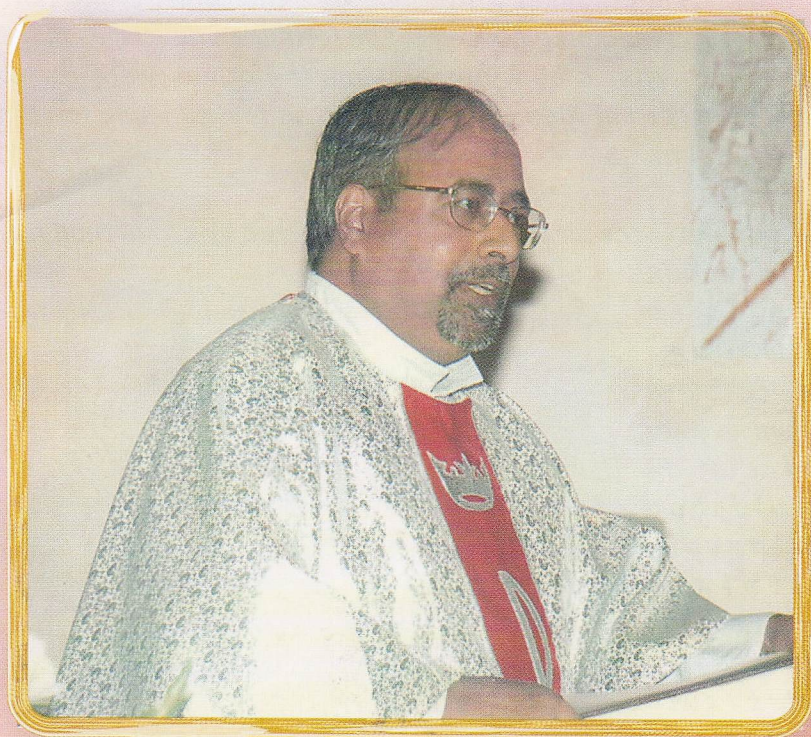


Touching Lives Healing Hearts



Fr Egidio Fernandes, sdb

Born: 1 September 1950, Salvador do Mundo, Goa

First Vows: 24 May 1971, Yercaud, Tamil Nadu

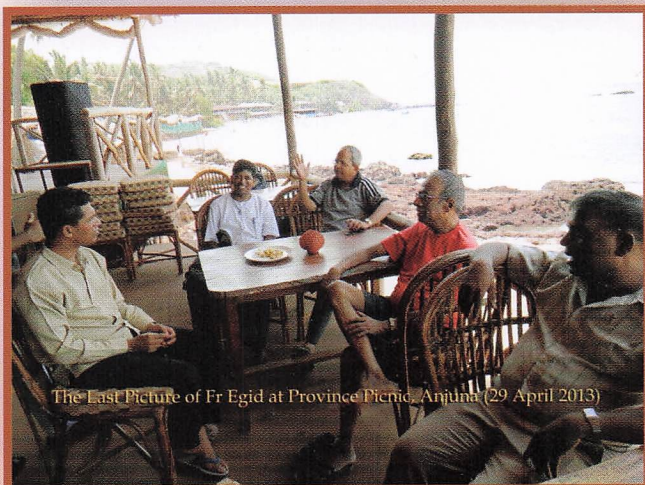
Priestly Ordination: 19 December 1981, Panjim, Goa

Died: 29 April 2013, Anjuna, Goa

29 April 2013 was a clear and sunny day. Fr Egidio Fernandes had been looking forward to this day with much anticipation, as waves of eager Salesians of the province of Panjim converged on the shores of Anjuna for their long-awaited Annual Picnic. In spite of his periodic dialysis due to his failing kidneys, his love for fun and fellowship would never allow him to miss this beautiful day.

Along with his confreres of the house of Panjim, Fr Egidio arrived at Café Looda, Anjuna, at 11 am. With a smile of mischievous contentment, he began his usual banter with his fellow confreres - chatting, joking, pulling a fast one on some unwittingly naive confrere, and indulging himself in the forbidden delicacies placed before him. After a heavy meal while the others were getting ready for a second round of swimming, he moved aside towards the washroom.

The laughter in the air was suddenly shattered by a loud thud from the direction of the washroom. The confreres rushed over to find that Fr Egidio had collapsed. Within a matter of minutes his pulse rate began to fall rapidly and, by the time the ambulance



The Last Picture of Fr Egid at Province Picnic, Anjuna (29 April 2013)

arrived, Fr Egidio's enthusiastic soul had left his weak body. His body was brought to the RG Stone Hospital, Porvorim, where he was a regular for his treatment, but he was declared dead on arrival.

‘Egidio de Salvador do Mundo’

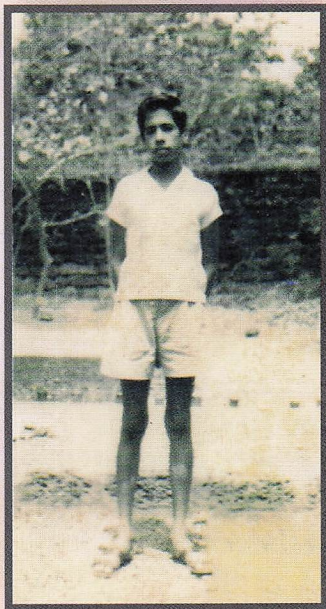
Located to the south-west of Socorro and east of Porvorim is the idyllic village of Salvador do Mundo (Portuguese for ‘Saviour of the World’), surrounded by verdant hills - forested by teak, cashew and mango trees, lush paddy fields and a picturesque tidal creek that flow into the Mapusa creek. The village has a history that revolves around some fine ancient temples, and chapels built in the 16th century.

In the midst of this sublimity, a child was born to Mr. Robert Fernandes and Mrs. Mary Barreto, on 1 September 1950. They named him Egidio (Greek for ‘shield bearer’) and his village - Salvador do Mundo - a cradle of spirituality, was to inspire the young Egidio who would choose to become a shield bearer of Christ in the years to come.



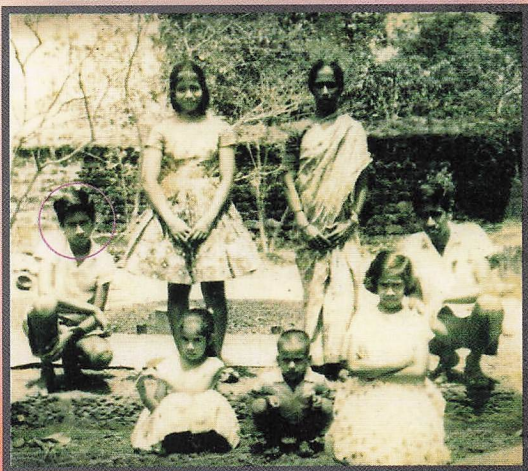
‘The Young Egidio’

As a young boy Egidio was very mischievous, the terror of the neighbourhood. His mother, in desperation, took him to the Salesians of Don Bosco at Panjim. “I don’t know what to do with him, Father,” she told Fr. Cajetan Lobo. “It’s better that you take him!” The Salesians were more than willing to oblige. Another ‘naughty’ boy! The more the merrier! And so it came to pass that young Egidio joined Don Bosco Panjim in June 1963. The Salesians enkindled in him a deep love for God and devotion to Our Blessed Mother. Thus bloomed Egidio’s priestly vocation!



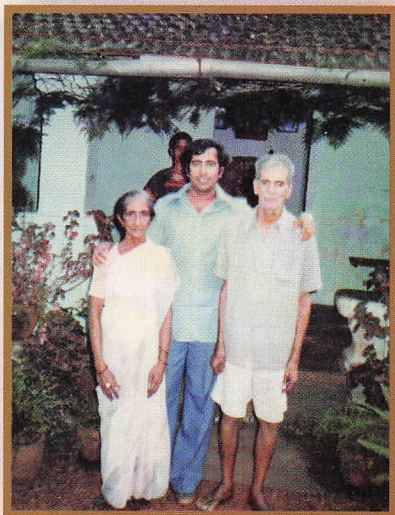
God endowed Egidio with innumerable gifts and talents. Already at a tender age, his superiors noted him to be hardworking, tenacious, possessing an above average intellectual ability, quiet by nature, a silent worker, eager about his vocation, generous, methodical and a good organizer.

In 1970, after his preliminary education in Goa, wherein he excelled with top honours, Egidio joined the Salesian novitiate at the hill station of Yercaud, Tamil Nadu.



‘Egidio, the Salesian’

Egidio took his first vows in the Salesian congregation on 24 May 1971. He completed his studies in philosophy at Yercaud, and then proceeded to the Papal Seminary, Pune, where he excelled in his Masters of Philosophy degree. His Rector at the Papal Seminary, Pune, said of him, “His ways are pleasing and charitable. He is mature, spontaneous and communicates easily. He has a spiritual outlook and sound judgement on men and matters. Though a very good sportsman, he does not exhibit any sign of exaggerated activism”.



These fine qualities would take him a long way in his Salesian journey. Egidio loved football, hockey and basketball, and was on

m a n y
o c c a s i o n s
called to act as
a referee, as he
was a qualified
f o o t b a l l
r e f e r e e .
Though multi-
t a l e n t e d ,
Egidio was a
simple and
humble man,
earnest and



zealous to the responsibility he had to shoulder.

Egidio did his practical training at the Salesian Studentate of Philosophy, Yercaud and at St. Dominic Savio Boys' Home, Andheri, Mumbai. He made his perpetual profession on 24 May 1978 at Don Bosco, Lonavala and from 1978-82, he completed his theological studies at Kristu Jyoti College, Bangalore. On 19 December 1981, he was ordained priest at Don Bosco, Panjim by Archbishop Raul Gonsalves.

During his priestly ministry, Fr Egidio held the posts of administrator, assistant parish priest, prefect of studies and catechist, as well as that of Rector in many Salesian houses of Mumbai and Goa. In 1997, he was given charge of Don Bosco Animation Centre, Benaulim. With great enthusiasm and dedication, he and Fr. Thomas Fernandes served the youngsters of South Goa through their catechetical animation, youth ministry and counselling services.

Br Michael Condillac, sdb, who worked for a short while with Fr. Egidio at Don Bosco, Sulcora, remarks, "I was struck by his freshness, simple zeal and great hearted fraternity." Many Salesians looked up to him as a motivator, counsellor, communicator, facilitator, and of course, a good priest. He opened the doors of his heart, in order to win confidence and to form strong personalities from a human and Christian perspective. He was instrumental in transforming the young into 'honest citizens and true believers.'



He loved Indian philosophy which he taught in the seminary then. He was well-versed with scripture and conducted Bible classes while he was in Panjim. He was an avid reader and was able to converse on a variety of topics and his homilies were well-prepared.

As time went by, Fr. Egidio's interest veered away from his first passion, philosophy and theology towards a more pastoral approach, trying to be a good pastor and marriage counsellor. To the end of his life, Fr. Egidio's one passion remained: COUNSELLING - youngsters, couples, parents and children!

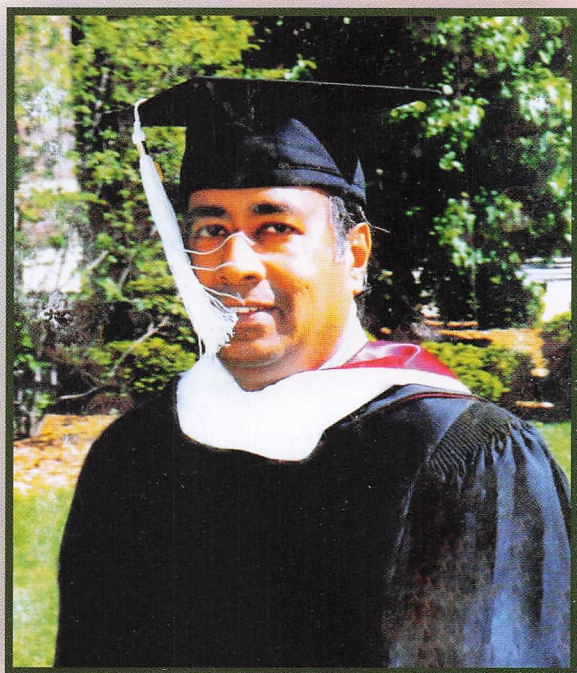


A word of hope; a note of cheer; a kiss of tender sorrow;
A thoughtful deed; a smile of warmth; a hand to borrow;
A faith in God; a love for man; a trust for joy and sorrow.

Little Things - Michael Dubina

'Egidio, the Counsellor'

From 1999-2002, Fr. Egidio Fernandes undertook counselling studies in Chicago, USA. He, along with a group of psychologists, belonging to the Salesians of Don Bosco, formed the Salesian Psychological Association on 28 February 1999. The group supported one another to work



for the young and the marginalized as professional counsellors and clinicians.

Meanwhile, the Carreno Counselling Centre was set up in Panjim seeking to help young people in their personal growth and development and to train adults in the art of proper parenting. With the arrival of Fr. Egidio from the USA, the centre had a qualified director from June 2002-May 2005. He began offering counselling services to parents and students. He helped youngsters understand the conflicting situations they found themselves in and showed them how to respond to them from a 'faith' perspective. In an interesting and effective manner, he tackled concepts ranging from faith to morality, science, scriptures, peer pressure and parental control.

His work burgeoned! Further services such as vocational guidance, help for slow learners, dyslexics, drop-outs were initiated. Courses and seminars were also offered. It was meant to be a centre with trained professionals focused in helping young people. His sterling skills as a counsellor and spiritual director were recognized by the Diocesan Family Service Centre, Panjim where he was asked to help out from 2005-06.

From 2006-07, Fr. Egidio was a Secretary of the Family Commission at CCBI Centre, Bangalore. On his transfer to the CCBI Centre, Fr. Socorro Mendes, Director of the Family Service Centre wrote, "His services to the Patriarchal Tribunal regarding marriage cases, was formidable. The Ecclesiastic Judges and Judicial Vicar have expressed disappointment about the loss of a great marriage counsellor." Unfortunately, due to his continuing ill health, Fr. Egidio was forced to return to Goa, where he once again started working at the Diocesan Family Service Centre.



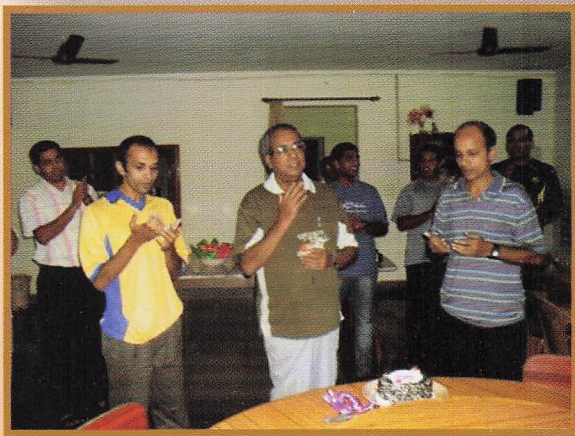
Fr. Ian Figueiredo, his Provincial disclosed that Fr. Egidio was plagued with continuous affliction due to problems associated with diabetes which precipitated from 1996. The high diabetes destroyed his kidneys, his eyesight and led to several other health related complications.

Fr. Egidio's spiritual journey continued, but his failing health and his long painful bouts of sickness gradually led him to discontinue his responsibility at the Centre. Expressing his sentiments of deep appreciation and gratitude for his dedicated services, Rt. Rev. Filipe Neri Ferrao, Archbishop of Goa and Daman, wrote to him thus: "In spite of your ill health, you went out of your way to render your valuable service to those



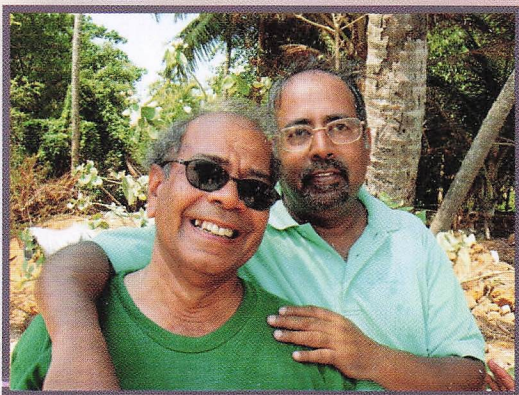
who came to you for help. Due to an empathetic and wise guidance, many troubled persons who came to you found solace and strength to live their lives more joyfully and meaningfully."

From 2010 - 12, Fr. Egidio worked at the Don Bosco Animation Centre, Benaulim, Goa, as a resource person. In July 2012, with his health deteriorating even further, he chose to come back to Don Bosco, Panjim - the cradle of his Salesian vocation, where despite his malady, he

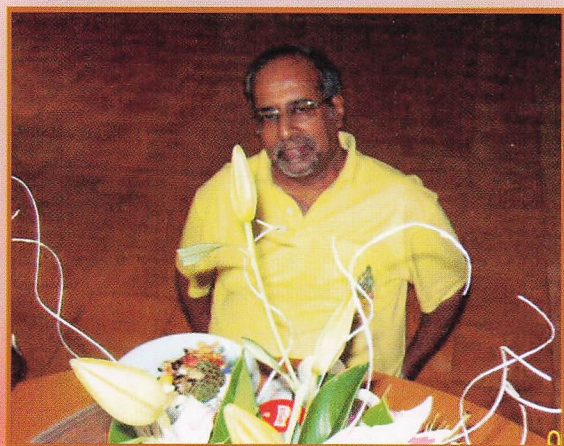


continued to work on occasion as a facilitator for workshops organized by various institutes. Though his body was growing weak, his soul was gaining strength from the Lord.

Fr. Egidio bore his illness stoically. There were bouts of depression, irritability and impatience; but in the last few months before his death, there was a new found calm - a renewed enthusiasm in his life. He did his best to live as normally as possible, and not even the serious nature of his illness could deter him from enjoying the good things in life. An outing with the community, a birthday celebration, a football game, the latest Konkani *tiatr* or even an occasional mango, these were things he enjoyed with boyish relish. He had begun to resume his normal duties of public masses, confessions, counselling, was more cheerful and communicative; He was looking forward to a kidney transplant which would offer him a new lease of life to resume his counselling ministry on a full time basis!



But God's plans is beyond human understanding, and we have no choice but to accept in faith! On 29 April 2013, Fr. Egidio Fernandes,



joyfully went to meet his Lord and Master, Jesus Christ - the Wonderful Counsellor. The celebration with which he culminated his earthly life now continues in heaven.

'Adeus, Fr Egidio'

The last rites of Fr. Egidio were held at the Shrine of Our Lady of Fatima, Panjim, on 1 May 2013 at 3.30 pm. The funeral mass was presided over by Rev. Fr. Ian Figueiredo, Provincial of the Salesian Province of Panjim, who while shedding light on his life, ministry and suffering, summarized the true Salesian in him, with a hope and a prayer that Fr. Egidio will now experience the fulfillment of the promise made by Jesus Christ and have a share in the glory of God's Kingdom.

In his farewell eulogy, Fr. Savio Gomes, Rector of Don Bosco, Panjim, extolled the virtues of Fr. Egidio, emphasizing his perceptive insights, enlivening comments, enriching discussions and astute observations in the community. He remarked that though Fr. Egidio's death has left a deep void, yet they are consoled that he suffers no more, and is now at peace in the loving embrace of God.



Thereafter, the mortal remains of Fr. Egidio were taken to his ancestral home for a while, following which, in accordance with the wishes of his family, they were carried to the Saviour of the World Church Cemetery, Salvador do Mundo, for burial. A huge gathering of people had come to pay their final tribute to one who gave so much! An eloquent testimony of his love of God and service to humankind!

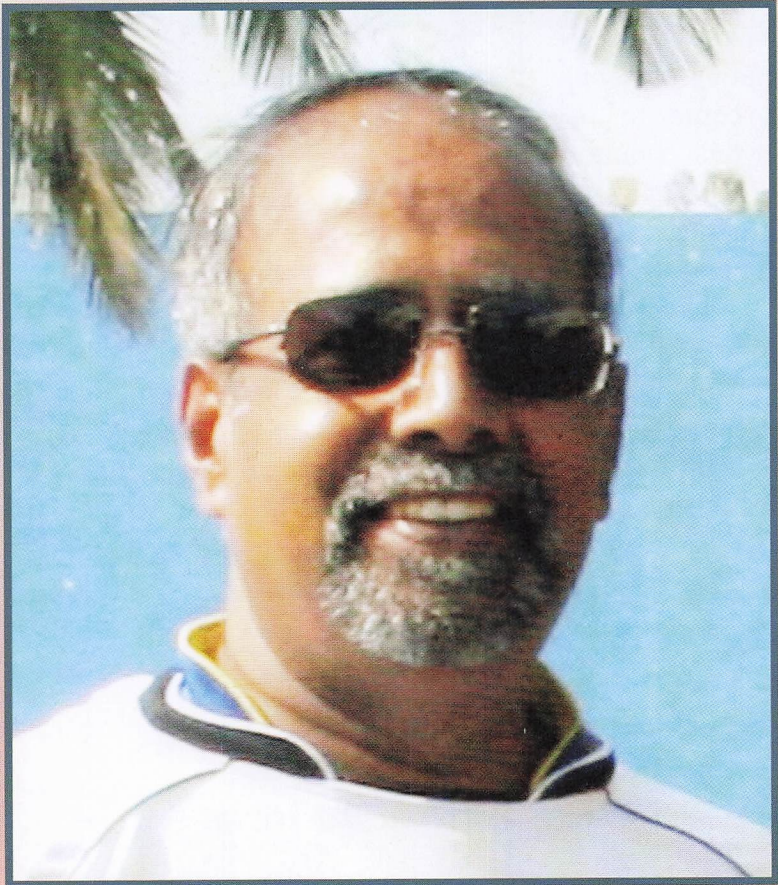


As the misty hills of Salvador do Mundo enveloped the valley, the call of the monsoon bird resonated in the air, carrying a poignant message to the sun-baked world - a mosaic of mud and weed. The winged burglar conquered the landscape with a full throated welcome cry... as Fr. Egidio Fernandes, sdb, finally came home to rest!



“Inspiration, Teacher, Counsellor, Guide, Father-figure, Friend. He could scare you and pull your leg and that’d make you laugh. Fr. Egidio’s homilies really rocked! His Bible classes too!”

(Source - Facebook)



“Sixty two years of a life well lived that concluded in a joyous spirit, despite hardships of health.”

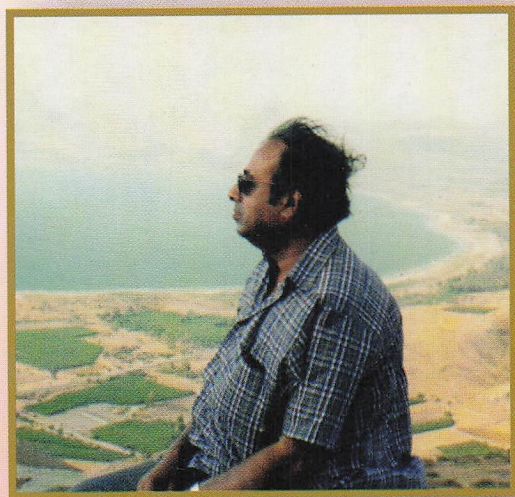
(Source - Facebook)



"To live in the minds and hearts of the generations who will follow you is to cheat death."

Robin Sharma - The Greatness Guide

Death ends a life, not a relationship!
Mitch Albom



You have made us for yourself, O God,
and our hearts are restless
until they rest in you.

Augustine of Hippo