

Focus

Embrace of Martyrdom



By Josekutty J. Puthuparambil

While the rest of the world slept in peace on Easter night a messenger of peace, Fr KJ Thomas, rector at St Peter's Pontifical Institute, Bengaluru was brutally bludgeoned to death by unknown persons in the early hours of April 1. The battered body was found at a table of the seminary at dawn.

The man known for his warm smile, had his face smashed beyond recognition. Although the police suggest the motive for the attack was theft on the ground that some documents were missing from the office of Fr Thomas, the motive is not clear especially because of the fact that his computer, iPad and other assets were not stolen.

A humble and good-hearted man, Fr Thomas Joseph Kochupurayil, affectionately called as Thommachan by his relatives and friends hailed from Pazhayempally family at Ettumanoor, in Kottayam District, Kerala. Born on May 13, 1951 he was ordained priest on 14 May 1980 for Ooty Diocese in Tamil Nadu.

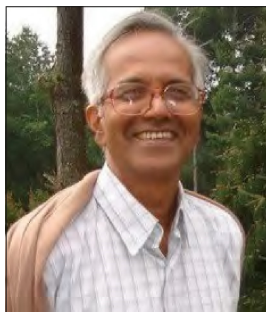
Being an erudite scholar, a great philosopher and a theologian, Fr KJ possessed rare qualities of heart and head. He was a pious priest, polite, soft spoken, good-natured, calm, composed, dedicated, hardworking, committed to his service and humane with a great sense of humour. Simplicity, humility, honesty, innocence, nobility, austerity and obedience to the elders were the hallmark of his personality.

In his eulogy, Bishop Bernard Moras said, "Fr KJ, the hallmark of your personality will make an indelible mark in the annals of St Peter's Pontifical

Seminary and Institute. You had an indomitable spirit for hard work, study, prayer and service. We will miss you but ever love you. May your soul rest in peace." With a heavy heart, deep shock and profound sorrow they bid adieu to him.

The diocese of Ooty, to which he belongs, flocked with clergy, religious, laity and people of all walks of life paid their homage at St. Mary's Church premises on the following day by a requiem Holy Eucharistic Celebration for the departed soul of Fr KJ.

In his appeal to all concerned, Bishop Arulappan Amalraj stated, "Though motive behind the murder is yet



to be ascertained, we demand a thorough investigation. The killing of Fr Thomas is not a murder for gain but a premeditated vendetta, when all the seminarians, staff vacated for summer holidays, this cowardly act is done". He continued, "we trust the police personnel of the State of Karnataka will look into all angles of the murder and establish the truth, whereby justice will be done to the departed soul".

The mortal remains of Fr KJ were moved to his ancestral home and parish on 4th April. Bishop Mar George Card.

Alencherry, HB Moran Mor Baselios Card. Cleemis, Bishop Mar Kuriakose Kunnacherry, Bishop Emeritus of Kottayam, HG Mar Joseph Perumthottam, Metropolitan Archbishop of Changanacherry, Bishop Thomas Mar Kurilos, Metropolitan Archbishop of Thiruvalla, Bishop Sebastian Thekethecheril, Bishop of Vijayapuram and Bishop Mar Jacob Murickan, Auxiliary Bishop of Palai were some of the Episcopal dignitaries who paid their last respects to the departed soul at his parental home

In his emotional sermon during the funeral service at home Bishop Vazhappilly, his bosom friend and teacher, was in tears and staggering for words when he recollected the time since KJ joined as a seminarian under him, who later turned out to be his colleague and thick friend. He narrated that Fr KJ was a friend to all, enemy to none; a guide and philosopher to all those who sought his counselling, a compassionate priest with affable manners, sincerity, exuberance and dedication. Dr Vazhappilly added that KJ reached out to everyone impartially especially the sick and the needy and affirmed that he was a saintly man.

The mortal remains of Fr KJ were laid to rest in the designated tomb at the chapel of St Joseph Knanaya Church, Ettumanoor at 5.45 pm on Friday, 5 April 2013, where thousands including prelates, clergy, religious, nuns and people from various walks of life paid their tributes to the departed soul.

According to Cardinal Gracias, CBCI president, Fr KJ's martyrdom is a tribute to the priesthood, who are called to give their life to the people, devote themselves, if necessary, to the point of death. Even in death, Fr KJ is a powerful witness, who proclaimed the death and the resurrection of our Lord.

Let us be assured that the great martyrdom of Fr KJ shall not go in vain but shall bear fruit in the form of a canonised saint of the Church participating in the eternal banquet in heaven, who will intercede for us hapless pilgrims in the sojourn and shine as a role model for us to look upon.

Malankara Church starts social center in Delhi

By Bijay Kumar Minj
New Delhi:

Cardinal Baselios Cleemis, the first Cardinal of the Syro-Malankara Church, on Sunday laid the foundation stone for his Oriental Church's first social service center in Jasola, New Delhi.

"Let this center be the sign of love of Christ where all are welcome, even the least of people," said the Catholicos, the head of the youngest of Oriental Churches.

The center named Prachodana (inspiration) is designed to house an NGO leading the social services that the Church initiated in 2009 in the national capital territory and nearby areas.

The service, joined with the "Food for the Hungry" program, helps people without discrimination of caste, creed, community, religion and gender, Cardinal Cleemis told ucanindia.in.

Currently it provides hundreds of food packets daily to poor people living in streets, slums, orphanages, rehabilitation centers and even patients in hospitals, who cannot afford even one meal a day, the youngest cardinal said. The church members fund the programs.



The 53-year cardinal, major archbishop of Syro-Malankara church, was in New Delhi for a two-day visit. The Oriental Church organized a function to felicitate the leader who was made a cardinal last November.

Some 3,000 people and several dignitaries from the Church and politics joined it.

Apostolic Nuncio Archbishop Salvatore Pennacchio at the function lauded the simplicity, humility and spirituality" of the leader, saying such qualities will help him lead the Church to growth in the Catholic Church in India.

The Church had only less than 10 members when it joined Catholic fold in 1930, but has some 500,000 Catholics now, mainly in Kerala state, southern India.

"In him we have found an able and zealous missionary here," the nuncio said.

Parliamentarian P J Kurien said the Cardinal is considered a people's bishop due to his simple and approachable nature. The acceptance he has among leaders of other religions will help in nation building, the politician said.

<http://www.ucanindia.in/news/malankara-church-starts-social-center-in-delhi/20735/daily>

Franciscan nuns promote organic farming

Ramganj Mandi: Franciscan nuns in a rain shadow area of desert state of Rajasthan are pioneering organic farming to help nurture the land and save villagers from harmful pesticides and chemical fertilizers.

"The intense use of poisonous pesticides and chemical fertilizers have been creating havoc both on the land and its inhabitants!" said Sr. Isabel, superior of the Franciscan community of FSMA Sisters here.

<http://mattersindia.com/franciscan-nuns-promote-organic-farming/>