



**SALESIAN PROVINCIAL HOUSE**  
THE CITADEL  
MADRAS-INDIA

*"The memory of our departed brothers  
unites in love that never ends  
those who are still pilgrims on earth  
with those who already rest in Christ."*

- Const.122

## **FATHER AMALADOSS ANTHONY SWAMY**

With the passing away of our dear Fr. Anthoniswamy, we have lost a veteran who had been associated with the growth and development of the Province from the very beginning. He died, following a massive heart attack, in the late hours of August 20, 1983, at the Provincial House to which place he had been brought only three days earlier from Pannur for medical consultation with specialists in the city. He had lived 73 years - 50 of them as a Salesian. Till the last he was a zealous priest and a loyal son of Don Bosco.

On the evening of August 17, when I passed through our Apostolic School in Pannur, I found Fr. Anthoniswamy very ill. The same night I brought him to Madras. On 18th and 19th he was examined by Dr. Solomon Victor, Chief Surgeon at the Cardiology Department of the General Hospital. The doctor and others felt that there was no sign of any immediate danger.

However, after tea on August 20, he complained of some pain in the chest, and showed signs of tension. The doctor was contacted and he advised admitting him in a nearby clinic the next morning. As the pain subsided, Father listened to some recorded music before going for dinner. At dinner he ate very little, and as he found it hard to digest even that little, he asked for ginger water.

At about 9.15 p.m. when I returned from a visit to Veeralur, I found Fr. Anthoniswamy slowly sipping ginger water. Then he went to his room, took his normal dose of medicines and set the alarm to rise at 5.00 a.m. the next morning. Ten minutes later, he felt bad, vomitted and broke into a cold sweat. The confreres of the Provincial House rushed to his room. While I was busy trying to get an ambulance, Fr. Anthoniswamy asked to be anointed. Fr. Vice-Provincial administered the sacrament to him. He was fully conscious while being anointed and said all the prayers along with the rest of us in the room. He kept repeating the names of Jesus and Mary and two minutes later breathed his last so quietly and so peacefully that we could hardly believe he was no more. The sisters of Mercy Home were by his side but they could not revive him.

Born in Trichinopoly on February 3, 1910, the third of Amaladoss Pillay and Ignatiammal's nine children, Anthoniswamy was baptized in the Holy Redeemer's Church. At school he excelled in athletics and won honours as the school's champion pole vaulter. Throughout his school days he had been nurturing a desire to become a priest. So it was no surprise that having finished his matriculation at the National High School, Nagapattam, at the age of nineteen, he asked to join the Pius XI Seminary, at Kondichetty Street, Madras. This seminary was started by Mgr. Eugene Mederlet, S.D.B., the first Salesian Archbishop of Madras, for the purpose of building up a native clergy. While at the seminary at Kondichetty Street, Anthoniswamy got in touch with Mgr. Louis Mathias, the Prefect Apostolic of Assam and the Provincial Superior of India. In a letter dated September 8, 1931, Mgr. Mathias invited young Anthoniswamy to join the aspirantate at Shillong, if Archbishop Mederlet of Madras would permit him. A month later, Mgr. Mathias wrote again telling

Xavier due to inter group rivalry. In the first year itself, Fr. Anthoniswamy succeeded in celebrating this feast to the satisfaction of all. During his time, the parish experienced relative peace and much progress. He rebuilt the Church at Kodiveri, built a chapel at Doreyampalayam and finally succeeded in getting a High School for the village. A daily oratory was also started in the parish.

Many will remember his readiness to bring up a new home for the poor boys at Vellakinar in Coimbatore. It was a pioneering life, deprived of all comforts. His presence there began to turn the dry land into a lovely coconut grove.

The major part of his priestly life was spent in the diocese of Vellore. Besides Kaniyambady and Uriurkuppam, he worked as parish priest at Koviloor, Udiyandiram (Vaniyambadi) and Katpadi. It was in 1971, while being parish priest in Katpadi that he suffered his first heart attack. After that he had never been too well. He suffered much but never complained. Even as a seminarian he had poor health; when very tired, his hands used to tremble. This weakness persisted and showed itself very strongly in his later years.

Since 1974 he had been at the Don Bosco Apostolic School, Pannur. He found great joy and fulfilment being confessor and spiritual guide to the 120 boys of the apostolic school and to numerous others in the area. He loved to be with the youngsters, especially while they were at play. The boys loved him in return and found in him a real father for their souls.

The funeral mass was celebrated at The Refuge, Madras, at 5.00 p.m. on August 21. A large number of priests both salesian and diocesan joined me in the concelebration. The Salesian Sisters, pupils, and a large number of faithful also participated. The boys of the Apostolic school had come all the way from Pannur. In his homily, Fr. Clive Hurley spoke of Fr. Anthoniswamy as a zealous priest and a true son of Don Bosco. After the mass the body was taken to Pannur to be buried in the small cemetery in the school campus. Fr. Anthoniswamy will certainly like to be there, close to the confreres and boys he loved so much.

From Uriurkuppam Fr. Anthoniswamy came to Jalarpet and after a brief spell there, was appointed parish priest of Kaniyambady where he worked for three years. The people of Kaniyambady remember him as a Marian soul and the grotto he built there became a sign of his personal love for the Immaculate and the focus of Marian piety in the parish.

Fr. Anthoniswamy talked about Our Lady often and his words always exuded confidence as the following incident bears out. In 1956 he had gone to the parish church at Varadarajampet in the diocese of Kumbakonam for recruiting vocations. Seeing a picture of Mary Help of Christians on the wall calendar of the presbytery, he told the parish priest, the late Fr. Chinnapan: "The Mother has come already; the sons will follow." This was realized in June 1964 when the Salesians opened a school and orphanage there. Today this institution caters to 900 students and 200 youngsters at the youth centre.

In 1958 he returned to Sagayathottam and worked there till 1963, first as delegate (acting rector) and later as confessor. Till the end of his life he had a special affection for this place and for the poor boys in this institution. While in Pannur, during the last nine years of his life, he used to go to Sagayathottam every week to hear confessions. His "good night" talk every Friday was something that the boys of Sagayathottam looked forward to because they were always interesting and abundant in spiritual thoughts. These weekly visits to the agricultural school also gave him an opportunity to deepen his knowledge of agriculture which was a life long hobby for him. Keenly interested in every aspect of it, he used to discuss the latest developments in agriculture with the specialists at the school and learn from them both theory and technique. Back in Pannur he used to try out these "latest" on his little farm. His experiments were always successful and drew the admiration of everyone including the specialists.

In 1963, when Bishop Padiyara of Ooty invited the Salesians to look after the parish of Peria Kodiveri, Fr. Anthoniswamy was sent there as parish priest. The parish was going through a difficult period; for nineteen years they could not celebrate the parish feast of St. Francis

him to spend some time in one of the Salesian houses in Madras before proceeding to the north.

Asking to be admitted to the novitiate, in a letter dated August 31, 1932, he wrote: "My only aim is to secure the salvation of souls according to the Salesian motto *Da mihi animas coetera tolle.*" He started his novitiate at Our Lady's House, Shillong, on December 10, 1932. He received the cassock from Mgr. Mathias and made his first religious profession on December 11, 1933, at Shillong. After two more years of philosophical studies at Shillong, he came down to Don Bosco Orphanage, Vellore, for his practical training. In 1937 he was sent to the Sacred Heart Seminary, Poonamallee, for the second year of regency. A year later, he left again for Shillong, this time to begin his theological studies - a thing he had been eagerly waiting for. After completing the four - year course he was ordained as a priest on June 5, 1941, at Shillong, by the late Mgr. Ferdinand Perier, S.J., Archbishop of Calcutta. The priestly ordination - the culmination of his long cherished dream - marked also the beginning of a fruitful ministry in the service of the Lord.

Fr. Anthoniswamy's first assignment after ordination was as administrator of Don Bosco Orphanage, Vellore. At the same time, he also served as assistant to the parish priest. In 1943 he came to Lourdes Shrine, Perambur, as assistant parish priest and two years later he was appointed parish priest at Arambakkam. In 1946 he was sent to Uriurkuppam as parish priest and remained there till 1950.

It was during this time that he arranged to buy some 200 acres of land close to the parish church, at what is now known to everyone as Sagayathottam, for starting an agricultural school. This land was held by joint *patta*-holders and great skill and tact had to be employed before the issue could be clinched. Still more formidable was the task of getting Government recognition for the new agricultural school. For Fr. Anthoniswamy it meant incessant trips to government offices, hopping over numerous bureaucratic hurdles and often cutting short miles of red tape at great personal sacrifice. In all these, Fr. Anthoniswamy displayed uncommon negotiatory skills.

Fr. Anthoniswamy's death was a real 'homecoming'. He had served the Lord with great generosity and had prepared himself like the good and wise steward awaiting the arrival of His Master. This year (1983)—the Golden Jubilee Year of his Religious Profession—he was very much in our minds as a person dear to God and man. He loved his Salesian vocation and was always interested in Salesian news from all parts of the world. His respect for and obedience to his superiors could not go unnoticed by those who had lived close to him. Fr. Adaikalaswamy, his rector for three years (1980-83), says he was very much impressed by his generosity to the poor. His spirit of sacrifice and readiness to help the community was also remarkable.

May God rest his soul. May You, O Lord, take this grain of wheat that has fallen into the ground, and make it bring forth an abundance of zealous workers in your vineyard.

Let us cherish the memory of this beloved confiere for he is now a link uniting us with those in heaven.

Yours affectionately in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Peter Sathiaraj', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the left.

FR. JOHN PETER SATHIARAJ  
PROVINCIAL