

# SALESIAN NEWS

## CALCUTTA



*Special Issue*

### FR. AUSTIN GUARNERI SDB.

Born at Grumone (Cremona) on 13th May 1912.

Professed at Shillong on 8th December 1932.

Ordained at Shillong on 5th June 1941.

Died at Cremona on 2nd September 1986.

**Served the Diocese of Krishnagar for 50 years**

- 1935—38 : Bhaborpara
- 1941—45 : Krishnagar parish
- 1945—52 : Rector—DB Krishnagar
- 1952—62 : Krishnagar parish
- 1962—65 : Rector—DB Krishnagar
- 1965—73 : Krishnagar parish
- 1974—86 : Bishop's House (Press & Publications)



Dear confreres, all those who lived in close association with Fr. Guarneri could not fail to notice some of the striking Salesian qualities that he possessed.

#### An unassuming tireless worker

A salesian who worked like a clock! It was heard in Krishnagar that people could check their watches only by seeing Fr. Guarneri on his bicycle going up and down from the Bishop's House to the Press. Every moment was a treasure for him. It was a common habit with him to carry books, pamphlets and materials for proof-reading everywhere so that he could go through those whenever he had a few minutes at his disposal.

#### A Salesian for his people and with his people

Any one who says that he loves a particular group of people tries to master their language and culture. This was amply proved in the case of Fr. Guarneri, who had mastered the Bengali language and culture.

#### A Salesian of the Apostolate of the press

In this Fr. Guarneri was a true son of Don Bosco, who did so much like his founder to disseminate good literature in Bengali. We could say that he was the soul of St. Joseph's press, Krishnagar, ever since its beginning.

#### A smiling, ever calm Salesian

No matter who went with what problem, Fr. Guarneri had always a smile on his face and would find no problem unsurmountable. We can say that he had the patience of Job!

We could carry on enumerating such wonderful qualities in this Salesian who is no more with us. But his spirit lives on with us to inspire us. We can safely hold him up as an example of a true Salesian before our Aspirants, young confreres and even those who are not so young.

What poet Longfellow wrote can be applied to Fr. Guarneri:

"Lives of great men (Salesians) all remind us  
that we can make our lives sublime  
And departing leave behind us  
Footprints on the sands of time".

Dear confreres, the need of this hour is Salesians of Fr. Guarneri's nettle. Let us pray and do all in our power to get more and more young recruits to take the place of Salesians like Fr. Guarneri who have gone before us blazing the true Salesian trail. Do continue to pray for the repose of his soul and for the surviving members of his family, especially his sister Maria who was truly devoted to him till his last moment. I remind each community of its obligation to offer one Mass for the repose of the soul of dear Fr. Guarneri, if not done as yet. (R 76 ).

Fr. Sebastian Alancheril SDB  
(Provincial)

All of us were shocked to receive the sad news of the death of Fr. Austin Guarneri on 2nd September '86. I was at Mawlai, where I had gone for the Governing Body meeting of the Theologate. The entire community of Mawlai joined Fr. George Tharayil and myself in the next day's concelebrated Mass for the repose of the soul of good Fr. Guarneri. While awaiting further news about his last days I give you the bits of news I can piece together from the letter of Fr. Guarneri himself, his sister and Fr. Dino Colussi, who had gone to Italy with Fr. Guarneri.

The last letter personally written to me by Fr. Guarneri is dated 27.6.86. Among other things Father said that he was trying to get a photo-type setter monotype for the press in Krishnagar, helpful for Bengali Scripture. He then gave a string of names of Confreres to whom he wished to be remembered.

His sister, Maria, with whom he was staying wrote on his behalf on 15th august saying that Fr. Guarneri had undergone an operation on 5th august for stones in the gall-bladder and that he was very weak. His pancreas and liver were not functioning well, that he was very patient as ever despite his bad health!

The third letter was from Fr. Dino dated 22nd august. He wrote after visiting Fr. Guarneri in the hospital where his condition was described to be hopeless. His gall-bladder was removed containing over 100 big and small stones! He was suffering from cancer in its advanced stage.

My reply to the letter of his sister could not have reached him.

#### Bio-data of Fr. Guarneri

Austin was born on 13th may 1912 at Grumone (Cremona-Italy), the son of Virginio and Dilda Comilla. He joined the aspirantate at Ivrea on 14th july 1930. After being admitted to the Novitiate he came out to India. He made his novitiate at Shillong and made his first profession on 8th December 1932. He made his perpetual Profession at Sonada on 8th December 1935.

We find Br. Austin for his practical training at Bhaborpara, in the present-day Bangladesh. Here is where he came in touch with the Bengali culture and language and loved it. Br. Austin went back to Shillong for his theological studies and was ordained Priest on 5th June 1941. Soon after his ordination he was sent to Krishnagar in-charge of the Oratory and Publications. From 1945-1952 he was Rector at Don Bosco Krishnagar. Then for ten years he was Assistant Parish Priest at Krishnagar and in-charge of the Oratory and the publications. He had another term as Rector at Don Bosco Krishnagar (1962-65). From 1965 to 1973, he was Secretary to the Bishop as well as Parish Priest of the Cathedral. In 1974 he was attached to the Bishop's House in-charge of the Procure and Publications. Since 1982 he was in-charge of the Press and the publications.