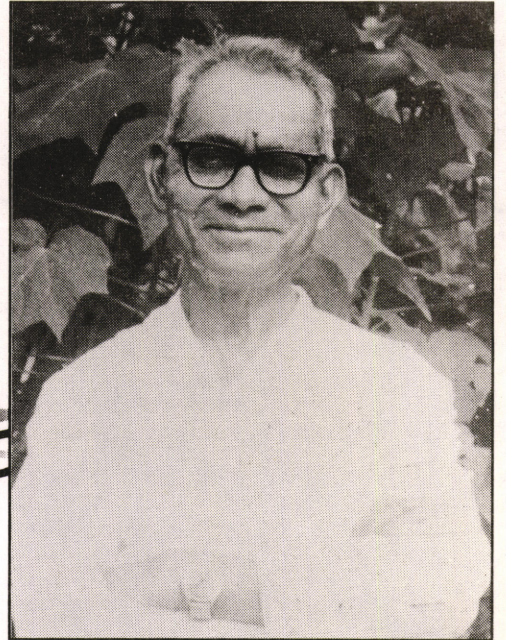


REV. FR.

LOUIS KERKETTA

S.D.B.

Born : 07.07.1910
Professed : 08.12.1932
Ordained : 05.06.1941
Died : 31.08.1998



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THE SALESIAN CONGREGATION
Regrets to announce the passing away of

Rev. Fr. **LOUIS KERKETTA S.D.B.**

*on Monday, 31st August, at 2.45 A.M.
at the Satribari Christian Hospital, Guwahati.*

*There will be a Concelebrated Requiem Mass
at the Catholic Cemetery, Shillong
on Tuesday, 1st September, at 2.00 P.M.,
followed by the Funeral Rites.*

*All Religious, Priests, the Faithful and his Friends
are invited to attend the Services
and pray for the repose of his Soul.*

Fr. DOMINIC JALA, S.D.B.
Provincial

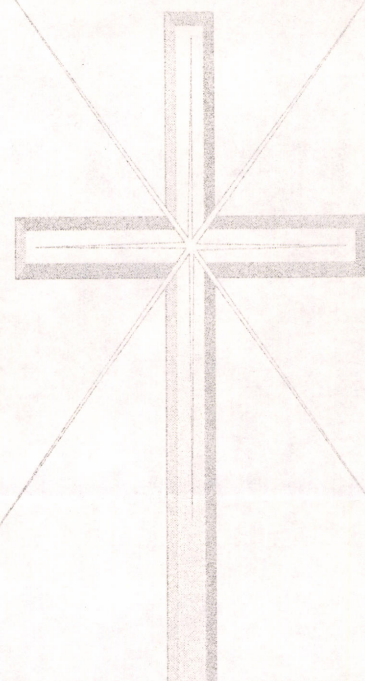
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THE SALESIAN CONGREGATION
 Regrets to announce the passing away of

REV. FR. LOUIS KERKETTA S.D.B.

He was born on 7th July 1910 at ...
 He was ordained a priest on 5th June 1941 ...

He was assigned to the ...
 He was a devoted priest and a ...

He was a devoted priest and a ...
 He was a devoted priest and a ...

FUNDAMENTAL TO ...
 ...



REV. FR. LOUIS KERKETTA SDB*Humble in service of the Lord*

*Blessed be God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
who has blessed us with all the spiritual blessings of heaven in Christ.
Thus he chose us in Christ before the world was made
to be holy and faultless before him in love,
marking us out for himself beforehand,
to be adopted sons, through Jesus Christ. (Eph 1,3-4)*

The passing away of Fr. Louis Kerketta did not take us by surprise. He seemed to have gradually slipped into the paternal embrace of the Lord who had marked him out for himself. More than 60 of 88 years of life God granted him were spent in active service of one type or another as a Salesian and a priest.

The final journey

Fr. Louis had been in Don Bosco Maligaon since 1992. He did not suffer any particular physical ailments but the passing of years witnessed a slow ebbing away of strength and life. He ate little and spoke little but smiled a lot. During the past two months he began to show more visible signs of sinking away. Seeing his deteriorating condition Fr. Francis Cheeramben, our Vice Provincial celebrated the Anointing of the Sick for Fr. Louis on 27th August with the whole Don Bosco Maligaon community present. On 29th August a doctor was called to examine Fr. Louis. Hospitalisation was advised. That same day, we were able to put Fr. Louis under medical and nursing care at the Shatribari Christian Hospital, Guwahati. Seeing that the end would not be far, his close relatives were informed. His nephews, Eugene Kerketta, catechist in Dekhijuli and Marcel Kerketta came together with others in the family. Fr. Louis was practically in an unconscious state, giving signs of his awareness only by a firm grasping of our hand when we placed it in his hand. He passed away without any struggle, on 31st August, at 2.45 a.m. Bro. Thadeus Kujur was by his side.

We paid homage to the departed Fr. Louis Kerketta at Don Bosco Maligaon. A *Requiem* Mass, presided over by Archbishop Thomas Menampampil of Guwahati Archdiocese, was celebrated on 31st August evening at our school in Maligaon. A large gathering of priests and religious, mostly from the Guwahati region joined at the Eucharist. On 1st September morning we carried the body of Fr. Louis up to Savio Juniorate, Shillong where the community celebrated the Eucharist for his eternal repose. It was raining heavily for days but after mid-day, as we readied for the funeral the sky cleared. A number of our confreres together with representatives of various religious communities in Shillong were able to gather for the last act of reverence to our departed confrere. The Salesians working in Shillong Archdiocese were in Shillong for their monthly recollection. A number of close relatives of Fr. Louis came from Dekhijuli together with Fr. Acasius Toppo of Tezpur Diocese, Fr. Edmund Lakra Sdb, both grand-nephews and Sister Patricia MSMHC of Tezpur Province his grand niece.

After the Eucharist celebrated at the Cemetery chapel of the Salesians, Archbishop T. Resto, SDB., of Shillong Archdiocese conducted the burial rites.

Listening to the Lord

In 1932 he had put forward his request to be admitted to profession, saying: "I have read many times the Constitutions and the Rules of the Salesian Society and I think I understand them well. With the same grace of God who gave me this vocation I will be able to observe them well. So I want to become a Salesian and I beg you to admit me to my second Baptism "Religious Profession". He did not waver from his decisive resolve.

Fr. Louis Kerketta was born of Mr. Johan Jhitia Kerketta and Maria Ana at Bikhampur, Noatoli (Chota Nagpur) in Ranchi, on 7th July 1910. He was the youngest of six children. At baptism on 8th December 1912 He was given the name Louis Sani (born on a Saturday).

Of his three brothers and two sisters one became a Jesuit priest, late Fr. John Kerketta S.J. Two of his grand-nephews became priests: Fr. Acasius Toppo a diocesan priest in Tezpur Diocese and Fr. Edmund Lakra a Salesian in Guwahati Province. Two of his nieces: Virginia, and Patricia and three grand nieces Josephine, Carmella and Cresectia joined the Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians.

Young Louis lost his father at a very young age and spent the first 15 years in his home place. He obtained a sound education at the local Parish school run by the Jesuits. Ill health forced him to interrupt his studies when he had completed class VIII. According to accounts given by his nephews, his mother went to work in Bhutan on a three month work permit. When the three months were over she had to move to a tea garden, Orangajuli near Tangla. Louis who had been told to rest for recovery from his illness, decided to follow his mother. There he met Fr. Leo Piasecki, the Lion of Assam valley, who got young Louis to be a local catechist in the tea garden. Seeing his zeal, Fr. Piasecki made him a head-catechist, in charge of a larger territory in the parish. In 1930 he was invited to the Don Bosco School in Guwahati where he spent about a year learning about being a Salesian. He learnt it in the company of Fr. Vincent Scuderi who took him on rounds of the mission since Louis knew the languages of the people.

Seeing the Salesians at work and dedicated to the education of boys, Louis felt attracted to the Salesian life and requested to be accepted. He was sent to Our Lady's House in Shillong for a three months' aspirantate and was eventually admitted to the Novitiate at the end of 1931 His novice master was Mgr. Stephen Ferrando.

The Salesian Missionary

He made his first religious profession on 8th December 1932. Among his companions were Mgr. Mariaselvam, Fr. Colzani, Fr. A. Doro and Fr. Elias Hopewell. It was only in 1934 that he was able to find time and opportunity to complete his school studies as a Salesian. From 1934 to 1936 he did his practical training in Guwahati with Mgr. Orestes Marengo as his rector.

He made his perpetual profession on 1 November 1938 into the hands of Fr. M. Uguet the superior of the province at the time. He had already started his theology studies at Bandel in early 1938. In September of the same year, with the opening of Sacred Heart Theologate, which replaced the burnt down Our Lady's House, the theology students moved to Mawlai in Shillong.

He was ordained by Mgr. Stephen Ferrando on 5th June, 1941, on the centenary of Don Bosco's ordination. His sentiments at that solemn and meaningful occasion could be gauged from what he had written a year earlier while asking to be admitted to the diaconate: "Though I am not quite strong spiritually and bodily, yet with the help of Divine Grace and with that of Our Lady and Saint John Bosco and with that of my dearest Superiors, I hope to persevere till death in my sacerdotal vocation and make myself as worthy as possible for such a high dignity."

In 1941 after his ordination, he was sent to Barpeta Road as Assistant Parish Priest. After a year he was asked to be the Assistant Parish Priest in Tezpur where he remained for a year. The next five years were spent as Assistant Parish Priest in Dibrugarh. In 1947 he was transferred back to Barpeta where he worked as Assistant Parish Priest till 1960. In 1960 he was appointed Rector of Don Bosco Tezpur, the first Indian Rector in the region. In 1962 he was back to Barpeta Road as Assistant Parish Priest. In 1968 he was appointed the first Vice Provincial of the Guwahati Province. After a year he asked the Rector Major to relieve him of his responsibility, humbly acknowledging his inadequacy for the work demanded of him. He preferred the simple life of the missions. He went to Bengtoli in 1969 to return to Barpeta Road as teacher in 1970 where he remained till 1992. The last years of his life were spent in the Salesian community of Don Bosco Maligaon as confessor.

A life moulded to serve humbly

At the time he was admitted to the novitiate he did not have the opportunity to have sufficient knowledge of English and Latin but his superiors saw that he had good will. They judged that he would eventually learn what was canonically required for a candidate to the priesthood. He was pious and docile. His novice master noted that, due to his personal background, he had to put much effort into his studies, but he would succeed well. He was a quiet person and was noted for his smile which would be his characteristic feature till the end of his life.

At his perpetual profession his superiors observed that; he had good will. He was ready for whatever sacrifice was demanded of him. He had a good approach to boys. He was regular in his duties and his religious exercises. Though reserved in nature, he got along well with everyone.

He was one of the first to go to Ranchi to seek for adult recruits for Salesian missionary life in Assam. In 1968, as Vice Provincial he made extensive tours in Ranchi area contacting up to 300 promising boys.

He wanted to spend his time working as every dedicated Salesian would. He felt lost when in 1990, at the age of 80, he did not have much work to do in Barpeta Road. He pestered his superiors for a place where he could do more useful work than just teaching one period. He did not understand retirement.

The last six years of his life witnessed a slow fading away of a man who was much loved by generations of students who had passed through Barpeta Road. His memory failed him. Even earlier in the Barpeta Road mission, it was not surprising to find him lost because there were times when he had even forgotten his own name.

His smile never left him. It was his lifetime signature to his inner nature of peace and calm acceptance of everyone and everything that passed through his life. He had not lost his stamina and his firm hand grip was one sure way of getting the response from him when words could not express what he might have been feeling. His last signs of communicating with Bro. Thadeus Kujur who was by his side as death came to him, was that hand which held tight.

Those of us who knew Fr. Louis closely only during the last part of his life will never be able to imagine the type of missionary he was. He had the capacity to reach out to people in all circumstances. He knew when to encourage and when to admonish. His unassuming ways of working and talking with people helped them tide over many apparently unsurmountable problems. He lived out the spirit of Don Bosco in a tangible way.

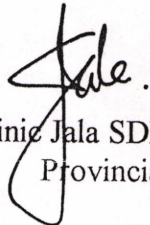
Fr. Louis Kerketta's life will not be gauged by the standards of the high and the mighty, the great prominent achievers in public life. But why should that be? His fidelity to his vocation and his work are the great pillars on which his life stood. His simplicity of life and his sincerity of purpose endeared him to everyone. He did not harbour any great worldly ambitions but he attained much.

Thank You!

Fr. Louis life in strength and in weakness was surrounded by so many people who helped him. His mother, his brothers and sisters, his dear and near ones made of him a dedicated apostle. The pioneering missionaries of Assam infused into his heart a deep love for God and for Don Bosco. His companions in the apostolate like Fr. Remo Morra and Fr. Benedict Kiro of Barpeta Road enabled him to work successfully in a vast mission territory spanning the Upper Bank of Brahmaputra from Tangla to the border of West Bengal. His community at Don Bosco Maligaon made his old age less burdensome for him.

We are grateful to all who assisted Fr. Louis during his last days: the confreres and the boys of Don Bosco Maligaon, the Sisters, the aspirants and postulants of St. Mary's convent Maligaon; Mr. Joseph, his constant nurse and companion for three years. The community of the convent of the Missionaries of Charity, at Bharalumukh, Guwahati were always ready to help with their ambulance. The Medical superintendent, the medical and nursing staff of Chatribari Christian hospital made the last moments of Fr. Louis comfortable. The communities of Savio Juniorate, Sacred Heart College and Don Bosco Technical School have collaborated in various ways to organize a fitting funeral for Fr. Louis. On them all we invoke God's choicest blessings. Fr. Louis himself will be their intercessor before the Lord.

Yours in Don Bosco,


Fr. Dominic Jala SDB
Provincial