



BRO. ALFRED GONSALVES
SDB.

1924 — 1989

DON BOSCO AGRO ED COMPLEX

SULCORNA, RIVONA P. O.

VIA QUEPEM, GOA 403705

October 7th 1989

Feast of the Holy Rosary

Dear Confreres,

Bro. Alfred Gonsalves, sdb expired on July 18th 1989 around mid-day. Not having turned up for lunch, he was found dead, seated on the side of his bed with his arms resting on the head-rest.

He died as was always his oft-repeated wish; 'That the good Lord take me without giving trouble to any one'. He was 65½ years old (born on 12-1-1924) and had been a Salesian for 39 years. The medical report put the reason as Cardiac infraction.

Bro. Alfred Gonsalves was born in Abadan, Persia, in a fairly well-off Goan family, where his father Sarterio worked and had sufficient means to maintain two of his sons in the Jesuit boarding of St. Stanislaus', Bombay. His father died suddenly during his school career and so the two boys and one sister came under the tutelage of an aunt in Poona.

Alfred, after completing a technical Diploma in Poona, joined the Ammunition Factory, Kirkee, and served both in Kirkee and Jabalpur on the clerical staff during the last years of the British period. His aunt in Poona recalls that he was a great devotee of our Blessed Mother and never went to bed without reciting the Rosary kneeling.

Little wonder then, that in 1947, he heard God's call, set out for Bombay and guided by HER maternal intuitions made his own arrangements to join Don Bosco's fledgling society in their humble beginnings in Matunga.

Down in Tirupattur, for his year of Aspirantate, it was a rather big jump for him from the luxury and mores of a working-man used to British Army Standards, to the simple life and privations of the Tirupattur of 1948. He had as his companions Very Rev. Fr. P. C. Thomas, Rev. Fr. T. V. Thayil, Fr. P. T. Thomas, Fr. Richard D'Souza, Fr. Tarcisius Resto and others who unanimously recall with nostalgia, how Alfred was the centre of their aspirantate group, which he regaled with his continuous flow of mimicry jokes and laughter.

On July 13th 1989, Fr. Rector finally convinced him to see a doctor in Margao. He could barely climb the stairs. He too suspected heart and immediately phoned to a heart-specialist next door. It meant going down one flight of stairs and climbing another. The Cardiogram and tests revealed a serious heart condition. He was advised absolute rest in isolation.

With some rest and medicines his pain and giddiness disappeared. However, Bro. Gonzy who hardly took a tablet for the last 30 years could not understand what bed-rest meant for a heart patient. He was seen down-stairs every hour or two, kept coming for all the meals and kept telling everyone he was feeling better.

Theatre was his second love. He even offered to take a part in "The Happy Jailbirds" to be acted on August 15th 1989. He felt he would soon be well to do his usual trumpeting for the feast of the Assumption/Independence.

On July 18th he was early in the Chapel (as usual); sat in his usual corner without a back-rest, had his breakfast, and was his usual bundle of jokes. As the Rector left at 9.30 a.m... he slowly said to the Prefect... "it's just the question of 1 valve... I'll get well soon" and he returned to his room. He was never seen out again. The community realised soon after 1.00 p.m. that he had expired some-time earlier. The news spread in the Complex.

On 19th July 1989, the body was brought down at early dawn and the first Mass held at 7.00 a.m. before his remains in the T.V. Hall. All through the day the boys, girls, workers of the farm and Complex took turns in paying their respects and reciting Rosary after rosary together. Fr. Provincial flew down from Bombay at 1.30 p.m.

On 20th July 1989, the body was brought into the Complex Chapel and the farewell Mass was held at 9.15 a.m. Fr. Rector was the main celebrant and Rev. Fr. Provincial concelebrated. The neighbouring priests from Rivona parish and Sisters from the Rivona Convent too were present.

The body left the Complex premises at 1.20 p.m. for Panjim.

The funeral took place at Don Bosco's Panjim (Our Lady of Fatima Shrine) at 4.00 p.m. The singing was led by the Panjim house in unison with the other houses of Goa. Rev. Fr. Provincial was the main celebrant together with about 30 Priests, Salesian, Diocesan and Jesuit...

that the name of Don Bosco was planted in these new fields.

One of his very close companions writes: "He made his work prayer. He always kept himself busy doing his humble chores with perfection. He was always ready to help whether in the workshop or as a simple driver of a four wheeler. Through his trumpet he helped us drive away lifes' blues during our formation period".

Another companion has written "Although Bro. Gonzy had a great deal to suffer in life he bore no ill-will or grudge against anyone. He remained always a humble confrere. He had a tender devotion to Our Heavenly Mother and was constantly seen with the Rosary in hand. He worked hard. He kept his person spick and span. His frequent confessions showed a candid, transparent, simple soul. He was always honest with himself and others".

Very Rev. Fr. Thomas Panakezham writes: "Bro. Alfred Gonsalves was a true Salesian who really loved his vocation and was faithful to it inspite of great difficulties. He was always cheerful and dedicated to his duty. He never liked disputes and quarrels and carefully avoided such occasions. He was a great lover of Mary Help of Christians and was very exact in his religious duties. He was indeed happy in his vocation as a Salesian Brother".

Many a superior will remember him for another painstaking aspect of his life, in which he served the Province: as a humble driver for VIP's. During his postings at the Provincial House, Matunga, Panjim and Fatorda he was the faithful and much esteemed 'chauffeur' to Very Rev. Fr. Tohill sdb, Very Rev. Fr. George Williams sdb and was always the constant 'driving' companion to Very Rev. Fr. P. C. Thomas during his visits to this Province. He put into these long and tedious journeys, always the supernatural motive, of furthering the cause of Don Bosco.

Bro. Gonzy spent a good number of his active years in Don Bosco Technical Institute, Fatorda. Here, he had found his grove in the automobile section, so to say; and watching the Diesel re-calibrating machine itself, was a tune-up to his own blood circulation. Here, he was truly in his element.

On 27th May 1989, he arrived in Sulcorna for the last lap (posting) of his earthly journey. By mid-June we noticed that he was not his usual self. He complained of chest-pain and took some ordinary pain-killing remedies. It was the sisters at the Sulcorna Convent who first suspected it could be his heart.

During his novitiate in Kotagiri (1949-50) under the Novice-master-ship of Rev. Fr. Cogliandro, he was again the one who cheered up the community throwing aside the 'Novitiate Blues' with his trumpeting, mimicry and humour. His was truly an apostolate of 'joy'. He did his philosophy at Kotagiri (1950-52) and his practical training in far-off Liluah and Matunga. Liluah particularly, was a great period of trial for him. He was in new circumstances and new surroundings but his faith in Our Lady and the Rosary sustained him during this period of trial.

He switched over to the Brotherhood at his perpetual profession and started active life in a rather difficult posting at the agricultural farm at Sagayathottam. Later he was for sometime Secretary to the Bishop of Vellore, Mons. David Marianayagam, sdb.

By 1959, during his tenure as storekeeper in Yercaud he earned for himself the endearing title 'Cavalliere'. Never would a feast day go by, without his trumpet being sounded and it was enough for him to peep into the stage to have the audience bursting out into peals of laughter as in 1958 during the Silver Jubilee celebrations of the house of Tirupattur. With simple khakhi-pants and a solar-toppee on his head, he made the long tedious journeys from Yercaud to Salem on his marketing expeditions.

It was from thence that Bro. Gonzy was asked by the then Provincial, Fr. John Med, to switch over to Motor Mechanics. By now his fame at repairing projectors and scooters was already proverbial. Although quite old in age he underwent a crash course at the Premier Automobiles Ltd., Kurla, Bombay, and was a member of the pioneering community that started the house of Kurla in 1965.

Again, another varied set of postings came across his path. From the Motor Mechanics workshop of Kurla he was designated to help Fr. Macferran in Madras as Supplies Inspector of 'Caritas' and was later posted to the office of Don Bosco School, Egmore, Madras from where he again returned to the Bombay Province (in 1974).

His first year in the Province of Bombay was spent in the Economist's office looking after the vehicles, keeping the Economist's accounts and it was during this period through his tedious journeys from Bombay to Poona, Nasik and Baroda that he was a great moral support in purchasing lands in these new areas, the first ventures beyond Bombay and Lonavla. 'His was the silent prayerful role that the simple brother played rosary in hand, down below, while Lacordaire preached from the Pulpit'. In all these three ventures he was everready to undergo the strain of toil and fatigue to see

Fr. Provincial performed the final obsequies and Fr. Olivio Miranda one of his former rectors, gave the last obituary.

Fr. Provincial in his homily expatiated on the colourful life of our dear Bro. Gonzy. He had worked in three Provinces (Liluah-Calcutta; Madras and Bombay)... he had resigned from his job in the Ammunition Factory, Kirkee and had hearkened to Don Bosco's call. He had worked in varied postings (Secretary to the Bishop of Vellore and Inspector of CRS Supplies Madras — Mylapore Archdiocese) besides his stints in Madras, Kurla, Panjim, Fatorda and Sulcorna.

Fr. Olivio recalled his apostolate of cheerfulness. He had his repertoire of Bengali and Anglo-Indian jokes and his poetical renditions sent his hearers constantly into peals of laughter. The doctors had opined that he could never drive nor play the trumpet again (his second love). In fact he was contemplating sounding the bugle-call for the feast of the Assumption when God's call came.

Our Const. 54 reads... 'when it happens that a Salesian dies working for souls, the Congregation has won a great triumph'... 'May his tribe increase'. Men like Bro. Gonzy are needed in this tense world of today who without much ostentation "serve the Lord in gladness".

Whilst remembering his soul in your suffrages and prayers do have a special momento for the needs of this very special house of Sulcorna.

Fr. Michael Mascarenhas, sdb.
RECTOR

For the Necrology

Bro. Alfred Gonsalves, sdb.

Born: Abadan (Persia) on 12-1-1924.

Professed: Kotagiri on 24-5-1950.

Died: Sulcorna on 18-7-1989.
