



RINALDI JUNIORATE  
2B TAYLORS ROAD  
MADRAS

# BR. JAMES GERVASONI

SANGALLO - BERGAMO - 13 OCTOBER 1913

MADRAS - 13 MARCH 1982

Dear Confreres,

Brother James Gervasoni is no more with us. He passed away on March 13, 1982, at the age of 68. He was one of those who served this province from its inception. He was a witness to the steady growth of the province and in many ways played a part in its development. His was a quiet and silent life, devoid of glamour and pomp. But the very simplicity of his life was a source of charm and inspiration for all. Indeed, he has left a deep and lasting impression in the hearts of all who have known him. A deep faith in God and a genuine concern for the poor were the outstanding characteristics of this great son of Don Bosco.

Brother James Gervasoni was born at San Gallo, Bergamo, on October 13, 1913. He entered the Salesian House at Becchi in 1935 and made his first Profession at Villa Moglia on September 21, 1936. The same year he came to India and six years later, on September 8, 1942, he made his Perpetual Profession, at Tirupattur.

The places where he worked are the following:

Tirupattur, Salesian House.....	1939-1942
Vellore, Don Bosco,.....	1942-1950
Sagayathottam .....	1950-1952
Katpadi, Don Bosco.....	1952-1965
Basin Bridge, St. Joseph's.....	1965-1966
Vellore, Bishop's House.....	1966-1971
Yercaud, The Retreat.....	1971-1973
Katpadi, Don Bosco.....	1973-1980
Madras, Rinaldi Juniorate.....	1980-1982

Death came to Bro. James unexpectedly. It was a not afternoon on March 13 and Brother was only happy to accompany two Italian friars and Bro. John Kesprey on an outing to the beach at Mahabalipuram. The van moved out of Rinaldi at 1.40 p.m. At 5.55 p.m. the van returned with the body of Bro. James. Bro. John tried to explain to a deeply shocked community what had actually happened at Mahabalipuram. Bro. James was talking with his friends on the sea shore when he suddenly collapsed and passed away.

The body was prepared and laid in state in the parlour of the house. As the news spread streams of visitors came from all around to pay their last respects to the dear departed. The following day at 11.00 a.m. Fr. John Peter, the Vice-Provincial, Fr. George Plathottam, the Rector, and Fr. Anthony Manayil, the vice-Rector, concelebrated a Mass in the presence of the Archbishop, Dr. Arulappa, for the repose of the soul of Bro. James. Confreres from the Citadel, many of the DBYC and their parents and relatives, and several sisters from Kingsford took part in the Eucharistic celebration.

In the afternoon the body was taken to the Dominic Savio chapel at Broadway for the funeral Mass, at which Rev. Fr. Provincial presided and some 50 priests concelebrated. In his homily, Fr. Provincial highlighted the following five aspects of Bro. James's life:

- 1) He possessed the oratorian heart of Don Bosco. The boys experienced his fatherliness and concern and remembered him with love and gratitude.
- 2) As a missionary he tried to spread the Word of God by distributing Christian and Salesian publications like **Soldiers of God, Friends, Arumbu**, etc.
- 3) He was a great devotee of Our Lady. Every year he went on a pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes, Chetpet, to thank her

for the many blessings he received through her intercession. In fact, his last visit to that shrine was the day before his death! He had returned only on the evening of 12th March.

4) He practised simplicity in everything. Rev. Fr. Sandanam who was his Rector for ten years and had known him intimately for a long period spoke of him as an ideal Salesian co-adjutor, a Salesian according to the mind of Don Bosco. He was extremely simple in his dress, he never set his heart on anything that had even the semblance of worldliness. It would be no exaggeration to say that he practised evangelical poverty to the edification of his confreres. Keeping in mind the heroic mortification of Don Bosco, he strove to imitate him by bringing about economy in food and avoiding every kind of wastage.

5) He was a model of hard work. Owing to lack of personnel in the earlier days he was asked to take up many responsibilities. He carried them out to the satisfaction of everyone and never did a word of complaint escape his lips.

Before the funeral procession started, Fr. George Piatnottam, the Rector, spoke a few words of farewell to Bro. James. The burial which took place in St. Roque's cemetery was attended by a large crowd. It was an eloquent testimony of the esteem they had for this great Salesian. Everyone said this simple confrere had gone to receive the great reward he so well merited.

We really miss this simple and saintly brother. He imitated his Master in his deep humility and unassuming ways. He always served the communities as a factotum. He spent his time and energy for his confreres and it is this spirit of service that won him the love of the confreres and the boys.

He impressed everyone with his spirit of poverty. He was totally detached from everything and this spirit he tried to cultivate in others as well. He had experienced and lived the poverty of Becchi and he tried to foster it in our Province by his personal example.

Wherever he was and whatever he did he was always a man of God. Amidst his many duties which kept him busy the whole day, he always found some time for a personal chat with the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament.

He was a great lover of youth, especially the poor ones. He loved to be in their midst. He would entertain them with jokes and anecdotes from the life of Don Bosco. Under the leadership of Fr. Andreas of happy memory, Don Bosco Orphanage had a flourishing youth centre. Every

Sunday, groups of Catholic Actionists would go to different mission centres to entertain children with games, and to speak to them about God and religion. Bro. James would always join one of the groups, trek to some far off village, to bring Christ's good news to little children.

The Don Bosco Band was an armament to the Orphanage. It was very popular and very much appreciated by the public. In quality and efficiency it could even compete with the State Police Band which had its residence then in Vellore. In this band Bro. James was one of the leading players and contributed much to its name and fame.

Brother James Gervasoni is gone to heaven to enjoy his reward. But his example as an ideal Salesian co-adjutor will remain with us always. His life will be an inspiration and an invitation to many a young man to work for youth and to save souls. Let us remember this beloved confrere in our prayers and let us ask the Lord to send us many more Salesian brothers like him. May he rest in peace.

Yours in Don Bosco

**Fr. George Plathottathil**

Rector