

# **BRO. OLIVER ERICATT – FUNERAL ORATION** **OF BRO. PROVINCIAL SUPERIOR**

Dear relatives of our beloved late Bro. Oliver Ericatt, Bro. Mariannan, Provincial Superior of Trichy Province, Brothers, Fathers, Sisters, past students and friends,

“And yet another elder Brother of ours has embarked on his Heavenward journey!”

“**Soldiers never die, they only go home for their eternal rest.**” The best word to summarize Bro. Oliver and his beautiful life on earth is “Soldier”. He was a great soldier who fought the vicissitudes and battles of life with a ‘Never Say Die’ spirit till the very end. As a young Brother with excellent mechanical qualifications, as a missionary in SPD or as a Brother holding various responsibilities in the Province, Bro. Oliver was a soldier who quietly strived hard and fought everywhere for the cause of the poor! Knowing him for many years and living with him in the Community for nearly 3 years, I found him with only one agenda ‘give to the poor and needy’, irrespective of the money available in the Community or the Province.

Christmas was a selective time when he went out of the way to give gifts and cash to hundreds of poor people, especially the beggars and vagabonds who gathered at the Provincial house. When it came to charity, nobody could outdo Bro. Oliver!

Bro. Oliver was always proud to be associated with the downtrodden and the homeless, following the path shown by our Founder, St. Louis Grignon de Montfort!

During his various terms in St. Louis Villa, he has built more than 50 houses for the homeless at Yercaud! His noble heart of love and concern for the poor will ever be remembered in the years to come - more than the buildings he put up, the diplomas he obtained and the other tall achievements of his life. His cry for the poor made him more humane particularly with pronounced manifestation of the same for the last 20 years and more. ‘Anbu Illam’ at Yercaud was his second home – he loved those inmates, visited them often and shared with them whatever came his way. His acts of kindness and charity were in resonance with our Rule of Life. Art. 33

*“Do not keep unto yourself  
the things that come your way,  
Whatever you earn, whatever is given to you,  
You have promised not to claim as your own.” R.L. 33*

Though everything is apparently quiet in this Chapel, if you listen carefully, we can hear our beloved late Bro. Oliver crying aloud “Look for me among the people I loved and served”.

Bro. Oliver, by nature had a feeble voice, often not heard in meetings and Chapters but he had unshakeable courage and determination to speak the truth and stand for justice even if others didn't agree with him. He would repeat the same thing again and again. All the Provincials who lived with him will accept the fact that he had a constant urge for the betterment of the Province, which very often appeared to be a bit of persistent irritation!

Another wonderful quality that all of us should imbibe from Bro. Oliver is that he wanted to do something more for the Province, for the Brothers, the poor and all around us. The soldier in him would never allow him to fold his wings and lie in a corner doing nothing. Even a few weeks ago, when I met him, he told me ‘Give me some work!’

*‘It is only well with me when I have a chisel in my hand’* said Michael Angelo. Bro. Oliver is a perfect example of an ideal Religious Brother who carried a mission-chisel in his hand.

Bro. Oliver always loved to work in our economically poor Institutions. The Kalghatgi project and the Grahini mission are perfect examples for the same.

Bro. Oliver had a unique quality of being at either ends of the swing of the pendulum of life. He could be friendly with persons in high places and also the poor Lazaruses, the lowly and the insignificant.

Being a consistent worker, one could often find things scattered all over Bro. Oliver's room but still he knew where each and every file was and in no time could gather the required information.

He had a tremendous intuitive knowledge which helped him to make quick and urgent decisions. His recent visit to his home just a few days before his death is a good example of his intuitive thinking capacity!

Whenever he was on transfer or assigned a new responsibility at home or in faraway countries, he readily accepted the same in total obedience without ever questioning or grumbling about the logic of his Superiors' decision.

Collecting and Compiling value based articles and quotations was another useful hobby of Bro. Oliver. He would take copies of his compilations and distribute them to everyone who came to him. At times he would force it on them – his quest for a better world!

### **Let me brief you a little on the wonderful journey of Bro.Oliver's life-**

Bro. Oliver (A.U. Mathew) was born in a good, Catholic family in Periyar, Kidangoor, Kottayam District on February 14th, 1932. In 1947, at the age of 15, he joined the Juniorate at Coonoor. He did his Postulancy in Coonoor and his Novitiate at Eachinkadu, Yercaud. He made his First Profession in Yercaud on May 8th , 1953.

Bro. Oliver was sent to Tindivanam to do his Teachers' Training (1953-55). As he showed much interest in technical matters, he was posted at St. Joseph's Industrial School, Tindivanam in 1955. He picked up carpentry. He received training in Motor mechanics in Trichy and Madurai from 1958-59. In 1959, he did his C.T.I. training in Pune. From 1959-1965, he was a teacher in St. Joseph's Training Institute, Tindivanam. His love for poor students and orphans was already visible over there.

During 1965-1967, Bro. Oliver received Automobile Training at Paddington Technical College, London and he received the College's Best Student Award.

From 1967-1973, Bro. Oliver was the Local Superior and Principal of St. Joseph's Industrial School and Technical Institute, Tindivanam. He started the Motor Mechanics division there. He prepared and submitted a Master Plan to Misereor and Cebemo and obtained funds in order to expand the orphanage building, to extend the carpentry workshop and to construct a spacious workshop for Motor Mechanics,

fitting and smithy. He helped many poor orphan students for higher studies, who will never forget him and his service to them.

In 1973, Bro. Oliver was selected to lead a group of Brothers to go to Fiji to start a Boys' Town in Suva, at the invitation of the Government of Fiji. Bro. Oliver built up excellent rapport with Mr. Ratu Mara, the then Prime Minister and the other Government officials of Fiji. There was no Institution and everything had to be provided. Bro. Oliver prepared a master plan for the buildings and applied to Misereor for funds. With 60% of support from Misereor and 40% from the Government of Fiji, the Montfort Technical Institute and Montfort Boys' Town were constructed and the Institute started to function from March 1976. Till 1980, Bro. Oliver looked after the Technical Institute and Boys' Town with tremendous commitment. Much credit goes to Bro. Oliver for starting this wonderful mission in Fiji.

From 1980-86, Bro. Oliver was the Local Superior of St. John's Boys' Town and Principal of St. John's Industrial Training Institute, Manjampatti. His love for the poor students stood out among many other qualities. He was the President of the Private Technical School Principals' Association, Tamilnadu for six years and the Regional Secretary of the SKIP for 6 years.

During 1986-87, Bro. Oliver was the Provincial Secretary and in-charge of the construction work in Kanakkankuppam. From 1987-1993, he was the Provincial Bursar and Secretary at St. Louis Villa, Yercaud. From 1988-93, he was a member of the International Finance Commission of the Congregation. From 1993-97, he was the Local Superior of St. Louis Villa and Provincial Bursar. During this period, he took an active part in the activities of SSGY.

In 1997, Bro. Oliver once again volunteered to work in Fiji. Yet again, he obtained funds to develop the Institutions at South Pacific District. Towards the end of 2000, he came back to India.

From January 2001 to November 2006, Bro. Oliver was the Local Superior and Vice Chairman of the Good News Welfare Society and Intermediate College and Degree College at Kalghatgi in Karnataka. As the first Superior there, he led the Institutions in the right direction and paved the way for their development. From December 2006-May 2007, he was the Local Superior of Montfort Senior Secondary School,

Anakkara. From 2007-2010, he was the Local Superior at Montfort Technical Institute, St. Thomas Mount.

From 2010-12, Bro. Oliver was the Local Superior and Provincial Secretary at St. Louis Villa, Yercaud.

In 2013, he was diagnosed with lymphatic cancer symptoms and was undergoing treatment in the Apollo Specialty Cancer Hospital for more than a year with Chemotherapy and radiation procedures. Initially he showed a lot of improvements. However, in spite of the best medical treatment made available, during the last few months, the external symptoms of cancer started to manifest and torment him much. But he endured everything patiently.

Recently he went to his earthly home in Kerala and was there from 11<sup>th</sup> May 2014 to 3rd June 2014- perhaps to say good-bye to all his beloved ones, especially his elder brother before he left for his true and eternal home in Heaven! As his health conditions were deteriorating, he was admitted in St. Thomas Hospital for symptomatic treatments. Day by day, his condition worsened and finally on Friday, June 13<sup>th</sup> 2014 at 9.40 p.m. he breathed his last. He died as he lived- he had a very peaceful death.

As we have gathered together and tears run down our faces, let us keep our eyes on Jesus and thank Him for all the gifts, blessings, good works, acts of charity and kindness we have received through the beautiful life of Bro. Oliver. In Bro. Oliver's death, we have all been brought together as one family! Let us remember that one day, sooner or later, the death knell with toll for you and me.

*“To live in the hearts we leave behind, is not to die” - Thomas Campbell*

The courage with which Bro. Oliver conducted himself after knowing about his malady of Lymphatic Cancer, is something to be admired. Always, he would say, “I am alright, doctor said, I am completely cured!” We admire his positive mindset which sustained him this far. Last Wednesday, when I met him in St. Thomas Hospital, he looked quite composed though he complained of weakness. The next day, on Thursday, we could see that he was slowly sinking – he held my hands and said just one sentence “Please pray for me!” Bro. Oliver was always faithful to his prayer and knew its strength amidst his work and his sufferings.

For Bro. Oliver, Life was real! Life was earnest! And the grave was not its goal; 'dust thou art, to dust returnest', was not spoken of this soul!

*Farewell, dear voyageur - 'twill not be long.  
Your work is done - now may peace rest with thee.  
Your kindly thoughts and deeds- they will live on.  
This is not death - 'tis immortality...  
And you know the thing that all men learn:  
There is no death – there is immortality.*

Dear Bro. Oliver, you knew that “Life is a voyage that is homeward bound.”

In the name of the whole Province, my sincere condolences to all his beloved relatives – whom he had loved so much! Be assured of the fact that we have one more intercessor in Heaven. We thank you for your support especially during his critical days. My sincere appreciation to Bro. K.K Thomas and the Community of St. Thomas Mount for taking care of Bro. Oliver with extreme patience and kindness. My special thanks to Dr. Ramanan of Apollo Speciality Hospital who had medically assisted him with love and care. With the same breath, I thank Dr. Sr. Rexline and Mr. George for looking after him especially during the last few days of his sojourn in this world. I also thank Bro. Ignatius who is presiding over the Eucharistic celebration, the Parish Priest, the other Priests, the Novice Master, the Novices and the Montfort Community here for all the arrangements. I appreciate all the Brothers and friends who have assembled here, particularly those from other Provinces to pray and to express solidarity with us and the family members of Bro. Oliver. I also thank Rev. Bro. Superior General and all other Brothers and friends who have sent us condolence messages.

“Good bye dear Brother Oliver, you were not afraid of the end, because you knew it is only a turn in the corner for a new road and a new beginning!”

*“Your glow of inspiration warms us, it is a holy rapture”*

-Ovid

“The things you do for yourself are gone when you are gone, but the things you do for others remain as your legacy”

-Bro. George Kalangod,  
Provincial Superior

Date: 15.06.2014