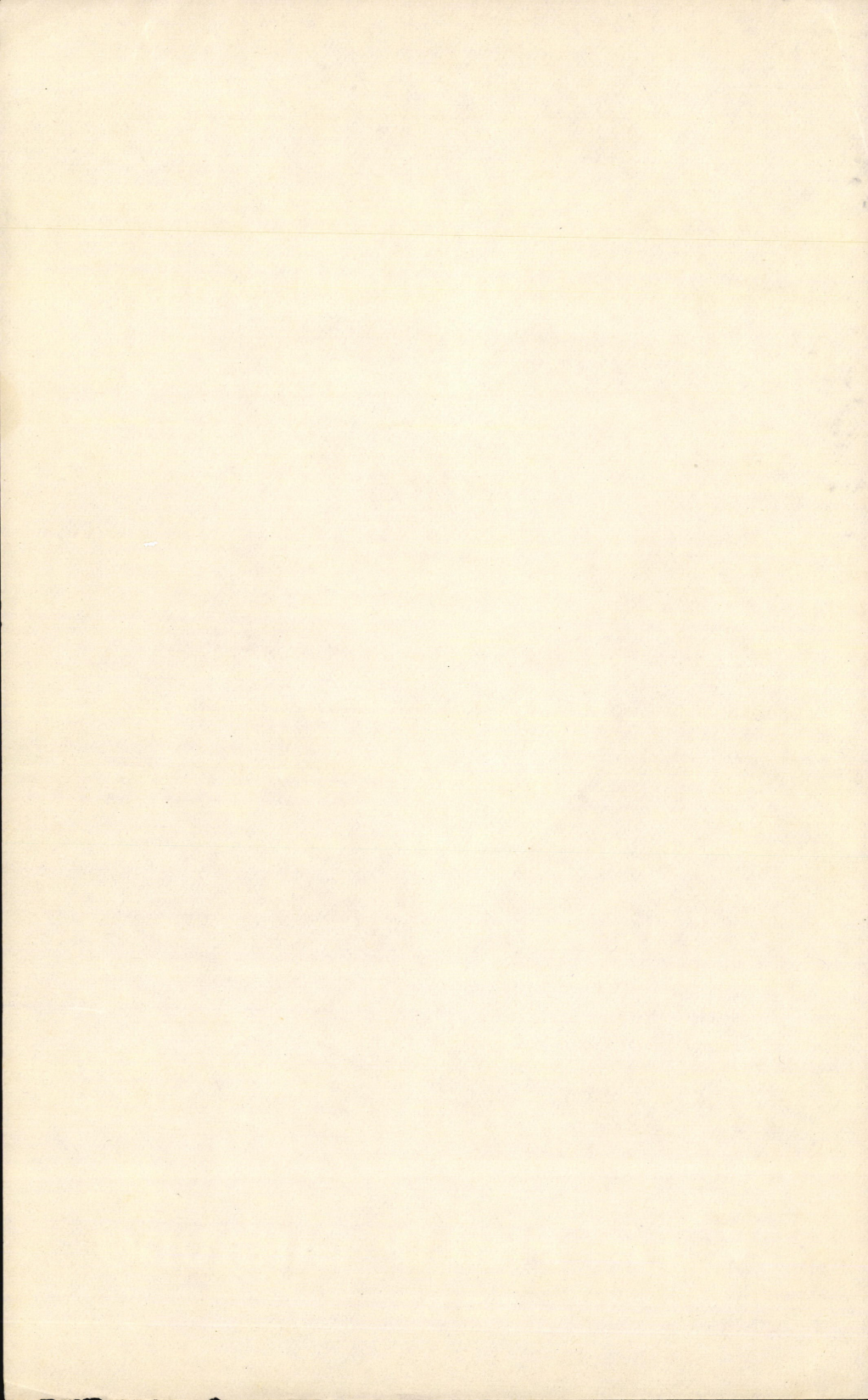


**REV. FR. PHILIP GIRAUDO**

**S.D.B.**





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THE EARLY HOURS OF THURSDAY, JULY 14, 1988

SAW THE PASSING AWAY OF A VALIANT MISSIONARY,

**Rev. Fr. PHILIP GIRAUDO, sdb.**

AT NAZARETH HOSPITAL, SHILLONG, INDIA.

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#### EARLY YEARS :

Fr. Philip (affectionately known as Pippo) was born at Andonno (CN) in the diocese of Cuneo, Italy, on June 21, 1928. He was the eldest son of Stefano Giraudo and Brigida Giordana. His parents were God-fearing and hard-working, and taught the children to be God-fearing from their tender years. Their house was in rural surroundings. From his early years, Philip had a very strong and determined character, and no difficulty would ever pull him down. At school, he was jovial and fun-loving, yet diligent in studies. As a youngster, he learnt the art of making friends. One can recall the joy that he radiated to those who came in contact with him.

#### CALL TO BE A MISSIONARY :

After his days at school, Philip felt that God was calling him to be a priest. We find him with this idea in mind, in the Novitiate, at Ivrea in August 1946. He made his first profession on August 16, 1946. Soon after his profession he came to India, the land of his missionary dreams, in the year 1948. He proceeded to Sonada (Darjeeling) where he stayed for two years doing his philosophical studies. He came to Don Bosco School Guwahati in March 1949 and did his practical training there till March 1951 when he proceeded to Sacred Heart College, Mawlai, Shillong to commence his theological studies. He was ordained priest on December 8, 1955.



## PRIESTLY MINISTRY :

As a young priest, his first assignment took him to the aspirantate at Bandel (Calcutta) as Prefect of Studies. After two years there, he was made Prefect of Don Bosco Park Circus.

In 1959 we find Fr. Philip as Prefect of Don Bosco Guwahati. At his initiative, a farm was bought at Maligaon which at present houses Don Bosco School and St. Mary's school.

In 1965, Fr. Orestes Paviotti, the Provincial, sent him to open the Technical school at Phuntsholing, Bhutan, where the Salesians had been invited by the then King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck. It was under his guidance that the huge Technical complex sprang up there. He remained there for over ten years in the capacities of Rector and Principal.

He came to Nongstoin as Assistant Parish Priest in 1976. In 1980 he opened the new mission centre at Rangblang where he remained as Parish Priest till the end of his life.

## A POLYGLOT :

I am echoing the feelings of everyone when I say that Fr. Philip was a person who personified joy and enthusiasm. As a student of Philosophy, at Sonada (Darjeeling), he learnt the Nepali language which he used as the key to open the hearts of the young in that area. While at Guwahati, he mastered Assamese, Hindi and Garo. In his years of theological studies at Shillong, he learnt the Khasi language. At Calcutta, he learnt Bengali and in Bhutan he spoke Bhutanese and Tibetan fluently. He had progressed much in the compilation of an Anglo-Bhutanese Dictionary during his stay at Phuntsholing, Bhutan.

## A DEDICATED AND UNTIRING WORKER :

Fr. Philip never tired under any sort of work. Fr. A.P. Thomas who went to Bhutan with him in 1965, recalled that he was an 'extraordinary' worker, at the same time serene and



joyful. Hardships failed to bring down his optimism because in everything he did, the idea of bringing men and women to Christ was his focal point. Fatigue was therefore no fatigue for him.

#### A CONFIDENT AND DYNAMIC PERSON :

Fr. Philip was never under fear. Even when circumstances forced him to change his plan of action, he was confident that God would be with him as his strength. He had influence over the rich and the poor. He had the gift of being effective and the ability to touch the hearts of his listeners. There was conviction in what he said and did. People could see this in him.

#### A MAN WITH INVENTIVE IDEAS :

During his practical training at Don Bosco Guwahati, he became the idol of the boys because of his cheerful and winning ways. As a young Priest at Bandel, he devised new methods to keep the aspirants roaring with laughter, especially through the get-togethers he organized in the evenings. Fr. Joseph Verzotto recalls an incident in the life of Fr. Philip at Bandel. There was a group of youngsters who used to be troublesome near the Church premises. Fr. Philip spoke to them in Bengali, organized programmes for them and won them over to himself. There was no more trouble thenceforth.

#### A PROMOTER OF VOCATIONS :

One of the points we come across in the life of Fr. Philip is his nurturing of vocations to priesthood and religious life. When he returned home ten years after his ordination, he took his younger brother Giovanni to the aspirantate at San Benigno. Later Don Giovanni became the Rector of the Salesian house at Valsalice. It is to the credit of Fr. Philip that there are many on their way to priesthood and religious life from the Parish of Rangblang. Radiation of God's love was the secret of his success in attracting others to dedicate themselves in the service of God and neighbour.



## PERSONAL DEVOTIONS :

He celebrated the Holy Eucharist with Faith and conviction. He cherished a great filial devotion to Mary the mother of Jesus. As he retired to sleep in the evenings, one could hear the soft strains of religious music including the classical compositions of Gounod's and Schubert's Ave Marias, and other hymns. That was how he relaxed : With holy thoughts and sentiments. As a Salesian, he inculcated great devotion to Don Bosco and Dominic Savio whom he placed before youngsters as models.

## WHAT OTHERS SAY ABOUT FR. PHILIP :

Fr. Verzotto, who was one of his companions during the four years of theological studies, tells us that "Pippo had a great zeal for youth work and evangelization. He was a very serious and convinced student of theology, and was very popular among his companions. He had remarkable qualities as a leader and kept the youngsters happy when he was in their midst."

Fr. Peter Schiavon speaks of Fr. Philip as a man with a single ambition in life viz., to imitate Christ and give Him to others whom he met in his daily life. His learning of languages was to communicate Christ and preach Him to "All Nations."

Fr. A.P. Thomas, who was with him in Bhutan during the pioneering years, presented Pippo as a man of "great esthusiasm, zealous for souls, an extraordinary worker, serene and joyful."

Fr. Jellici speaks of the joviality of Fr. Philip. Once Mgr. Perier, the Archbishop of Calcutta, had come for the feast of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary at Bandel. He remarked on seeing the dynamism and cheerfulness of Fr. Philip : "Philip had great influence over the boys so much so that he could get much out of them." He was very daring and very prudent at the same time during his stay at Bhutan. He was friendly with the royal family as well as civil and religious authorities.

Fr. Ugo Turco speaks of Fr. Philip as a man who had great trust in God, was devoted to Our Lady and jovial in his approach to all. When he was a young student, towards the end of the war,



someone remarked : "Pippo, there is no more food in the aspirantate. The superiors are feeding us with vitamin injections. All our companions have either become TB patients or abandoned their vocation. What about you?" "I have a DIVINE VOCATION", he replied, "I trust in God, and will go ahead with my efforts." At one time, he consulted a holy stigmatist (priest) in Mondovi (Cuneo, Italy). The stigmatist told him : "you will suffer much, but many will know the Blessed Virgin Mary and taste her love for them through you." While driving the jeep, at times he would clap his hands and say : "Look, look, the evil spirits get off our way. Temptations disappear as we drive along with the purpose of Christ's mission in our mind."

Ashi Kesang Wangchuck, the Queen-mother of Bhutan, held Fr. Philip in great esteem. She spoke of Fr. Philip as a great friend who influenced her life. It was he who brought her joy and hope in the days when she was living in sorrow and disappointment.

#### HIS LAST ILLNESS :

Fr. Philip suffered much towards the end of his days on earth. He had an advanced cancer of the liver. He was well prepared for his departure from this world. During his two weeks of stay at Nazareth Hospital Shillong (from June 30 to July 14, 1988), his health gradually deteriorated. He approached Fr. Giacomello for the sacrament of reconciliation and was also given the sacrament of the sick on July 6 (the day before he died). Thus fortified by the sacraments and in the presence of three of his confreres (Fr. Giacomello, Fr. J. Thelekkatt the Vice Provincial, and Fr. P.J. Joseph) he entered eternity at 7.00 A.M. on Thursday, July 14, 1988.

The funeral took place the next day with a Solemn Mass concelebrated by over seventy priests and presided over by Archbishop Hubert D'Rosario of Shillong-Guwahati. During the homily, His Grace paid glowing tributes to the untiring apostolic zeal of Fr. Philip. Fr. Sylvanus Sngi Lyngdoh spoke in Khasi recalling the virtues of this worthy son of Don Bosco, adding



that he was a messenger of the Good News as Jesus was the Messenger of peace and reconciliation.

Fr. John Kalapura, then the Provincial, presided over the last rites at the cemetery. In his eulogy, he brought out the sterling qualities of mind and heart he had noticed in Fr. Philip. Fr. Guidotto delivered the funeral oration in Khasi. Amidst audible sighs and sobs the representatives of the Rangblang Parish bade their pastor a tearful farewell.

#### CONCLUSION :

Fr. Philip, though dead in the body, lives with the Risen Christ, in that "New Jerusalem" where there are no tears, no grief but only joy. Let us keep him in our prayers and strengthen ourselves with the words of faith we come across in the preface for the dead : "For those who believe in you, Lord, life is changed, not ended, so that when this our earthly body lies in death, we gain an everlasting dwelling place in heaven."

Fr. JOSEPH THELEKKATT, S.D.B.  
Provincial

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*For the Necrology :* Fr. Philip Giraudo; Born on June 21, 1928  
Professed on August 16, 1946  
\*Ordained on December 8, 1955  
Died on July 14, 1988.

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