

OBITUARY



Fr. Dr. JOSEPH PUTHUMANA SVD

(1930 – 2012)



Fr. Joseph Puthumana, the senior most confrere of India-Hyderabad Province (INH) died on June 16, 2012. Fr. Joseph Puthumana occupies an enviable slot in the history of the Indian SVDs as he has the distinction of being the first in many aspects. He was one of the first Indian SVD priests, who was ordained in 1959. He was one of the four pioneers in SVD Andhra Pradesh mission as he took up the parish at Ramachandrapuram in 1974 and started an English medium school in 1976 and another in 1984 at Patancheru. He established himself as a writer as he had authored seven books and he was proud to have his Ph. D. done when he was 78.

Fr. Joseph Puthumana suffered a massive heart attack on July 25, 1988 and soon recovered from it and was keen on his physical fitness as he had his morning and evening walks till he suffered a brain haemorrhage on June 7, 2012 and was taken for an operation at Prime Hospitals, Ameerpet, Hyderabad. The brain operation was successful as he came to his consciousness the same day and spoke to the people who visited him. Soon he went into coma and was put in ventilator as he developed pneumonia on account of the infection of the lungs with pleurisy. There was no improvement in his condition and he breathed his last on June 16, 2012 at 06. 30 pm in St. Theresa's Hospital, Sanathnagar, Hyderabad.

Fr. Joseph Puthumana was born on January 18, 1930 to Paily Puthumana and Annamma at Mutholapuram, Kerala. He was the fourth of seven children for his parents. He completed his S.S.L.C. in April 1950 and joined the St. Joseph's Mission Home, Kottayam with the intention of becoming a missionary priest. His dream was realized when Fr. Valentine Zimmerman recruited the first Indian candidates in February 1951. They started their novitiate at Catholic Ashram, Palda on December 21, 1951 under the novice mastership of Fr. Stanislaus Wald. They pronounced their vows in December 1953 and had their philosophical studies at Catholic Ashram, Palda with Fr. Steltenpool and Fr. Stephen Fuchs as their professors from June 1954 to May 1956.

Fr. Puthumana and his companions had their Theological studies at Papal Athenaeum, Pune. On October 02, 1959 Fr. Puthumana and four of his companions were ordained priests in Indore, Madhya Pradesh. After the ordination, Fr. Puthumana served as teacher and prefect of Brother Candidates for an year at Palda after which he was appointed Vocation Director in Kerala. He was instrumental in starting St. John's Seminary, Changanacherry.

Later, he was transferred to St. Theresa's Church at Bandra as an assistant priest for three years. In 1966, he was permitted to go for renewal course in Nemi, Rome. After the renewal course he was sent for higher studies in USA in the University of Notre Dame, Indiana. In 1968, June 02, he completed his M.A and returned to India in September, 1968.

Back home in India, he did his B. Ed. at Santa Cruz, Mumbai and then was given an appointment as assistant priest at Papady, Bassein. After three years of pastoral ministry in Bassein, he volunteered to work in Andhra Mission. Fr. Puthumana reached BHEL Hyderabad on June 8, 1974. He was accommodated at St. Ann's School Staff residence. He took possession of the parish land opposite to Srinivas Theatre, BHEL and put up a multi-purpose hall and got it blessed on January 15, 1976. On February 23, 1976 he opened a K. G. school, which grew into a primary school and then a High school and named it after the Founder, St. Arnold. In 1984, he opened yet another school at Patancheru and named it after St. Joseph Freinademetz. These two schools grew up successfully and are said to be great achievements of Fr. Puthumana.

Fr. Joseph Puthumana retired from the school at the age of 60 and was appointed the District Superior of A. P. He bought a house at Begumpet and named it SVD House. In 1993 he took his residence at Catholic Centre, Sangareddy and was appointed the first parish priest of Sadashivpet in 1994. In 1995, he took over the parish of Sangareddy and put up the parish house. From 1999 to 2000 he was a teacher for the Brother candidates at Alwal and then moved to R. C. Puram parish house to write the history of INS Province which he released on June 28, 2002. He wrote yet another book '35 Years of SVD presence in Andhra Pradesh' and got it released on September 18, 2007.

In the year 2003, he got himself registered for a Ph. D. in Mysore University and obtained his doctorate on February 28, 2008 at the age of 78. On October 02, 2009 Fr. Joseph Puthumana celebrated the Golden Jubilee of his priestly ordination with his near and dear ones at home while he anticipated the same one year earlier with his companions Bp. G. M. Anathil and Fr. Jacob Arackal at Indore.

Fr. Joseph Puthumana was a good friend of Archbishop S. Arulappa and M. Joji of Hyderabad. He is a role model for hard work, punctuality, regularity in spiritual exercises like morning prayers, holy mass, etc. He has also written his autobiography and got it published on October 02, 2010. Through his autobiography he gives a lot of historical perspective of the beginning of SVD formation in India and pioneering mission in Andhra Pradesh. Fr. Joseph Puthumana was an inspiration and instrumental in the establishment of SVD cemetery at R.C. Puram and he is again the first in occupying the same. The Divine Word Missionaries in India will cherish the memory of Fr. Joseph Puthumana for a long time. An apt epitaph on his grave would be : ***“MANAPUTHUMANA”*** – Our Puthumana.