auto-mechanic shop and remained there for three years. While here, the outstanding qualities that marked his life were dedication, self-sacrificing nature and determination to see his work through. Along with that were his strictness with self and others that got him on the wrong side of people, his tendency to get lost in his work to the detriment of his health and



## CONDOLENCE MESSAGE

'A special card to a special person with an acknowledgement that we should have stated this much, much earlier given our achievements on the 9th Himalayan Rally in 1989.

Geoff Stone and Jack Davidson wish it to be kept on record that Philip Neri de Souza was instrumental in keeping our Maruti Gypsy in fine fettle during the challenge that was the 9th Himalayan Rally.

Without your help, Philip, in translating and carrying out the necessary work to maintain the car en route, we are convinced that we would not have finished, far less be placed as second best European drivers and top British drivers on this tough, demanding, hazardous and exciting event.

Philip, your efforts on this event, as you have shown in life, where you have given so much to so many has been as majestic as the Himalayas, and our efforts as mere drivers pales into insignificance." God be with you, Philip! You are in my prayers!

**Jack Davidson** Scotland [Posted on 31st October 2014 & Received in November 2015 due to insufficient address]



a propensity to be self-willed. In May 1995, he moved to Don Bosco Ganv, Quepem as Teacher and Assistant and, from there to Don Bosco Agro-Ed Complex, Sulcorna as Prefect of Studies in March 1997. He remained in the period of initial formation till May 1998 when he made his Perpetual Profession and was posted at Don Bosco Technical Institute, Fatorda.

At the request of the then Rector at Sulcorna, Br. Philip was transferred there as Administrator of the Farm. With that move, the social activist in Br. Philip emerged. Already by 24th September 2001, we find him getting into conflict with the Timblo mining company. Br. Philip had filed a writ petition in the High Court to stop mining activities of M/s Timblo Minerals Pvt. Ltd. at the Muscavrem mines. As a result, the mining activities came to a grinding halt, much to the displeasure of the mine owners and the truck drivers. This action was the result of his awareness of the hardships



## REMEMBRANCE MESSAGE

"I thank Br Philip because he was the first to invite me and a few children from the dhangar-gouilly community to study in Don Bosco, Sulcorna. My own brothers and sisters and most of the children from our Goulliwada, Neturlim now study in Don Bosco. He motivated my parents and other poor people from our settlement to educate us.

### Miss Sobha Lambhor

Ex Student of Don Bosco Agro-Ed School, Sulcorna, Goa



being encountered by the poor people who depended for their livelihood on the Kushawati river that was getting polluted, as manganese ore was being washed and the slurry emptied into the river. Besides that, there was the rising dust pollution, destruction of wells and silting of the riverbed in this once pristine part of the State. The river water had been traditionally used for agriculture, dairy farming and cattle rearing, besides its use for human consumption. With this activism, threatening letters began to find their way to the Sulcorna community, targeting Br. Philip.

In reply to a letter from the Delegate of the Konkan, Fr. Romulo Noronha, asking Br. Philip for an explanation of his actions, a detailed letter dated 24th Sept. 2003 follows, in which one gets a picture of the extent of the damages that would have ensued had the mining companies had their way. This would have affected not only the villagers but even the Salesians in



## REMEMBRANCE MESSAGE

His vision and foresight has been enlightenment today. If an erstwhile President of India Shri. A.P.J. Kalam has written "Ignited Minds" this guy had already ignited the young, the old and the entire brethren by cutting across religious lines and by leading from the front. The spirit of Bro. Philip will keep the flame burning till the end.

### Mr Johnson Fernandes

Dy. Collector & SDM, Ponda, Goa



the long term. Depletion of ground water, reduced productivity of paddy fields due to mining silt, dust pollution causing health problems, loss of private property resulting in landless villagers and an uncertain future for Salesians (all that will be left of Don Bosco Farm will be the mountain beyond Our Ladys Hill, below Corla village, which is a reserved forest) would have been the consequences due to renewal of mining leases.

Br. Philip became linked to the movements that fought destruction of the environment and more particularly of peoples livelihood. Gradually, he became the rallying point around whom the people came together to fight for their rights, in the process of which they became empowered. The *Kushawati Bachao Andolan* was an off-shoot of these movements. Due to his initiative, in January 2005, the then Governor of Goa, Shri S. C. Jamir was taken on a tour of several of the surrounding villages and, seeing the



## REMEMBRANCE MESSAGE

He was a champion for the mining affected villagers in the neighbouring villages of Sulcorna. He had made a thorough study of the mines and the destruction it caused to the farms and the farming people. He had an art for drafting letters to the officials like Collector, the D.S.P the Sarpanch and other big dignitaries like the Governor. It was through the then governor, Mr. Singh that the road to the remote village of Karla, up in the hills was sanctioned. Then they were given a Kadamba bus service.

**Fr Mathias D'Cunha, SDB**



plight of the people and hearing of their grievances, issued orders to the officers accompanying him, to initiate action to resolve these issues. At a seminar on mining and women, organized by mines, minerals and People (mmP), in New Delhi, in April 2003, a group of local women, accompanied by Br. Philip, gave a presentation of their problems to a national audience in front of a shocked print and electronic media. Extensive coverage by the local media back home failed to have the desired effect. A group of women formed an organization *Krishi Vikas Ekta Sanghand*, despite threats, rallied around Brother in fighting for the cause of their village at Colomb, Sulcorna. On a more personal note, I also know for sure that on several occasions, Br. Philip would sleep in different rooms at Sulcorna for fear that someone would take his life! If mining has been halted and regulatory bodies are putting checks in place today, I believe Goa needs to salute the courage and initiative of a salesian brother, Br. Philip Neri De



## REMEMBRANCE MESSAGE

"We the Helpers of Mary at Nitya Seva Niketan, Rivona were privileged to work with Bro. Philip Neri sdb, in the tribal villages of Sanguem, Goa. Bro. PhilipNeri played an outstanding role in fighting for the rights of the poor. This was an expression of love from his heart and his faith in Jesus. He was an epitome of MERCY and he lived every moment of it, for others."

**Sr Rohini, SHM**

Provincial Superior, Helpers of Mary



Souza who began the movement with the local people. Pressure was even brought to bear upon the superiors by Ministers in the Government to get Br. Philip transferred out of Sulcornia because they were in collusion with the mining mafia.

By 2007, Br. Philip was sent to Mawlai, Shillong to attend to his On-going Formation. He was to pursue the Diploma Course in Theology. Due to the turn of events at Sulcornia, with threats to his life and the Provincial desiring to help him, this line of action was taken. However, it did not go down well with him. He got deeply depressed and was told to return to the Province, which he did, after great struggle, travelling from Guwahati to



## REMEMBRANCE MESSAGE

"I lost a really beautiful person and a true friend in the person of Philip. I don't think ever, anyone can fill the vacuum that his death has created. What inspires me looking at Philip is: His passion to reach out to the poorest of the poor children, women and people in the villages, in the remotest parts of the States in which he served. His spirituality of ecology, care and love for the earth and his efforts to stop destruction of natural resources has been truly praiseworthy.

**Sr Dr Vijaya Rani, SMI**, Holy Family Hospital, Amalapuram,  
Andhra Pradesh



Goa by train on 14th December 2007. On his return, he was physically and psychologically extremely weak, stayed home for a few days and then, disappeared for a time. His destination was unknown to anyone initially. He was finally discovered by Fr. Nelson Carvalho at the station of Baroda. He was sent for medical attention to the Holy Spirit Hospital at Andheri, Mumbai. From Baroda, after a few months recuperating his energies, with the kind understanding of the then Provincial of Guwahati, Fr. Joe Almeida, Br. Philip was granted permission to reside and work in that Province in February 2009. He was placed in the salesian community of Amkachi in a missionary setting.



## REMEMBRANCE MESSAGE

"Philip came across to me as a forthright person, one who would call a spade a spade and this usually came at a price. He could give offence to people due to his honesty and critical insight into mannerisms, situations and events. This part of his character of looking at things critically, quite often made him look at things and persons negatively (in my understanding and experience); maybe he wanted people to be more genuine or....

He had a passion to take up causes for the poor and the downtrodden, those who faced injustice and this was very commendable. A man of constant action, one who would not like to remain still! Rest in peace dear Philip and pray for us!"

**Fr Brian Moras, SDB** - Novitiate Companion



While in that Province, Br. Philip continued to work for the upliftment of the people of the remotest villages of Umswai, Amkachi and Sojong, liberating children who were bonded to brick kiln owners, using his new found friendship with the Chief Justice of the Guwahati High Court to permit an exam centre for Std. X and XII students who otherwise had to live away from home during exam days and in rented homes, as reaching the exam centres entailed a four hour journey. Of course, the education authorities did not like this for it meant they would have to travel to these distant areas to arrange for the exams! He even got the Handmaids of Christ from Goa to work at Sojong to run a school, do village and evangelizing work and got the Bishop to confirm their presence there to look after the people in these remote areas.

## REMEMBRANCE MESSAGE

Sometime in the year 2008, Br. Philip walked into my office at Salgaocar College of Law, Miramar – Goa. Without any introduction he began to discuss about the pollution of river Kushwati near Sulcorna in South Goa. He having known my associations with the Salesians of Don Bosco, deemed it unnecessary to enter into any formal introduction of himself or the cause. Such was his style and ‘the Cause was his passion.’ With my limited knowledge of river pollution, I only gave him a few hints on the need for caution and how the rich and the powerful would not hesitate to destroy those who obstruct their business. Thereafter, he was an occasional visitor to my office, but always to discuss or show me a draft of any application relating to his cause. He had no other business except his cause and that was his commitment.

BR PHILIP NERI DE SOUZA according to me was a JEWEL IN THE CROWN OF THE SALESIANS OF INDIA and especially the Konkani Province .

### Dr Marian Pinheiro

Dean of Department of Law, Goa University, Goa  
Ex Principal of Salgaocar College of Law, Goa

He was indeed  
a true  
revolutionary  
at heart  
but like  
Jesus always  
focused on  
the cause  
and never  
on personal  
fame or  
achievements.



When Br. Philip returned to the Province of Panjim by late 2012, having done a lot of good work among the people of the North East, he was physically sick. From January 2013, he had begun receiving blood transfusions and medication regularly. After many medical investigations by doctors in Mumbai as well as in Goa, in July 2014, Br. Philip was diagnosed as suffering from MDS, or Myelodysplastic syndrome, which refers to a collection of disorders in which the bone marrow does not produce enough blood cells leading to leukemia. Additionally, the iron content in his blood had been extremely high from 2008. After receiving his blood report from Mumbai, in an email to a doctor at GMC in July 2014, Br. Philip jokingly observes the only improvement is that the iron content has shot up from 2505 to 3456 ng/ml. It could be because of the Supreme Court ban on mining; please pray that mining begins at the earliest.

## REMEMBRANCE MESSAGE

"O my, my! Philip you are sleeping. Go wash your face and come. Poor chap!" ... that was how Fr. Master (Rev. Fr. Joseph Casti) would interrupt his conferences to us, the 1989-90 batch of Novices. 25 silver years later, when I reminded him of such academic/classroom struggles, Philip would triumphantly tell me, "Yeah, you wrote each word Fr. Master spoke in your conference book and forgot about it... instead I listened and I am practicing those conferences even today!" Instantly I felt insulted, but a closer look at his life makes me feel that it was true. As a companion and a friend, and knowing Philip that long, I can say that he lived his religious life in all honesty before God and neighbour. Never a person to display exaggerated forms and expressions of piety, he was a person who shared a deep union with a God who had the face and smell of the poor.

A man  
having deep  
knowledge of  
man, matter  
and machines,  
he was well  
informed  
and highly  
opinionated.

**Fr Arvind Severes, SDB** - Novitiate companion and friend



Treatments to reverse the process proved futile. He was asked to reside at the Provincial House, Odxel to facilitate follow up of treatment due to proximity to the Goa Medical College. As time progressed, he would be admitted to the hospital every fifteen days or so to receive red blood cell and platelet transfusions. The doctors and nurses there were very understanding and cooperative. They extended all help to Br. Philip whenever he visited the hospital. In his inimitable way, he kept them good-humored and made it a point to enquire about their families and their work. Gradually, with time, as his condition worsened, he began to have bouts of bleeding from the gums and from other parts of his body. He even requested us not to purchase any costly medication as it gradually



## REMEMBRANCE MESSAGE

**As a person:** Br. Philip dared to walk the unbeaten path with utmost sensitivity and genuine concern to everyone and everything he came across.

**As a Salesian:** He was at times a sign of contradiction because of his convictions and radical following of his vocation.

**Always for the poor:** He stood with the downtrodden and supported the less fortunate to enable them for a better living.

**All for environment:** It was his nature...not 'How much I can get rather how best I can care and share'.

**Voice for Socially marginalised:** He championed the cause of those exploited, under privileged and on the periphery of society.

**Fr Tamatur Cardozo, SDB**



dawned on him that his condition was irreversible. Towards the end, the frequency of his visits to the hospital increased.

On 14th June 2015, Br. Philip was admitted to the hospital for what, we all believed, was one of his routine visits for a blood transfusion. It was to be his last! The end came very quickly on Wednesday, 24th June, at 8.10 p.m. Before we could reach his bedside, Br. Philip was gone. All of us, including Br. Philip, had lived in the hope that a miracle would take place. A few days prior to his death, I had had the privilege of assisting him through the night at the hospital. At a quiet moment, he spoke to me of a vision he had had recently, where he saw all the dead cells being carried away from



## REMEMBRANCE MESSAGE

"Unassuming, passionate and committed, that's the first impression I had of Brother Philip. He knew the problems and anxieties of the villagers who had a complex existence. Almost in every family was someone who was dependent on mining for survival and another few who were dependent on agriculture for living and feared that unchecked mining activity was destroying their yield. The conflict between the two groups was what the mining lobby exploited, with the result that you would often find brothers fighting over mining issue. It is this spirit of his that probably keeps him alive even today in the hearts of several hundred people whose lives he touched."

**Preetu Nair,**

Senior Assistant Editor, The Times of India



his body and being replaced with fresh blood cells. Who knew that it was a premonition of the New Life he was soon to enjoy!

At his funeral homily, celebrated at his parish church, Our Lady of Assumption, Velsao, the Provincial in his homily shared this reflection.

Like his Founder, Br. Philip became a salesian of the street, who made the love of God visible in the work he did to bring about justice and healing, testified to by the presence of the local people of villages around Sulcorna at his funeral today and the prayers of his beneficiaries in the N.E. India. He



## REMEMBRANCE MESSAGE

From 2002 with Br Philip our agitation against the strong mining companies to fight for our rights and to preserve environment from destruction received a loud voice. He taught and guided us. He prepared some for leadership. Got journalists, social activists, collectors, ministers to see the reality of our villages. He was threatened, accused... He had to suffer much because of his daring ways of taking head on the mining mafia. But he loved the environment, loved the poor villagers, and wished they come up in life. He was a man sent by God to us. We owe it to Br Philip, the beginnings of the closure of illegal mining in Goa.

**Rama Velip** (Activist)  
Kollombh, Quepem, Goa



had his fair share of misunderstandings and hurts! He suffered in life, both physically due to his illness dating back to 2008 and his lobbying on behalf of the down-trodden. The bodily pain and cramps and the transfusions were painful, but he bore it stoically and kept up his sense of humor and interest in all that happened around. He never complained and remained steadfast.

I am quite certain that like St. Paul, Br. Philip can say, I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous



## REMEMBRANCE MESSAGE

"Br Philip came across to me as a man of principles. A person who challenged authority for the rights and dignity of poor people. He lived his religious life convincingly and practiced what he preached. At the same time, I found him light hearted and a jovial person. He was a practical man, down to earth in what he did. His skills for driving the Jeep and relating to people attracted us to him. I was amazed and surprised to see the work done for the students in the North East and in the missions of Sulcorna. A simple silent brother and a worker, who would dare to change the system. A true friend and an honest companion!

"We will miss him a lot, but he will live on in the lives he has touched and in the memories he has left behind."

**Fr Gregory Almeida, SDB** - Novitiate Companion



Judge, will award to me on that day.

Entrusting him into the hands of our merciful God, let us pray that Br. Philip will not begin a revolution in heaven, but will rest forever in peace!

Br. Philip Neri De Souza lies buried at the Salesian cemetery at Fatorda. He lies peacefully in the earth that he fought so valiantly to protect! May his spirit live on in the people he empowered!

**Fr. Ian Figueiredo, SDB**  
Provincial  
Salesian Province of Panjim  
24 July 2016



## REMEMBRANCE MESSAGE

"Philip, lived his life in all simplicity and frankness. Never a person to spend on himself, he dressed in simple clothes and always remained a friend of the poor. A technically gifted person, he was much sought after for his mechanical expertise before he joined the Salesians. It was truth that motivated him to fight against all odds.

**Fr Nelson Carvalho, SDB**



## REMEMBRANCE MESSAGE

"Br Philip was an elder brother to me. I relied on his guidance right from school days up to his death. He always encouraged us to study further and to never give up when faced with difficulties. He had a special concern for the girl-child/student and always alerted us when we needed to protect ourselves.

**Mrs Ancy Lopes** (Rivona, Goa)

Ex-Student of Don Bosco School, Sulcorna



## REMEMBRANCE MESSAGE

"What can I say about Philip that society does not know! Yet Philip for me was a dear friend who I miss very much. What I miss most are his concerns and practical advices which in retrospect I hope I had heeded."

**Fr Blaise Fernandes, SDB** - Novitiate companion





## One year with the Lord...

Born: 24 April 1960

Died: 24 June 2015

