

Tribute to late Rev.Fr P.Jesunesan OMI

By: Anton X. Rajinthrakumar

It's with heavy heart and tremendous sense of respect, I write this humble tribute to Fr.P.Jesunesan OMI who was called to eternal rest on August 13th 2009. As we look through the kaleidoscope of his life, we see the many valued and meaningful life of Fr.Jesunesan. He has touched the lives of so many people in different ways over the last four decades of his varied and illustrious career – as a humble priest, dedicated teacher, wisdom-filled Vice Rector, mentoring Superior, resourceful Provincial Council and the list goes on.

The dawn of the eighties witnessed the induction of a young and energetic Vice Rector – Fr. P Jesunesan OMI, at St.Patrick's College , Jaffna . I was one of the first year Advanced Level students in 11M class and had the pleasure and blessings to have this humble servant of God as my vice Rector at SPC Jaffna until I left the portals of St.Patrick's in August 1983.

It takes a special kind of teacher to leave a lasting effect on your students, even after nearly 30 years .But that is exactly the kind of effect Fr. Jesunesan had on his students during his time as vice Rector at SPC as evidenced by the outpouring of grief and the sense of loss felt by the extended Patrician family members from all parts of the globe. Like many of his former students, I continued to had contacts with Fr.Jesunesan and had the privilege of meeting him in person in Toronto couple of times over the last few years.

He always made time to meet his past pupils especially whenever he visited Toronto.

As I turn the Kaleidoscope of Fr.Fesunesan's life to the early eighties, this new vice Rector to the Colleges was caring, fair-minded and humble. In one of his initial assembly speeches he mentioned that if he had known that one day he would be appointed the vice Rector of the College he would have studied more. He was in his early forties but his counseling depth and philosophical outlook of education was unique. He challenged us to realize our full potential with words of encouragement and real –life inspirational stories.

Well, this was St. Patrick's , famous for giving new teachers new names and soon this wisdom-filled vice Rector earned a new name PAPA appropriately so for his sound counseling and PAPA- style walk and talk.

Fr. Jesunesan had the virtues of a true servant of God: sincerity, serenity and integrity. He always put the well being of the College first without the slightest deviation towards nepotism or prejudice. He treated his students with respect and dignity. Whenever students encountered issues whether it was related to sports , social functions or academic matters , Fr.Jesunesan was approachable and gave a patient hearing with open mind. He stressed the importance of honing our soft skills in order to face the real world in a better manner in our chosen careers.

Fr.Jesunesan was a fluent orator in both English and Tamil and his English classes were very lively and students showed lots of enthusiasm and interest. He was a well-read man and one can engage in interesting and thought-provoking conversation with him on any topic under the sun. Fr. Jesunesan believed in us and he was confident and made us feel confident. He made an immeasurable contribution to both the College and the pupils' development and was one of the mainstays of the school during his tenure at St' Patrick's College.

It is very hard to say goodbye and we don't want to, but we need to remember that he touched so many people's lives, so positively. He leaves an amazing legacy behind. The Patrician family will always cherish the memory of this outstanding Vice- Rector.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep. He has kept his promises and earned his sleep. In the end, we are all God's children. We can take solace that the Lord has come and taken His humble servant by the hand and led him home to heaven.

Au revoir, Father Jesunesan.

**By: Anton X,Rajinthrakumar
Head Prefect - 1982
Asst.Secretary , St.Patrick's College , Jaffna
Alumni Association, Ontario
Toronto**

The Rector's Tribute at the Funeral of Late Fr. P Jesunesan OMI at St. Mary's Cathedral, Jaffna, on 17 Aug. 09

The star that was shining in the firmament of St. Patrick's is no more. A fine living example of a true Patrician has disappeared from our midst. Thoroughness being the moving power of his activity, Fr. Jesunesan gave the prime time of his priesthood to St. Patrick's College. He lived the essence of Priesthood as both priest and victim, and immolated himself on the altar of St. Patrick's, guided by the ideals of a true Patrician, faithful to its motto: Fide et Labore.

Fr. P. Jesunesan OMI, born in 1939 at Puloly, joined St. Patrick's in 1949 in Grade 4 under Index No 3376. After a successful school career, being in the forward line of the College football team, he entered religious life, and was ordained priest in 1965. After gaining wide Pastoral experience at home and abroad, and further education, he became the Vice-Rector of our College in 1980.

He used his style of eloquence to elucidate the best and to advise, rectify and guide the students at the College. His Napoleonic arm administered strokes with a graceful art and formed the students as true Patricians.

It was a time of dark clouds continuously hovering and gloomy situation persisting in and around Jaffna. Terror, torture and abductions were the common phenomenon of that time. In that frightening situation Fr. Jesunesan shared our suffering and grief. It was in 1987, during the time of the IPKF, that Fr. Jesu, as the Warden of the hostel, in safeguarding a student wounded by a stray bullet, was interrogated and subjected to trauma, threat and humiliation.

The Annals of the College bear testimony to the fact that different segments of the Patrician family, namely the students, teachers, parents and Alumni had great admiration and appreciation for the yeoman services rendered by Fr. Jesunesan to St. Patrick's and for the cause of education in Jaffna.

No words of mine can sum up the sentiments of love and loyalty the then students had towards their Vice-Rector. The eagerness with which he looked after their moral and religious training, his empathy with them and his competence in developing their dormant potentials are the qualities that adorned the personality of Fr. Jesunesan. The Parents certainly felt a sense of satisfaction and security that their children were placed under his soothing, watchful, zealous, protecting and loving guidance, because Fr. Jesu considered character formation as the bed-rock of true education.

To the teachers, he was a rock of refuge, sharing their burdens and sorrows, participating in their joys and anxieties. He used his talents and genius to promote their welfare. His wise guidance, ready sympathy, enlightened outlook and magnetic personality enabled the teachers to maintain an atmosphere of cordiality among them. He identified himself with the Alma Mater and laboured strenuously in her interests with that energetic enthusiasm so characteristic of him.

Dear Fr. Jesu, we are sure you will be missed by your colleague and friend, Fr. Francis Joseph, who steered the Patrician vessel together with you for twelve long years. He proudly acknowledged that you were, from the very beginning recognised as an acquisition to St. Patrick's. You both were seen as an admirable pair, where, Fr. Joseph was the dreamer and you were the transformer who generated the power needed for process and output.

Fr. Francis Joseph is missing from our midst, and thereby missing this opportunity of paying his respects in person. Therefore, Fr. Jesu, I deem it most appropriate to repeat here the tribute he paid to you on your Priestly Silver Jubilee. I quote, "How can I express feelings that are indeed too deep, but for tears of joy? Love and gratitude, doing homage in the secrecy of the silent cloister of my heart – that would be the only fitting substitute for what pants for expression from my lips".

Lastly, Fr. Jesu, Accept this tribute as a token of gratitude and love from the Patrician Family, the Staff, Students, Parents and Alumni at home and abroad. Accept this as an acknowledgment of our indebtedness to you. Accept our prayers for you.

"To live in the hearts we love is not to die."

Farewell, God be with you till we meet again.

Fr. M. Jero Selvanayagam
St. Patrick's college,
Jaffna.



