

**BRO.GERARD PATRICK -**  
**FUNERAL ORATION OF BRO.PROVINCIAL SUPERIOR**

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Your Excellency Rt.Rev.Dr.Lawrence Pius, the Bishop of Dharmapuri, Chamakalayil family members of our beloved Bro.Patrick, Rev.Bro.Franky Noronha, the National Chairman, Rev.Bro.Mariannan, Provincial Superior of Trichy Province, Rev.Bro.Clement Kandulna, Provincial Superior of Ranchi Province, Rev.Sr.Lilly, Provincial Superior, Daughters of Wisdom, Brothers, Fathers, Sisters, past students, staff, collaborators and friends of MCDS and my dear friends,

Dear Bro.Patrick,

*“God looked around his garden  
And found an empty place,  
He then looked down upon the earth  
And saw your tired face.  
He put his arms around you  
And lifted you to rest.  
God's garden must be beautiful*

*He closed your weary eyelids  
And whispered, 'Peace be Thine'.  
It broke our hearts to lose you  
But you didn't go alone,  
For part of us went with you  
The day God called you home”*

Our beloved Brother has surprised us all by taking a sudden flight, embarking on a new journey with empty hands and an expectant heart even as we are celebrating Easter joy of risen Christ, who suffered and died for us. After busy days of work and struggle for 73 years, of which 54 were spent in committed service to God and his children, he has given back the keys of his door and entered the house of his father.

As St.Paul reminds us in 2 Corinthians 5:1, *“For we know that when this tent we live in - our body here on earth - is torn down, God will have a house in heaven for us to live in, a home he himself has made, which will last forever.”*

At this time of shock and dismay, no words can wipe away our earthly tears and quench the wailings of emotions so human! But the words of Bernard Shaw, give us sufficient reason to cross over the sea of sorrows and enter into the land of eternal rejoicing! *“Death levels all men; but reveals the eminent”*

Bro. Patrick was a 'Phenomenon' by himself - totally different from the ordinary mortals - a unique person who defined the meaning of 'Paradigm shift' by his life of courage and determination especially for the last 20 years. He believed in taking risks and loved to face challenges - Bro. Patrick by his bold step of 'option for the poor' gave a new meaning and outlook on what it is to be a Religious Brother. He also attempted with success to redefine the meaning of 'sanctity' in a practical way in this modern world where oppressors grab even the little that is the right share of the poor.

'Never say die' was his watchword. He was always bold and daring.

***"Cowards die many times before their deaths; the valiant never taste death but once."*** Bro. Patrick was a perfect example to this Shakespearian dictum!

Bro. Gerard Patrick (Isaac Chamakalayil) was born on September 29, 1941 at Kaipuzha, Kottayam District, to Mr. C.K. Chummar and Mrs. Mariamma Simon of Chamakalayil family. Influenced by his maternal uncle Bro. Eugenius (Mr. Joseph Pathiyil), he joined St. Gabriel Juniorate, Kazipet in 1955. He did his Novitiate at Eachinkadu from 1959-1961 and he made his First Profession on April 12, 1961.

From 1961-1963, Bro. Patrick did his Teachers' Training at Kazipet and taught a year each at St. Joseph's High School, Kothagudem and St. Charles Inter College, Sardhana. From 1965 to 1972, Bro. Patrick was teacher and warden at Montfort school, Yercaud. As Sports' Secretary, he conducted Sports and Athletic activities for the all round development of his students. In this effort, his students appreciated him very much. He believed in the old adage that the "Battle of Waterloo was fought in the playing fields of Eton". From 1972-1980, he worked at RSK Higher Secondary School, Trichy. Here too he spared no effort whatsoever in order to bring out the best in his students, especially in the field of Sports and Games. During the year 1983-1984, he worked at St. Joseph's Higher Secondary School, Chengalpattu.

From 1984-1990, Bro. Patrick was the Manager of St. Louis Institute Press, Adyar. He worked hard to improve the Press. During his visit to USA, he contacted agencies and individuals with the intention of improving the Press as well as St. Louis Institute, Adyar. Bro. Patrick raised funds and added two floors to the Press building.

From 1990-1995, Bro. Patrick was the Superior of the Institute as well as the Manager of the Press. He started a Printing Institute offering a Diploma course in Printing. Further, after much struggle he started a University College affiliated to the Madras University, offering B.Com for the hearing impaired which is the only

one of its kind in Asia. During this year, he registered the '**Montfort Community Development Society**' (MCDS).

In June 1995, Bro. Patrick was transferred from Adyar to Alandur. From there he started functioning as the Founder-Director of MCDS. When Montfort Youth Centre became free, he moved in there. Later, he got a house on rent in Adyar area itself and the Society started functioning from there without interruption.

Starting his career as a teacher, he experimented with many opportunities that came his way. Though he did shine in all that he did, his heart was never at rest in the comfort zones of his mission and life... The missionary dynamism of St. Montfort, our Father coupled with his love for the poor and those rejected by the world became his prime concern in life especially during his stay at St. Louis, Adyar. No force on earth could stop him from doing what he thought was the right step in his life. Practically with no purse and little resources following the example of his Master, he embarked on a mission for the least of the brothers and sisters of Christ resulting in the formation of Montfort Community Development Society!

The parable of the mustard seed and the birds of the sky finding place to rest in its shade is the best comparison we can make regarding MCDS and its contribution to the Society, particularly in Chennai.

He loved his students passionately and treated them with dignity and respect. His love for sports and games saw him producing some of the finest Athletes of the Country. But instead of stopping by such snowy woods, he moved onto another realm of total commitment for the poorest of the poor and the marginalized - And that has made the whole difference in his life.

The Montfort Community Development Society plays a multifaceted role in developmental activities and provides services through its Integrated Community based rehabilitation programmes. Special emphasis is given to people with disabilities and their families. The programme covers awareness creation, prevention, early detection, education, vocational training, health, recreation and socio-economic rehabilitation of the disabled.

MCDS' vision is self-reliance to live in dignity and justice, particularly for women, providing access for the less privileged to progress through learning and training. Its activities include physical development, relief for those affected by natural calamities, care and help for disabled children, child labourers, street children and visually impaired. It also has youth development programmes, mobile clinics, open schools, non-formal education centres, special schools for child labourers and an Orchestra for the blind.

The Society has managed to provide appliances to thousands of disabled persons. It conducts various Literacy and supplementary education programmes in slums to benefit the disabled, as well as able-bodied children. Free medical camps are also organised for them. Bro. Patrick has a very devoted team to support and help him in his mission. He organized financial help from Cardinal Leger Foundation and many other agencies including the State and Central Governments. I am happy to see among us Mr. Raymond Stark, Chairman of 'Talking Tech Foundation', New Zealand which is also a Partner of the MCDS mission.

Bro. Patrick was a very talented person. He was excellent at relating himself with people. He was good at contacting government officials, political leaders, benefactors, students, and above all, the people in need. He got help from doctors, professors, businessmen, youth leaders, government agencies and foreign agencies.

In 2003, Bro. Patrick organized an International Seminar in Chennai on Disabilities and Developmental Delays, a Global Perspective. There were a whole lot of dignitaries from India and abroad who participated in this programme.

Celebrations marking the Ten Eventful Years of MCDS and its Self Help Groups took place in the San Thome Indoor Stadium on 1st April, 2007. Over 3000 members of the MCDS Self Help Groups and a number of friends and associates participated in this event. Hon'ble Ministers, leaders from various walks of life, Church authorities, MPs and MLAs from the State were also present and appreciated Bro. Patrick and MCDS for its upliftment programmes.

The Golden Jubilee of his Religious Profession was organized on June 25, 2011.

In December 2013, he received the Lifetime Achievement award for a life of service to people. This award given by the Christian Welfare Society of Tamil Nadu was conferred by his Eminence Cardinal George Alencherry, Major Archbishop of the Syro - Malabar Church.

Bro. Patrick had the courage to challenge himself and also quietly question every Brother who is called upon to live a radical evangelical life and give tangible expression to it through their mission according to the Charism of their founder.

***“You are free and totally available,  
you can therefore be bold and dynamic  
and rush where God beckons  
to meet the urgency of men’s needs.” RL.10***

Through the MCDS activities, Bro.Patrick's contribution to the society attempting to bring about socio-economic equality will never be forgotten. However, I think he has made another equally important contribution by telling loudly to the Brothers of St.Gabriel in India that one does not require degrees, high qualifications or a heavy money bag in order to serve, to strive and to live in the hearts of people.

Bro.Patrick always had the courage to call a spade a spade! He loved his Brothers and never failed to appreciate any good work done by others. He always thought and spoke differently, becoming of a gentleman. His critical attitude and questioning nature were part of a greater vision and the habit of thinking 'big' without being tainted by pettiness and selfishness.

On February 15, 2015 Bro.Patrick had a blackout and was admitted in 'Fortis Malar Hospital'. He was later shifted to Apollo Hospital for an angiogram requiring stents for the 2 blocks. Apparently he recovered well and was very cheerful. When I met him last on 26.02.2015 and later, my telephonic conversations with him indicated that he was recouping fast and preparing to go for yet another gallant bout in the service of the poor.

However, on 7<sup>th</sup> April at 12 Noon, after attending some work in his office, Bro.Patrick came down to his room for his lunch break. The room door was left open and after 10 minutes, the driver Mr.Thangamani saw him lying motionless in his bed. He alarmed the Secretary and the other staff members; they rushed him to Fortis Malar Hospital. Though they reached the Hospital within 10 minutes, the Doctors declared him dead.

***Dear Bro.Patrick, at your death,***

***You have taught us not to postpone our life as life will not postpone our death.***

***Death shall not stop for us,***

***But we can conquer death by 'dying' to ourself!***

***Your life has been filled with challenges,***

***You have looked at life differently,***

***And have taken a road less travelled by others.***

***You dared to reach the unreachable***

***Transforming the lives of others, particularly the poor, neglected, abandoned and those numerous broken men and women.***

***Your outstretched arms lifted orphans and the differently able...***

***The blind see and deaf hear,***

***You are a different type of flower in God's garden***

***With a hue and colour unseen in the visible spectrum of light.***

***You have touched the lives of others with all colours of the rainbow!***

In the gloom of the silence around your lifeless body, we can hear you saying to us:

“When I go down to the grave, I can say, like many others, I have finished my day’s work!” But I cannot say, “I have finished my life”. My day’s work will begin again the next morning. The tomb is not a blind alley; it is a thoroughfare. It closes on the twilight and opens on the dawn. (Victor Hugo)

I have got my leave, Bid me farewell, my brothers and sisters! I bow to you all and take my departure. Here, I give back the keys of my door...A summon has come and I am ready for my journey.

With the Montfortian family and your biological family members, along with all your friends, students and well wishers, we say ‘adieu’ to you, dear Brother Patrick with the words of St.Paul, ***“You have fought the good fight, you have finished the race, you have kept the faith. Now there is in store for you the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to you on that day”***. (2 Tim.4/7,8)

Once again, I take this opportunity to express our appreciation and prayerful condolences to the sorrowful Chamakalayil family, particularly Mr.Thommikunju, his other brothers and sisters who have come from far and wide. I must specially appreciate and thank Rt.Rev.Dr.Lawrence Pius for having volunteered and come all the way to preside over this solemn funeral mass and ceremony. I also thank our Novice Master and Novices for the night vigil and making this funeral service solemn by their singing and effective participation.

From the time Bro.Patrick collapsed in his room on 7<sup>th</sup> April, Bro.Thomas K.K and his Community went out of the way to organize systematically everything in Chennai, especially at Malar and Ramachandra Hospitals. Yesterday, after a special mass and a memorial service at St.Thomas Mount, they accompanied the mortal remains of Bro.Patrick to Eachinkadu. My appreciation to them. Also while expressing my sincere condolences, I must thank the office staff, drivers, programme coordinators, field workers and all other staff members of MCDS for their support and collaboration. I am sure it will continue in the days to come with the heavenly blessings of Bro.Patrick.

My appreciation to the Community of Montfort School, Yercaud, all other Brothers from various Provinces, Rev.Fathers, Rev.Sisters and our dear friends who have come together to give a dignified ‘send off’ to our beloved Brother. Dear Bro.Patrick, we miss you, your relatives, your dear children, staff and collaborators of MCDS miss you, your past students and friends miss you, but it is the poor who will miss you most... our loss is heaven’s gain!

Date : 10.04.2015

Venue : Montfort Chapel, Yercaud

**-Bro.George Kalangod  
Provincial Superior**