



## Fr. Maurice Figueiredo Salesian of Don Bosco

Born: 05-Dec-1953 Died: 14-May -2009

No one is useless in this world who lightens the burden of it to anyone else

Charles Dickens

### One more Smiling Angel in Heaven

#### The Life

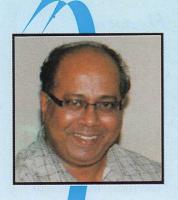
r. Maurice was born on 05.12.1953 to Victor and Helen Figueiredo in Nairobi, Kenya. The third born among four siblings (3 brothers and 1 sister). The changing situation forced the family out of Kenya to their ancestral home in Carmona, Goa. Goa then being under the Portuguese, had the education system in the Portuguese language. Coming from British Colonial Kenya, it was felt more convenient to pursue the education in Bombay. So, after his confirmation in St. Theresa's Nairobi (Kenya), he came to India and joined the St. Paul's Apostolic School, Borivli, Bombay. The vocation seed was already there at a young age. It was here that little Maurice first came in contact with Salesians in Borivali, and expressed his desire to join the Salesian family.

**Early Salesian Life** 

The initial training began in the Savio Juniorate in Guwahati in 1973, perhaps sprouting the first indication of a missionary vocation. But as a British Passport holder, and constant trouble with the authorities began to increase, he requested to join the Bombay Province. He then came to Yercaud for his Philosophical formation, and was sent to Lonavla and Matunga for his practical training. As per the formation program of the province, he went on to complete his theological studies in Bangalore. In December 1985, he was ordained Priest in his native village, Carmona Goa.

Salesian Ministry

As a Salesian he did a years' ministry in Kudal, and then went toSonada to complete his graduation (BA). His interest in Catechetics, and dynamic and simple effective way of conducting sessions, made him proficient as a catechist. He was Assistant Director of the Catechetical center in Pune (1987-88) and later went on to guide the center for a term of 6 years (1988-93). He help develop the upcoming catechetical center in Benaulim (1993-97), and was sent back to catechetical center in Pune (1997-2001). After a short stint at Sirsi, as a Parish Priest, Fr. Maurice was reappointed as Director of the Catechetical Center in Benaulim, (2003-2009), making this center popular and well sort after, especially in the south of Goa.





**Animating Others!** 

No one will doubt the animating capability of Fr. Maurice. Most of his Salesian life was spent in this sector, consolidating, building, and moving around animating various communities and religious institutes. His eight vears of service in the Pune Diocese, in the Diocesan Catechetical center were well appreciated. As an avid reader, Fr Maurice, prepared a lot of his session like an eclectic, who picked and chose his articles and thoughts from around, and ruminated the concepts to simple ideas for his listeners. There was never a moment in the delivery of sessions, his listeners would doze away. If in his method, catechetics got boring, his wit and humour would pump up the spirit.

In many aspects one would say that Fr. Maurice was a self made person, without very high qualification, but giving quality insights to groups of every category. Right from communicants to confirmation students, from school children to college youth, from seminarians to religious sisters of numerous congregations, from priests to dioceses and Bishops, he had preached to all, making them appreciate their faith and connect it to life! Even in his short stint as a Parish Priest in the Karnataka town of Sirsi, he was made Dean as well as the catechetical animator of the Diocese. Diocese of Karwar, stills owes a lot of gratitude to Fr. Maurice for their catechetical animation program of the diocese (as admitted

by the Bishop, at the funeral service).

For the last over six years of his ministry, Fr Maurice regularly conducted a week long course for Directors and leaders at the NVSC (National Vocational Service Center), Pune, as well as the DPC (Diocesan Pastoral Center), Old Goa. During his tenure in Pune, he was also invited at the Papal seminary to conduct a seminar for the students at JDV (Jnana Deepa Vidhyapeeth), in Pune. Let alone the numerous religious congregations, and institutes, that invited him to conduct sessions in the various dioceses he labored and the states that heard of his fame.

#### Joke Bloke

If you don't have the knack to laugh at yourself... Fr Maurice is one who can surely teach you that. He was aware of his weakeness and often avoided confrontation in public. And if others would really get him in a tight corner, he really had the wit to just change the topic. quip a wit, and just laugh it out! That was not all... all will not end till he would quietly sneak into his room and have the last laugh by himself in the room! He had the knack of grabbing attention as well as set the laughter roaring in a tense situation.

Many people often remember his sermons, full of jokes. With simple instances that in his vivid style he would make them lively and entertaining, Fr Maurice would draw out the deeper insights that he would want to express to the people. With laughter and joy, he had grabbed the attention of his listeners and drawn home a deeper

message.

Another interesting fact was his ability to get himself understood even without proper hold of the language! With his transitory childhood from Africa, Goa to Mumbai, and then to Guwahati, Yercaud, besides English, he never really learnt any other language proficiently. Of course he did a lot of attempts to learn the language. Even with gender and tense disrupted, he would get his message across. Though Fr Maurice was originally from Goa, he never really studied there. Perhaps he knew Swahili better than his native Konkani. And so, at the earliest instant, he managed to find for himself a remote chapel in Betalbatim, (Consua) with the permission of the local Parish Priest, and regularly celebrate the Konkani Mass there, with the local people assisting him and teaching him to improve his pronunciations and diction. Though it was tough, he never really gave up. Many still remark, months after his demise, 'Fr Maurice spoke Konkani differently, but his sermons were really good!'.

Just a couple of months before the tragic accident, Fr Maurice was invited to raise the toast for the Province community day celebrations held in Don Bosco Loutolim. Speaking in public is his forte and none can beat the pun and fun behind every statement. And even if you don't catch it, he would know how to twist it to your taste! For over 20 minutes he kept every confrere at the celebration, laughing loudly at almost every statement. This was infact the last

time he had addressed all the confreres of the province!



#### YES MAN!

As a Director of the Animation centers in Pune and Benaulim, the schedule at the center was obviously hectic. There are the regular groups, and activities that fill up the yearly calendar. But these would to no avail tie Fr Maurice down to the confines of the center. Be it mass at a Parish or chapel, or a convent or school, Fr Maurice was there! He never let down anyone who ever came to him. It the time proposed was not suitable, he would convince the person to another agreeable moment. It was done in the end.

His hectic movement around were not only restricted to animation of groups. Aware of the need of listening in animation, Fr Maurice was a approachable counselor too. More that the students and youngsters who came to him for counseling, numerous families and couples would be found seated with him in the office talking to him. In most cases, Fr Maurice would bring them to the community chapel and sit with them in prayer. It looked like he could never say NO! Much to the detriment of his own health and sickness, he would always say YES, and the smile or cheer on his face would hide the tension and the fatigue behind it all.



"Another Cheerful Angel in Heaven" is an apt description to the Person and Gift of Fr. Maurice to the Salesian Family. In a tragic sudden accident, that seemed a slight touch, and a fall, the damage was done on the 11th of May at about 7.30am on his way to the Divine Providence - Home for the aged, for mass. Considerable damage to the head, had put Fr. Maurice in an unconscious state from the first moment for the next four days till he breathed h i s

The message of the first day of the accident, sent by the Provincial, who was present at each moment in the hospital supporting the

community, read thus: "This morning I sent an SMS to all Rectors of INP, hoping that the news would be spread to others. Fr. Maurice Figueiredo sdb (Benaulim) has had a very serious accident this morning at around 7.00 a.m. He is at the GMC Bambolim, Goa, in the ICU under a Ventilator and under observation for the next 48 hours at least. PLEASE PRAY FOR HIS QUICK AND COMPLETE RECOVERY.

This morning around 7.00 a.m. Fr. Maurice was on his way to the Providence Sisters for Mass. It seems some vehicle hit him and sped away. There seem to be no witnesses. The neighbours heard a loud noise and came out to see what had happened. They found Fr. Maurice in a pool of blood. He was wearing his helmet (which is intact), but blood was oozing from his mouth and ears. Sr. Joanita FMA was returning to her convent after Mass at the Patrocin Chapel. The Salesians at Benaulim were informed and Fr. Ralin rushed to the scene. Calling an ambulance on 108, they rushed to Hospicio, Margao. First Aid was administered, but the Scan machine was out of order. It was not possible to shift Fr. Maurice to Apollo hospital, as it seems you cannot shift from a Govt. Hospital to a private clinic, and Apollo's had their regulations and conditions.

Hence it was decided to rush the patient to GMC Bambolim. The Vice Provincial, Fr. Ian Figueiredo was informed and later the Provincial got in touch with Fr. Ralin. Fr. Provincial &Vice provincial went over to GMC at 9.00 a.m. and after contacting important Doctors known to Fr. Ralin, Fr. Anisio, Fr. Ian and

Fr. Willie Fernandes, the scan and x-rays were taken.

The reports showed there was internal bleeding and the case was serious. As all the doctors were busy, the Dean, himself a neurosurgeon, came with Mr. Tellis, Joint Director of the Accounts Department. After the preliminaries, the patient was taken to the OT for the operation at 2.00 p.m. By 4.30 pm. we got the good news that the clot was removed and that the doctors had done what could be done medically. Now medicine, the healing process and lots and lots of prayers can do the rest.

Nothing more can be said till 48 hours have passed.

Do storm heaven and ask people to pray for our confrere."

The next 48 hours had its hiccups, since Fr Maurice had high diabetes. Though he survived the first 48 hours, the pressure began to collapse in the later stages of the day, and finally at 6.15am on 14th May 2009, despite last minute attempts to revive the heart by the ICU doctors, Fr. Maurice breathed his last.



**Responsibilities**As a Salesian Fr. Maurice has held various posts: Diocesan Director of Catechetics in the Diocese of Pune, Director of Salesian Catechetical Center, Pune, Director of Don Bosco Youth Center, Benaulim, Goa, and Member of the Diocesan Priest Council, of the Arch-diocese of Goa.



## Stardust Alive

The sun dips into the horizon tingeing the vast expanse with brilliant hues which gradually fade. At times it is hidden from view leaving traces of its presence. To me and many others I am sure Maurice SDB came across as a reflection of God's light, touching our lives

like a ray.

Our fathers were brothers and yet as children we had no contact. My first memory was visiting him in Borivili. He timidly entered the room, sat with his head bowed and never made eye contact. I asked him, "how on earth will you become a priest if you can't look at us?" My mother reprimanded me. Later, when we both were religious he took pride in being slightly older and never let me forget it whenever I disagreed with his views.

When celebrating the Eucharist with the community his homilies invariably were on community life. Over the years I saw the pupa become a butterfly and I rejoiced at the changes. He became a "man for others"- the testimonies shared by people are tangible signs.

Maurice was a master at changing the topic and masking his suffering. He was stoic and I failed to get him to reveal his inner world. Probably that is one of the reasons some of his experiences were not life giving for himself or his confreres. Sometimes, I felt his loyalty was misplaced and the discussions would eventually switch to another topic. I miss these rare conversations. Family was secondary and if I got time, it was because I claimed it. Ours was an unusual relationship and at this moment I am grateful for all that has been.

Words are inadequate to thank Frs. Loddy, Ralin and Anicio for being brothers to me during those last days as I tried to make sense of what happened, the unraveling of information — the known and the unknown. True—"…like a breath…days are like a passing shadow." (Ps. 144:4)

#### **FUNERAL ORATION FOR** FR. MAURICE FIGUEIREDO SDB 15th May 2009



(Delivered by Fr. Loddy Pires s.d.b., Salesian Provincial of the Panjim-Konkan Province.)

"While God does not promise us a tomorrow, he does promise eternity." Jesus has given us the assurance of eternal life: "I am the Resurrection and the Life. If any one believes in me, even though he dies, he will live; and whoever lives and believes in me, will never die". Jn. 11:20

My dear brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ.In sorrow we tend to look back and worry, but in FAITH we look up.On 11th May 2009, after spending practically the entire day at the Goa Medical College Hospital at Bambolim, Goa, I sent e-mail messages to all our Salesians: "Fr. Maurice Figueiredo sdb, Rector of Don Bosco, Benaulim has had a very serious accident this morning at around 7.20 a.m. He is at the GMC Bambolim, Goa, in the ICU under a Ventilator and under observation for the next 48 hours at least.

PLEASE PRAY FOR HIS OUICK AND COMPLETE RECOVERY.

This morning (11th May), Fr. Maurice was on his way to the Sisters at Providence Home for Mass. It seems some vehicle hit him and sped away. The neighbours heard a loud noise and came out to see what had happened. They found Fr. Maurice in a pool of blood. He was wearing his helmet (which is intact), but blood was oozing from his mouth and ears. Salesian Sr. Joanita, who was returning to her convent after Mass at the Patrocin Chapel informed the Salesians at Benaulim and Fr. Ralin de Souza rushed to the scene. Calling an ambulance on 108, they rushed to Hospicio, Margao. After First Aid administered there, we decided to rush the patient to GMC Bambolim. Fr.



Provincial & Fr. Vice Provincial went over to GMC at 9.00 a.m. and after contacting doctors known to us, the scan and x-rays were taken.

The reports showed there was internal bleeding and the case was serious. The Dean, Dr. Jindal, himself a neuro-surgeon, came with Mr. Tellis, Joint Director of the Accounts Department. After the preliminaries, the patient was taken to the Operation Theatre at 2.00 p.m. By 4.30 pm. we got the news that the clot was removed and that the doctors had done what could be done medically. Now medicine, the healing process and lots and lots of prayers can do the rest. Do storm heaven and ask people to pray for our confrere".

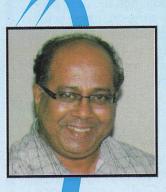
After three days of attentive and prayerful vigil, Fr. Maurice succumbed to his injuries and breathed his last on 14<sup>th</sup> May at 6.15 a.m. I am aware that many Salesians, Sisters, his relatives, friends, prayer groups, as well as His Grace, the Archbishop of Goa, have been praying incessantly for Fr. Maurice. **But God's answers are wiser than our prayers**. Let God's holy will be done. We surrender Fr. Maurice to the God who created him with a purpose and for a Mission. He must have accomplished it, and so his last breath was a prayer, "Father into your hands, I commend my spirit".

Maurice, born on 5<sup>th</sup> December 1953, at Nairobi, Kenya, East Africa, was the son of the Late Mr. Sebastian & Mrs. Helen Figueiredo. On coming to India, as a young smart lad, on 7<sup>th</sup> August 1970, he entered St. Pauls, the Missionary Apostolic School of the Salesians, at Borivali, Mumbai. Later, on 25th February 1973, he

joined Savio Juniorate at Gauhati to complete his Pre-University Course.

He joined the Salesian Novitiate at Yercaud for the Province of Guwahati on 16th May 1976. Having made his first Religious Profession at Yercaud on 24th May 1977, he completed his studies of Philosophy at Yercaud itself from June 1977 – April 1979. His first assignment was as Assistant & Teacher at Don Bosco Apostolic School, Lonavla, where from June 1979 to May 1981 he endeared himself to his students, especially the young aspirants, and the staff as well. On account of his British passport, he had problems to work in North East India, and so he was admitted, on his request to the Province of Mumbai in 1981. He was next transferred to Don Bosco High School, Matunga, where he worked tirelessly for a year (June 1981–May 1982).

He made his Perpetual Profession at Don Bosco, Lonavla on 24th May 1982 and proceeded to commence his Theological Studies at Kristu Jyoti College, Bangalore (June 1982 – 1986). He was Ordained a Priest at his native Carmona, Goa on 19th December 1985 by Archbishop - Patriarch of Goa & Daman, Most Rev. Raul



Gonsalves.

His first assignment as a Priest was as Assistant Parish Priest at Don Bosco Parish and Technical School at Pinguli, Kudal (June 1986 -May 1987). Expressing a desire to serve in the catechetical field, Fr. Maurice was appointed Assistant Director of the Salesian Catechetical Centre, DBYC-Pune (1987 – 1988) and the following year he was put in-charge of the Catechetical Centre, where he remained on till May 1993. He was then transferred to the Don Bosco Animation Centre of Benaulim where he was Director till May 1997. Again he served as Director of Salesian Catechetical Centre, Koregaon Park, Pune from 1997 - 2001. I had the fortune of being his Rector then, as he also collaborated in the formation of our students of Theology.

He served for a short period as Rector & Parish Priest at Don Bosco, Sirsi in the Karwar diocese, (2001 – 2003). His love for the people and their interests, made him a popular parish priest. Even after his transfer, Fr. Maurice kept on assisting the diocese of Karwar, whenever called upon to do so. I thank His Lordship, Most Rev. Derek Fernandes, Bishop of Karwar, who is officiating at this Eucharist, as a mark of his and the diocese's appreciation of Fr.

Maurice's services.

These last 6 years Fr. Maurice was again Rector & Director of Don Bosco, Benaulim (2003 - 2009). He was appointed Director of the Salesian Catechetical Centre, Pune, with effect from the coming 24th May. This funeral service seems to be a farewell for Fr. Maurice. God's ways are not our ways. Blessed be the name of the Lord.

Fr. Maurice is 55 years old. We feel very sad that his life was brought to an abrupt end through this accident on his way to celebrate mass. He is now celebrating the Eucharist with God, no longer under the veils of bread and wine, but in the fullness of the mystery, seeing God face to face.

As a man, Maurice brought cheer to people. He always had a ready joke or a witty saying. He would appear quiet, sitting in a corner, but observing everything intently, while pretending that he was unaware of things happening around him, and when called, he would just say, "AH" as if he was in a world of his own. And then carry on the conversation. A Salesian replying to our message on Fr. Maurice's death, said, "Heaven has gained a cheerful angel". As a priest of God, he was available, ready for any pastoral ministry – talks, conferences, saying Mass even at odd times, confessions he never refused and pastoral counseling to listen to people's woes and given them an encouraging word. But his passion was catechetics: he would prepare his retreats, talks and conferences, reading every available paper and magazine to cull stories from everyday life and jokes to suit his topic and make it lively and interesting.

Even though not qualified, (and very few knew this), his expertise and experience in the field of Catechetics, would draw seminaries and dioceses to invite him for lectures. When asked to get qualified, he would say, that if he were to get qualified he would loose his unction and enthusiasm in the subject. He was a self made man.Fr. Tony D'Souza, his former Provincial sent me the following email, on hearing of Fr. Maurices's death. "Though the thought of Maurice at this moment brings grief to my heart and tears to my eyes, I cherish the memories I hold of him as an unassuming Salesian, fervent without fanfare, withdrawn yet popular, committed yet casual,

quietly humorous and always humble and friendly.

In the field of Catechetics and spiritual animation he touched the lives of thousands and remained staunchly dedicated to his mission as a Salesian Catechist. May The Lord who has called him in this Easter season, reward Maurice for his perseverance and fidelity to his priestly ministry of preaching the Word to the young in a special way". No one of us among his family, the Salesians or friends, believes that Fr. Maurice's life was long enough. And, yet - in the face of its brevity - we respond in faith, that the measure of a man is not found, as the Book of Wisdom comforts us, "in terms of years" (Wisdom 4:8). It is, our faith that reminds us that: "the just man, though he die early, shall be at rest.

For the age that is honourable comes not with the passing of time. He who pleased God, Wisdom writes, was loved (and) ... having become perfect in a short while, he reached the fullness of a long career; for his soul was pleasing to the Lord (Wisdom 4: 7-14)." For the believer, for people of faith, the true measure of a man lies in his efforts to please God.Fr. Maurice believed, as St. Paul's Letter to the Romans affirms, that "no one lives for himself" that "no one dies for himself (Romans 14: 7)," that we live and we die for the Lord, that





we are his. And that the Lord, above all and alone is the one to whom, we shall give an account of our life.

And, yet, the measure of Fr. Maurice's life was never his job or his title or even the long list of accomplishments in the public eye, as impressive as they all were. The measure of his life can be found in his character, in his optimism, in his joy and great sense of humor, in his passion for what was good, in his love of God and of people who needed his ministry. His love spilled over to touch and include many others, and many are here today. Mother Teresa used to say, "If you start judging people, you will have no time to love them". People became his companions on life's journey. They made up his every day. I sum up his ministry, saying that his aim in life was not merely to get people to heaven but to get heaven into people. His was a ministry of a "wounded healer".

Fr. Maurice did not need a long life for us to measure. It was, rather, we who needed his life to be longer. We humbly submit to the mysterious ways of God's Providence, and offer up our dear Fr. Maurice, confrere and friend, thanking the Lord for the years he spent with us in love, in brotherhood and in the fulfillment of the Salesian mission.

And what about us, who are left mourning and yet not without hope. We don't know how our lives will end but we get to choose how to use the interval between now and the moment we meet our Creator face to face ... "Treasure every moment that you have! Yesterday is history. Tomorrow is a mysteryToday is a gift. That 's why it 's called the present!!... ..."Yes, while God does not promise tomorrow, he does promise eternity. For Fr. Maurice that promise has been fulfilled.

We pray FOR him and in faith, TO him as well. May his soul rest in peace. AMEN.

Be a life long or short, its completeness

depends on what it was lived for.

**David Star Jordan** 







hen I think of Fr. Maurice, I think of a shy goan cleric who was sent to the Mumbai province from the Gauhati province since he could not reside in the sensitive border areas with a British passport. Maurince started as a practical trainee in Lonavla and on my invitation joined our province after his perpetual profession.

As his provincial superior, I hold very edifying memories of Maurice, as a cleric and later as a priest. He was a simple, sincere and gifted salesian who touched the spiritual lives of very many youth and even religious, through his catechetical ministry in Pune and Goa. Though not specifically qualified, he was much in demand for his catechetical courses and spiritual retreats or recollections in seminaries and convents.

Rather shy by nature, Fr. Maurice shunned the limelight and appeared withdrawn but remained always a pleasant person to deal with, readily obliging and available for any priestly ministry. He wouldn't harm a fly and avoided any controversy or confrontation.

Notwithstanding his silent attitude and

shyness, he attracted attention.

He was very popular and had a keen sense of quiet humour and even allowed himself to be the butt of jokes. I remember him inviting us to his Birthday party and announcing an 8-course dinner. When we went to the table, all we saw were 8 quarter plates of the same biryani.

When I think of Fr. Maurice now, I recall with gratitude, his warm friendship and cooperation. Though God has taken him away from us, Fr. Maurice's unassuming holiness remains with us as a model for imitation. May

he enjoy the bliss of heaven!



# He touched their hearts in many ways.....

personally did not know Fr. Maurice very closely but as I observe him, he was not a community man but a person who was loved by many people, Children, Teachers, Priests and Religious. I took over from him at Don Bosco Sirsi, Karnataka and Don Bosco Benaulim, Goa.

In both these places people speak very highly of him. He touched their hearts in many ways, be it through his sermon, counseling or his personal chats. Retreat children simply loved him. For the people he was a very jovial person. Although he did not know Konkani well, he would make up for it with a joke. As people say, he was an outgoing man and helped many. For many sisters he was a good spiritual director, retreat preacher and a resource person.

He is the person who kept himself busy throughout. Celebrating Masses and preaching was his passion. I think God gave him the privilege even at the last moment of his life to die on the road to

celebrate the holy mass. May God grant him eternal rest.

Fr. Bernardino De Almeida SDB





## Flashback





Fr. Maurice with his family.



A young cleric.



First taste of Christ.



Holy Kiss.



First Mass.



with his mother.



The Ordination



with Fr. Maschio



The animating team with the Bishop of Pune, Bp. Valerian.



Catechetical Animator



Lighter moment with the Regional



Clerics doing practical training in Lonavla.



With the Salesian at the visit of General Councillor, Don Odorico.







The community of Pune with the Provincals



Fr. Vincent Rasquinha with Fr Maurice



The Christmas celebrations with the sdbs





The Deacons together at Bangalore



Fr. Maurice with Sirsi kids



The assistant with his boys in Matunga.



Fr Maurice - the Actor



Birthday celebrations with Fr Vivian and Don Casa



Theological days





God has put something noble and good into every heart which his hand created.

Mark Twain