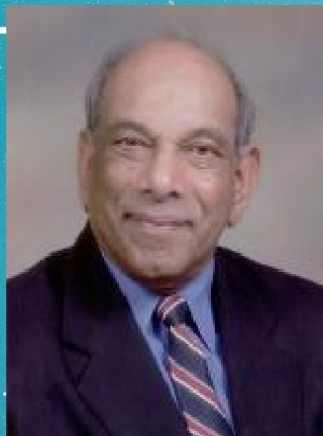




Guides And Fellow Travellers

A Travelogue of Memories

By Joe Pathyil



GUIDES AND FELLOW TRAVELLERS

A Travelogue of Memories

BY JOE PATHYIL

Compiled For Joe Pathyil: MG Jacob

Part I

Prelude

Introduction

My parents were my first instructors. In spite of the busy day of my mother, she found time to instruct her children . My father was my mentor and guide for many years. I, in turn, was his greatest admirer. Even after I left home, he continued to correspond with me, giving me not only news from home, but instructing me in life's journey.

My superiors and elders took personal interest in my formative years and beyond. Several of them bestowed particular attention in my training. I, in turn, observed these elders and tried to learn from them.

At home and in schools I had many companions with whom I interacted. We studied together; we played together; we laughed and joked together; we prayed together; we commiserated together.

All my elders have gone to their heavenly reward. Most of my companions too have gone. I had written about some of them, as I remembered them. M.G. Jacob, my former student and, a dear friend, took on the arduous task of collating my writings, and putting them in some sequence. Needless to say, I am grateful to M.G. for his help.

I do not pretend to write biographies of my elders and companions. These are sketches and memories. A few autobiographical articles are included on the insistence of M.G.

The ebook also contains a couple of journals that I am in the habit of keeping while on journeys. I have others that I did not include due to their length.

I have written several short and long articles and tracts about the Knanaya community, of which I am a member. I have not included them in this book. That is for another time, and another readership.

I am grateful to The Almighty for all the Blessings through my life. I am also grateful to my wife who accompanied me all these years. My sons and daughter in law have humored me in my crazy hobbies. To all , my affectionate thanks.

A word of sincere appreciation to M.G. Jacob and Leela for their affection and help.

Joseph Pathyil

October 04, 2022

Message

It is significant that the book GUIDES AND FELLOW TRAVELLERS, a compilation of the autobiographical memoirs of Uncle Joe Pathyil is being published on his 88th Birthday, today the 4th October 2022. Let me in the first place, take this opportunity to wish Uncle Joe Pathyil a thrice happy Birthday and many more joyous returns, on behalf of all the Montfort Brothers of St. Gabriel and all the MGAs. In the same breath I wish to congratulate all those who are responsible for compiling and editing this Travelogue of Memories from the writings of the author published in an E-Book format, especially the Associate MG Jacob, ex-religious and a student of the author himself.

The title of the book itself is indicative of the fact that the author publicly acknowledges the fact that several individuals have contributed to Joe Pathyil becoming what he has become today, a man of success on more counts than one, who has made a difference in the lives of all those who have encountered him.

With my long association with Uncle Joe, going back to 1961 when he was my Headmaster in St. Antony's High School, Coonoor, and with closer interactions during the past four decades, I feel confident to day that Robert Louis Stevenson's description of a successful persons aptly fits him: *That man is a success who has lived well, laughed often, and loved much; who has gained the respect of intelligent men and the love of children; who has filled his niche and accomplished his task; who leaves the world better than he found it, whether by an improved poppy, a perfect poem, or a rescued soul; who never lacked appreciation of earth's beauty or failed to expressed it; who looked for the best in others, and gave the best he had.*

All those who had the joy of reading these Travelogue of Memories at different stages will vouch for the fact that in Uncle Joe we find a person who has a positive attitude towards people and problems, a person who invests heavily in human relationships, a person who has translated into action the golden words of Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore, *There is so much of good in the worst of us, so much of bad in the best of us that it ill behoves*

anyone to find fault with the rest of us! All the memories that the author has shared in his characteristic simple, lucid and humorous style, are indicative of how these personalities have guided and influenced his own journey.

It is my earnest hope that all those who read this book will get inspired by the author's skills in making his autobiographical narrations entertaining and educative, while echoing the sentiments of H. W. Longfellow, *Lives of great men all remind us, we can make our lives sublime, and, departing, leave behind us footprints on the sands of time.*

May the life and labours of Uncle Joe Pathyil and his Fellow Travellers continue to inspire us to make a difference in the lives of others, leaving behind a world better than we found it.

Bro. John Kallarackal, Superior General

Montfort Brothers of St. Gabriel

October 04, 2022

About This Book

Joe Pathyil needs no introduction to the Montfort Brothers of St Gabriel, the Montfort Gabriel Associates (MGA), relatives, friends and thousands of his students world over.

His writings take the reader along the time line of the 20th century. The writings are straight from the heart only to touch the reader irrespective of the time, distance space and age. There is an element of suspense embedded into each of the writings awakening the curiosity of the reader at the end of every page.

Joe Pathyil born on October 4, 1934 in Kaipuzha, Kottayam district of Kerala joined the Juniorate of Montfort Brothers of St. Gabriel in Coonoor in 1947 from where he passed the SSLC. Thereafter he joined the Novitiate in Coonoor. After his first profession on May 8, 1952 Joe Pathyil along with some of his colleagues joined Loyola Chennai for graduation followed by B.Ed.

At the very young age of 22 years, Joe was entrusted with the responsibility of running St Antony's Coonoor. Joe Pathyil exhibited remarkable dynamism and skill in harnessing the talents around to providing quality education to the students of the school. When he responded to the second calling in 1967, Joe had left behind a blazing glory of academic innovations and achievements and a template of successful setting up, running, managing and expansion of schools in Coonoor, Kazipet and Nalgonda – this template of educational entrepreneurship remains unaltered till today and largely contributing to the structure and design of most of the institutions run by the Brothers of St. Gabriel in all the seven provinces in India today.

In a nutshell, Joe Pathyil epitomizes his life with the best of the traditional wisdom, culture and dynamism of his family, community and the global culture and modernism and the Montfortan Values which he imbibed during those two decades. Brothers of the Congregation before 1967 know him in person, those after 1967 thru hearsay. These Montfortan Values are reflected in the writings of Joe Pathyil.

Montfort Brothers of St. Gabriel, a worldwide Catholic religious order,

founded in France in 1705 by St. Louis Marie De Montfort, devoted to education and philanthropic activities. The congregation has been cooperating with several educational institutions and government agencies in several countries covering all the continents like - Canada, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Tanzania, India, Mauritius, Spain, Italy , France over the last 300 years.

The institute's main concern is Christian education, especially for the poor, orphans and the physically challenged. Other organizations inspired by Montfortian ideals are the Company of Mary and the Daughters of Wisdom. The 'Associates' are a lay association linked to the Gabrielites and similarly inspired by Montfortian spirituality. The 'Associates' are called 'Montfort Associates' in Thailand.

Similarly MGA stands for Montfort Global Associates. Membership of the association is open to persons who had taken their vows in the Congregation of The Montfort Brothers of St Gabriel, and who had permanently left the said congregation. MGAs are sprouts, off- shoots from the trunk of Montfort - evolved into trees in Montfortean Garden of Spirituality, nursery of academic and vocational education, skill development, and Forests of Social Action - transplanted across the globe consistently over the last ten decades to take paths un-travelled with out the protection and boundaries of the walls of a community.

And Joe Pathyil always remained the focal point of reference and convergence for the Brothers and the MGAs during the past six decades or so. The process of the formation of the Montfort Global Associates that began two decades ago saw its fruition in 2021 with the active guidance and support of Joe Pathyil. His address on May 8, 2021 during the inauguration of the website of Montfort Global Associates *mga.life* sums up aptly the umbilical cord that exists between the Congregation and the MGAs.

The writings of Joe Pathyil reflects some of the treasures of Montfort spirituality that are particularly relevant to our times .

Joe Pathyil has written about persons around him and calls them them his Guides and Fellow Travellers. He wrote from his heart and one can perceive and experience Montfort spirituality and human values. Thru the prism of the persons, incidents and events he wrote about, Joe Pathyil brings out their traits characteristics of human values or understanding, vision Knowledge of Self, Joyful Enthusiasm, overcoming roadblocks,unbounded confidence, filial and divine devotion, trust in the Divine Providence.

What Joe Pathyil wrote, therefore offer a repository of nostalgia, togetherness, bonding and connects directly with Brothers all over.

For those colleagues who took their second calling, his writings provide a sense of belonging,togetherness and purpose to remain at peace with oneself and others, to live life without regret , giving one's best in every endeavour, to actively engage utilizing one's talents,resources to make a better world around us.

To a new reader, the writings of Joe are mirrors where one can see people, places, events he encountered in his journey of nearly nine decades and experience their mutual warmth, joy and zest, empathy, encouragement and courage. The life of Joe Pathyil is one of Positive Strokes through out.

Every piece of writing in this compilation offers the reader an experience of learning - learning about oneself, learning about and from one's surroundings, learnings about people and learning how one relates to one's near and dear ones, colleagues, friends, learning to explore life with open mind with pure and pristine passion of joyous living.

The writings about near and dear ones, old colleagues, one's village and other places of stay and travel also narrates the socio economic and political changes that have been taking place and which impacted relationships.

It is remarkable to read how Joe Pathyil has created space in his heart and mind for almost everyone with whom he came into contact during these nine decades. While the charm of his magnetic and towering personality is known to one and all, his writings do convey his warm affection for every human being including the reader. For a new reader who has not known or seen Joe Pathyil, this compilation offers a journey of exploring life, people and places across distance, space and time covering nine decades and wrote this work over a period seven decades. To describe this work as A Travelogue of Memories therefore no exaggeration.

These writings of Joe have been compiled verbatim without any alteration to the content.

Writings of Joe Pathyil is learnings on life and living one's life with joy and zest without fretting over the pest of regret.

Guides and Fellow Travellers by Joe Pathyil is the apt book for any person who wishes to learn to write with connect, to write with conviction and to write with intellectual honesty.

Happy reading this feel good book embedded with tons of positivity.
(MG Jacob Mathecken)

Prologue

Once upon a time, there was a prince. The prince has many generations of descendants who have moved across the frontiers to spread his ideas thoughts and deeds.

There was a prince in France in the 1700s - a noble saintly prince – St Louis De Montfort. He grew up to be a philosopher, writer, poet, musician, artist, sculptor, choreographer builder and social reformer besides being a saintly priest and Marian Devotee . His thoughts and ideas took shape in words and deeds by the mid 18th century. Just before his death at the age of forty three years, the noble saint established the centres of education for the poor needy and orphaned to impart knowledge to grow which attracted many followers.

Once upon a time, there was a prince. The prince has many generations of descendants who have moved across the frontiers to spread his ideas thoughts and deeds.

The followers of the saintly prince grew in numbers as years passed by. His spirit led his followers to various countries over the next 300 years to spread education to the poor , needy and orphan children by inculcating a total global and universal approach to life and living. Three of his followers came to India 1903 to set up schools and vocational training centres for youth. By the end of the century the number of the followers called Brothers grew; so too the number of centres of learning across India. Lakhs of students have passed thru these centres of learning of growth while there have been thousands of followers who aspired to be religious and who followed the way of the saintly prince .

Once upon a time, there was a prince. The prince has many generations of descendants who have moved across the frontiers to spread his ideas thoughts and deeds.

Many of these descendants after some years of being religious opted for a second calling and ventured out on their own to spread the universal approach to grow and living. They are called MGAs – Montfort Global Associates – who carry on the mission in a different scale and personal environment – two innings in the game of life.

Very few among the religious and the MGAs have excelled in every sphere of life like the gentle giant – Joe Pathyil. The handsome vibrant tall teenager in the 1940s grew up to a powerhouse of talent, knowledge and action. With dynamism and untiring ability to surpass all milestones of progress, Joe Pathyil had a glorious first innings as a religious and rose to be one of the brightest talents and gems earmarked for taking up greater responsibilities.

Once upon a time, there was a prince. The prince has many generations of descendants who have moved across the frontiers to spread his ideas thoughts and deeds.

At the peak of his career, he decided to heed the second calling of the inner voice and left the portals of glory and blaze in 1967 to settle down in a different country Canada. During his second innings, Joe Pathyil continued to mentor and nurture students to grow even as he was actively involved in various community activities. He continued to travel, continued to meet people, continued to mentor, continued to pursue his favorite game of Bridge. During the past fifty five years Joe Pathyil remained in touch with most of his colleagues in the Congregation as well as his MGAs, friends and relatives and students. Joe Pathyil has written experiences of his life and association with people and places. The writings of Joe Pathyil display an intrinsic splendour of his great self and personality of being true to himself and his principles of integrity and intellectual honesty which become evident as one keeps on reading his wrings

In a nutshell, Joe Pathyil at the age of 13 left the comfort and luxury of a rich home to join a religious life. At the age of 33, he left the corridors of power and fame, to lead an ordinary life in an extraordinary manner in an alien country far away from his natiaveland. Incidentally, Joe Pathyil was born on October 4, which is the feast day of St. Francis of Assissi - a noble saint who left every thing to become a mendicant.

Once upon a time, there was a prince. The prince has many generations of descendants who have moved across the frontiers to spread his ideas thoughts and deeds.

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Chapter 1

Address to MGAs - Essence of Gratitude

On Gratitude

Address during the MGA Website Inaguration thru Zoom Meet on 8 May 21- Joe Pathyil delivered this from the hospital bed

The text of his speech delivered by another MGA.

I left the congregation in January, 1967. I was in Rome and was due to fly to Canada on January 31. I went to see Reverend Brother Romain Landry, the Superior General. I started by asking for his blessing. He embraced me and told me how he and the congregation was grateful for my services to the congregation, especially the province of India. I was taken aback by his words. I told him I was beholden to the congregation for my formation, for my education, for entrusting me with responsibilities, for the nurture and consideration of local and major superiors. Bro. Landry said that all what I said was true. But I had given my youth and my talents in the service of the congregation. We had a long chat. I told him how during my formation I was led to believe that anyone who left the society even from a house of formation, was betraying one's calling, and that the Novice Master had once mentioned that one of the early Superior Generals had an apparition of Our Lady who promised him that anyone who dies in the congregation was certain to get to heaven. There was an implication that the reverse might end in perdition. At least that was the attitude of the Brothers in India. Bro. Landry, a Canadian, was thankful to me genuinely for my service. Second Vatican Council had brought about many changes in the mindset of priests and religious. In France and in the rest of Europe, as also in Canada, it was not uncommon to see former Brothers teaching and administering schools of the Brothers. Brothers in India would have thought of such an appointment as unthinkable. But I remember several professors and lecturers and tutors in Jesuit colleges were former Jesuits. I had asked my mentor Fr. C. Leigh S.J. about this. His reply was that the Jesuits had trained these people and

it would be a pity not use them in Jesuit institutions. And other Jesuits did not fear the influence of former Jesuits. However, at least in my time, Brothers in India did not have the courage to have anything to do with the “traitors”.

Obligation of the former Religious to the Society that educated him, that instilled values in him, that formed him spiritually, is obvious. As Bro. Landry said, the congregation will not be diminished in acknowledging that the former Brothers served the congregation, for however long or short a time. Gratitude should be mutual.

The present Superior General is fully cognizant of this mutual indebtedness. If I may reveal something: a short time after Bro. John was elected Superior General, he called me to say that he would like to visit me and spend some time with me. I was very pleased to welcome my ace student. We spent a couple of days in intense communion, the content of which will remain with us. I am grateful for his confidence and his regard, and his fraternal solicitude. In my turn, I have been concerned about his cardiac issues, since I have had experiences with that too. But we hope and pray that he will remain healthy and hearty for many more years.

May 8 - A memorable date

Address during the MGA Website Inaguration thru Zoom Meet on 8 May 21- Joe Pathyil delivered this from the hospital bed.

The text of his speech delivered by another MGA.

Let us begin with the late 30's: The only Tamil medium High school that the Brothers ran was St. Antony's High School Coonoor. The Juniorate was attached to the school. The Novitiate and Scholasticate were in the same campus. Coonoor, a jewel of the Nilgiris, was a favorite summer residence of the British Raj. From March to June, there was no other place like Coonoor to enjoy the salubrious climate. Temperature never goes above 20. The parks and gardens are in bloom; the hiking trails are picturesque, the tea estates, the falls, and mountain ranges are breath taking.

Almost all the Brothers working in various parts of India came to Coonoor in summer for a few days of relaxation. For the seniors it was a good time to spend a few days with their friends and exchange news. Everyone knew everyone. They had their annual retreat in the first week of May. At the end of the retreat the postulants would shed their civilian cloths and wear a soutane with Rabat bleu, shed their family name and would be given a new name. The novices would pronounce their first vows and receive a mantle. Others would renew their annual or three-year vows. Those who were professed for six years would take their vows for perpetuity. The ceremonies that accompanied the religious event were solemn. As the congregants sang “Veni Creator Spiritus” goose bumps covered the body. One was about to

take a life changing step.

From the early 40's May 8 was a special date in our calendars. " Obediences" , (appointments and transfers) were announced on May 8. When the novitiate shifted to Eachinkadu in 1952, the tradition continued. Even though all the Brothers did not attend the annual retreat in May, the postulants and novices had their ceremonies on May 8. I do not know if that tradition still continues. May 8 is etched in our memory.

(Joseph Pathyil)

Part II

Some Giants... Some Saints...
Some Greats

Chapter 2

Brothers in India in the 1940's- Enterprising

When I joined the Juniorate in May, 1947, Brothers had only a handful of institutions in India. Montfort Anglo-Indian School, in Yercaud, All Saints High School in Hyderabad, St. Patrick's Anglo Indian School in Secunderabad, Industrial School in Tindivanam, St. Joseph's High School in Ooty and St. Antony's High School in Coonoor. In addition a Juniorate for youngsters ("Juvenate" was the name used at that time.), Novitiate, and scholasticate for newly professed brothers were also located in Coonoor. Apart from Bro. Paul who was the Rector of All Saints, and Bro. John of God, the headmaster of St. Antony's, all the other superiors were French. In fact India was a district under the French province. The superior of about forty brothers in India was called "District Principal". Bro. Eugene Mary who was district director and a capitulant to the chapter in 1946 had died in France before the chapter started. Bro. Eleazar, therefore, was appointed as District Principal, much to the chagrin of older French Brothers. Bro. Eleazar was only 39 years old, full of vision and vitality, a person who thought outside the box, and pushed for expansion and changes in the new, soon to be independent, India. He had opposed the plan of Bro. Eugene to recommend to the chapter the amalgamation of India, Singapore and Thailand in to one province. Instead, Bro. Eleazar and the council of the district had insisted that the chapter be asked to make India in to a new province.

Let us hearken back a few years: After the arrival of French Brothers in Pondicheery and later to other parts of India, a few Tamil recruits underwent their religious training in India, such as Bros. Louis, Andre, Francis, James, Augustine, Aloysius, Paul, while some others were sent to France for their novitiate. Thus Bros. Claudien, John of God, and Francis Xavier had their religious formation in France. Later in the 30's a few Malayalee recruits like Bros. Bernard, Denis, John of the Cross, Augustinose, George, were sent to

Singapore for their novitiate.

Second World War had its consequences. French Brothers in Thailand ("Siam" was another name for the country.) had to leave, though the Spanish Brothers stayed on, as Spain under General Franco had declared neutrality during the war. Singapore was occupied by the Japanese. Bro. Michael, A French missionary in Siam, principal of the famous Assumption College in Bangkok, was asked by his friend Bro. Eugene Mary, the district principal of India to join him. Bro. Michael was asked to be the Master of Novices for young men mainly from Travancore, recruited by Bro. John of God. Thus began the substantial expansion of the brothers in India. Bro. Michael and Bro. John of God were a good team, supporting and complementing each other. Bro. John of God was headmaster of St. Antony's. He would visit Travancore periodically and recruit youngsters to join the juniorate erected in Coonoor. If there were high school graduates, he would bring them to the new novitiate under Bro. Michael. As the novices professed their vows, they had to be sent for further education. Bro. John persuaded the education department of The Madras Province to allow him to start an accelerated teachers training school in Coonoor to increase the number of teachers for the imminent independent India. Thus instead of a two year training programme, he was allowed to train them in twelve months. The newly professed brothers were the main beneficiaries of the programme. Thus Bro. Michael was the one in charge of the formation of the youngsters, and Bro. John recruited them, and educated them.

The salubrious weather in the Nilgiris in April, May, and June attracted thousands to the hill station. Early in May, when schools would be closed, almost all the brothers came to Coonoor for their annual retreat, followed by "vestition" and "profession" that took place on May 8. It was at that time that postings and appointments were announced. In May, 1947 Bro. John of God was appointed Rector of All Saints, Bro. Paul was sent as manager of St. Joseph's, Ooty, Bro. Amance was transferred to Coonoor, Bro. Jean Baptist was posted to Yercaud , While Bro. Marcel was sent to St. Patrick's. A few weeks before that, the district of India was declared a province and Bro. Eleazar was made the Provincial Superior. This was the harbinger of a new dawn.

Changes, reforms and new vision began with the creation of the new province. In 1948 half a dozen young brothers were sent to Loyola College, Madras for higher education. Bro. Paul was appointed director of Tindivanam. Brothers of St. Gabriel had come to Pondicherry in 1903. St. Joseph's Industrial School, Tindivanam was the second institution that the Brothers ran under the supervision of Paris Foreign Mission. The few Tamil brothers who were there formed a separate community, with separate

timetable, separate kitchen, separate chapel service etc. in Tamil, while the French Brothers had their own community.

When Bro. Paul took over Tindivanam he united the two communities, took over the ownership of the industrial school, took charge of the orphanage , secured large tracts of paddy field, secured admission for teachers training for the young brothers in the training school run by the priests.

Bro. John of God who had been appointed Rector of All Saints, established satellite schools in the vicinity. Thus began St. Peter's, St. Paul's and Little Flower schools. In addition, young brothers who neither went to Loyola, nor Tindivanam went to Hyderabad to be absorbed in these communities and study in Osmania University. These changes assured a steady supply of qualified brothers who would man the new institutions that were to be established in the 50's. The vision of Bro. Eleazar and council for consolidation and expansion, with the enthusiastic support of the senior brothers gave impetus and hope to all the province.

Chapter 3

Br. Eleazar - The Wise Visionary

Br. Eleazar (nee Louis Bureau) who took the Congregation to the fast track of accelerated growth and expansion.

I joined the Juniorate of the Brothers of St. Gabriel in Coonoor, The Nilgiris, in May 1947. The Brothers belonging to the French Province had been in India since 1903. They had started in Pondicherry and subsequently expanded their educational institutions to Tindivanam, Yercaud, Coonoor, and Ooty all in the present Tamil Nadu, and a couple of schools in Hyderabad and Secunderabad. Apart from a few local recruits, the Brothers in India were mostly missionaries sent from France. However in the thirties the Brothers started actively recruiting youngsters in India. Bro. John of God, a Tamilian of great vision and boldness went to Travancore to recruit young men of all ages to join the society. They came to Coonoor to study, to train, and eventually to make their choices. The Brothers in India, however, remained directly under the French Province, with a “District Director” with limited authority. Bro. Eugene Mary was the District Director until his death in 1946 when he went to France to attend the general chapter. The authorities decided during that chapter that India would be given the status of a province. In March 1947 India was declared a province and Bro. Eleazar was named the first Provincial Superior.

Bro. Eleazar (born on August 6, 1908) had come to India from France at the age of eighteen, studied in Montfort School, Yercaud, and was sent to Loyola College, Madras where he completed his B.A. (Hons), which was equivalent to an M.A. He became the headmaster of Montfort School in 1936. When, at the age of 39 Titch (as he was fondly known in Montfort) was appointed the Provincial Superior, some of the senior members were doubtful about the choice. Here was a young man who had a sarcastic tongue, a defiant attitude, a self-confidence beyond his years, and untraditional views.

But they were willing to give Bro. Eleazar all the support in the hope that he would surpass their limited expectations. Besides, India was becoming an independent country in August of 1947, and the old missionaries were rather confused about their future.

A few days after I arrived in Coonoor, Bro. Eleazar visited the place. He met with the new recruits and spoke to us. But he spoke much too fast for me to fully comprehend him, though I was fascinated by his English, his demeanor, his cigar, his winning smile, and his general bearing. He would continue to visit Coonoor periodically and spend a few minutes with each one, inquiring about our well-being. It was always a feast when he visited. Bro. Michael (popularly known as Thatha), a French missionary, who had been in Thailand until the Japanese army occupied that country during WWII, was the superior of the Juniors, of the Novices, and of the scholastics. In fact he was a confidant and adviser to Bro. Eugene Mary. In 1948 the scholastics were transferred to other places, and Bro. Charles was given the charge of the juniors. Thatha would continue to be a strong influence, as he was in charge of the Novitiate for many years. Thatha would be the person most loved by the youngsters. But Bro. Eleazar wielded his authority, gently, firmly, and confidently to direct the affairs of the province.

In 1952 I was selected to go to Loyola College, where Bro. Eleazar himself had studied. It was from that time that he took a particular, a fatherly, interest in me. Those sent to Loyola were the most precious future prospects of the society. Bro. Eleazar came quite frequently to visit us in Loyola. On his constant travels he had to pass through Madras, and he would take a cab, to visit us for at least a couple of hours. He took interest in each of us in a different way. He had the uncanny ability to understand us and see through an individual. While he upheld the traditional virtues and attitudes, he also had the wisdom to allow for differences. A prime example of his unique judgment happened in 1953. Two of our confreres got into a nasty fight, knife was drawn by one, and some of us had to physically restrain the combatants. Within twenty four hours Bro. Eleazar arrived, met with us individually, and decided to send away to Hyderabad, not the one who threatened, but the one who provoked. When I told him about my surprise that justice was not meted out, he reassured me that he had done the right thing by keeping the attacker. His judgment was proven to be correct subsequently.

Bro. Eleazar was pleased at my success in my studies and encouraged me to read widely beyond the University requirements. He himself was a voracious reader and would recommend books. In March of 1953, Montfort School needed a person to help out as they were short, and Bro. Eleazar got special dispensation for me to skip the final examinations and join the staff of Montfort school for over three months. I continued to go to Montfort

School to help, during all the holidays for the next four years. Since The Provincial headquarters was also in Montfort School, Bro. Eleazar saw me at close quarters. And I too grew in my admiration of the man. Bro. Corentin, a French ascetic, was our director in Loyola. His two concerns were to be present for the prayers and insist that we play every day. For all the rest, Bro. Eleazar was virtually in charge. After my two years of Intermediate studies, Bro. Eleazar wanted me to go for B.A. (Hon), the same degree that he had taken. Unfortunately his plan to send me for it was taken rather late. Till then he could persuade the principals of Loyola who were his friends to do such things. But the new principal would not hear of late admission into the prestigious program even though Fr. Murphy, the most influential person in the University promised he would get special exemption from the University for my admission. The principal was adamant. I was very disappointed. But Bro. Eleazar consoled me and said that I could go for M.A after I completed my B.A. But I was not interested in staying another two years in Loyola. In 1956, as soon as I completed my B.A. Bro. Eleazar made arrangements for me to go to St. Xavier's Teachers Training College, Palayamkottai. Bro. Frederick was my companion. I had spent a few years studying under some of the finest Jesuit minds. Bro. Eleazar spent a week with us. His purpose was to assess my readiness to take on major tasks. I was hardly 23 years old when he asked me to be the headmaster of St. Antony's High School, Coonoor, from where I had graduated only seven years earlier. But he was confident I would do well directing the affairs of such a big institution. I did not let him down.

Work in Coonoor was interesting and challenging. But I was young, and ignorant enough to be confident. I had good advisers and great helpers. Bro. Charles, my former director in the Juniorate was my most dedicated cheerleader. He encouraged me and gave me freedom to pursue my paths in school. Other brothers helped wholeheartedly. The teachers, some of whom had taught me, were very cooperative. But it was Bro. Eleazar who gave me full and unconditional vote of confidence. I would write to him regularly detailing my hopes, worries and dreams. He would promptly reply with pertinent suggestion, letting me choose among alternatives. I learned administration, and how to manage people under his tutelage.

There were several immediate vacancies in other schools and Bro. Eleazar wanted to appoint me to Ooty and Kolathur at various times. But Bro. Charles would not hear of it. He fought tooth and nail to retain me in Coonoor. In fact Bro. Eleazar was miffed that Bro. Charles would be so persistent about keeping me in Coonoor.

In twelve years as Provincial Superior he achieved much. The number of colleges, schools and institutions more than doubled. The number of

members grew to more than three times what it was when he became the Provincial. More than the growth, there was enthusiasm and hope and future. There was pride in performance and willingness to do more. His talks were about loving one another, about caring for the poor and downtrodden, and walking in the footsteps of the Lord. He did not preach fire and brimstone, punishment and hell. Nor did he threaten or censure. I looked forward to his talks and his private chats.

There were whispered rumours about Titch. He did not care for money. He loved good food. He drank some times to excess. He especially was close to a certain woman in Yercaud. His defense was that she was a widow, and that her children were in England, and it was the responsibility of the society to look after such a person who had worked all her life for the school. I knew all these. But my admiration for him has remained undiminished, even to this day.

In 1958 Bro. Eleazar became the Vicar General, meaning the Assistant Superior General for the whole society and had to relocate to Rome. Bro. John of the Cross was appointed Provincial Superior. However Bro. Eleazar continued to direct the activities of the province, with the new Provincial as his conduit. He spent a fair bit of time in India and helped Bro. John make the more important decisions. I did not miss him as I continued to correspond regularly with him.

In 1962 I was asked to take over the directorship of Kazipet, a tri-lingual school, with three types of boarding, a large community, and with a school which catered to elite of Andhra State. I was 28 years old. My superiors thought I could do the job. I was not nervous. I knew the community. I knew that they would do everything to ensure success in administration. I had learned the basics of people management. Bro. John of God, who was the venerable educator of the State, from whom I took over the administration was at hand to advise and guide. I left the details of the school and hostels to others in whom I had confidence. My task was to coordinate every aspect. Bro. Eleazar spent time with us and encouraged me. He also pointed out my failings. For example I remember cautioning me against my habit of sarcasm. He said that those who heard sarcastic comments about someone might laugh; but the one to whom the barb is directed would never be my friend. Apt advice of that sort helped me grow.

There were several attempts to appoint me to other urgent institutions; but the community fought against transferring me. In 1965 when crisis arose in All Saints High School, Hyderabad, the superiors wanted me to take over the school. I resisted for the first time. I had my reasons. By this time I was having doubts about my calling. I had become rather blasé about success

and glory. I started asking myself serious questions such as whether this was the life I wanted. I knew that until I had answered these questions, I should not take on more onerous responsibilities that would entangle me further. I begged my superiors to give me some time to make those decisions. Bro. Eleazar influenced the Provincial to let me be in charge of a new school in Nalgonda. I was happy to go to that quiet place with only three companions. After spending less than year there, Bro. Eleazar (now known as Louis Bureau), arranged for me to go to Europe to spend a few months in "the Second Novitiate". This was the place for senior brothers to rest and recuperate and study and meditate before going back to the field anew. I flew to Rome in May 1966 and was received by Bro. Eleazar. I told him openly that I was thinking of quitting. But he asked me to spend a few months in Europe and then make whatever decisions I felt I should. I am eternally grateful to the authorities for the time I spent in Europe.

Bro. Eleazar met me at the airport in Rome and took me around the Eternal City the next couple of days. As the two of us were doing the tour of the Vatican, I reiterated that my intention was to leave. He asked me to shelve the thought for a few months; I should examine every aspect of my future in the few months in Europe and then make a decision; and that such a decision would be the right one. I promised to abide by his advice.

I went to Paris where I brushed up on my French for a few months, and traveled a great deal all over Europe. Bro. Eleazar came to meet and spend a few days with me and encouraged me to visit as much as I could. He knew my interest in history and education. He introduced me to some of his friends in France, in U.K., in Belgium, and other places. By September I had seen a good bit of Western Europe. Then I went back to Rome for a few months of the second novitiate.

The four months I spent there were some of the most intense of my entire life. The group consisted of senior leaders of the society. The themes and topics under discussion were important to the future of the society. But even as I participated – and I did participate fully- my mind was preoccupied with my own future and past. I consulted with several people. I wrote personal notes. I decided to write an autobiography that would be starkly honest. It was a gut wrenching few months. Bro. Eleazar left for India and other countries in Asia for a few months. When he returned at the end of December, I had long sessions with him. I asked him to read my autobiography, which he did, and tore every page in that copy book and flushed it down the toilet. In the end I told him that I must leave. He agreed. Then, and only then, he told me two things that he did not want to tell me before. One was the decision of the authorities in regard to my posting. I was appointed to take over the rectorship of the biggest and most difficult and most prestigious school. That I knew. The second was a letter he handed over

to me to read. This was from Bishop Beretta of Kazipet. After I left the school, there were problems in administration. It resulted in strike by the students, shutting down of the hostel by the director, and general malaise. The bishop was upset about all that and had asked bro. Eleazar to send me back to Kazipet for a short period to bring the school back to the former regularity. Bro. Eleazar listened to the intense plea of the bishop and told him that I was having second thoughts, and that I may not return to the society in India. The bishop was stunned to silence. Then he went back to his residence. An hour later he returned with a letter in an open envelope and asked Bro. Eleazar to read it. The bishop asked Bro. Eleazar to give the letter to me. I read the letter in front of Bro. Eleazar, in his room. It was heartrending. The bishop praised my abilities, wanted me back in Kazipet. If I was not happy in the society he was willing to take me into his diocese; I could continue studies in Rome towards becoming a priest for his diocese. Bishop Beretta was a loving soul; he was like a father to me. As I read the letter tears flowed down my cheeks and plopped on the paper. I was sobbing. Bro. Eleazar took the letter from me and tore it up. He did not want to show that letter before I made my decision, lest sentiment would sway my judgment. He said that I had made the right decision. Let it be. I have remained grateful for the great generosity of that wonderful man. He had *savoir faire*.

I was not too concerned with my future as I knew that when I returned to India, I would be able to secure a good job. I worried about how the news would affect those who knew and loved me. Above all, I agonized over how my own father would take the news. But Bro. Eleazar assured me that, despite the expectations of others, I had made the right decision, and to be of courage. As luck or providence would have it, I secured an immigrant visa to Canada and left Rome.

On January 30, 1967, Bro. Eleazar accompanied me to the airport in Rome from where I caught a flight to London, and then to Montreal, via New York. On the way we were both rather silent. As we neared the airport, he said that as for himself, it was too late for him, and wished me all the best in whatever lay ahead. We embraced and parted company. I continued correspondence with him, at first regularly, then, in later years, sporadically.

After his twelve years of tenure in Rome he returned to India to be in charge of "The Little Way Association", a charitable organization that gave him freedom to travel, and be independent. It was my great desire to bring him to visit Canada and USA. He was not at all keen on it. When we visited India, I tried to meet him; but could not. Bro. Eleazar died on 14th of August, 1995, and my innermost secrets are buried with him. R.I.P.



Figure 3.1: Br Eleazer

Chapter 4

Br. Charles Garnier- The Unparalleled Saint

Bro. Charles Garnier popularly called as Charlie Darling remains a tall spiritual leader unparalleled, an affectionate religious who remains in the heart of every one who came into contact with him

I have written about Bro. Charles Garner (I preferred Charles to Charlie Darling, though his last name being Ladouceaur, meant darling) and it was published in his obituary booklet. Suffice it to restate that he was one of the truly religious, sincere, faithful religious whom I have met in my life. He was a self-taught person. He was constantly learning.

After he returned from his second novitiate his attitude to piety and devotions evolved. Bro. Charles was immersed in the study of the documents of Vatican II. He was invited to become a priest for the congregation. But he refused for very personal reasons. Instead he became a councilor to priests and bishops.

Bro. Charles came to visit Canada at our invitation and expense. I found him a changed a person. He was more Indian than most Indians. He preferred some rice and sambaar, and other simple things of life. Fr. Jim McDonald, our parish priest in Montreal, was so impressed by him that whenever we took Bro. Charles to church for Mass, Fr. Jim asked Bro. Charles to give the homily.

After having been a Juniorate Director (from 1948) until he was named Novice Master, and in charge of houses of formation, he was responsible for the growth and religious formation of the brothers.

He became an itinerant councilor of brothers in all the houses. He would spend a few days at a time in each community and advised the brothers. Later in life he got involved in Basic Christian community movement.

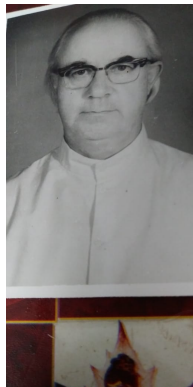


Figure 4.1: Br Charles Garnier

Whatever he undertook,-religious formation, legion of Mary, Basic Christian community,- he did so with his heart and soul. In the last years of his life, he became disillusioned with the life of the brothers. But Bro. Charles was full confidence in Divine Providence. Incidentally Bro. Charles taught all his students palmer method of handwriting. A version of that method is the unique handwriting of the brothers.

There is much more to describe Bro. Charles.

If there is a person who has certainly gone to his heavenly reward, it is Bro. Charles. **Brother Charles Garnier Remembered on His Centenary Year 2015**

Bro. Charles Garnier...!

MG Jacob, a former student of mine in Kazipet wrote to me: *"Today I am writing to share an old memory - Bro Charles Garnier...whose feast falls today 26 September and who was born on Dec 15,1915 - 2015 being the Centenary of Bro Charles Garnier. Bro. Charles Garnier - whom you knew very well.*

His handwriting was inspirational and aspirational on young minds to achieve. His smile and hale and hearty laughter rained emotions of joy, love and acceptance. His systematic approach to doing things calmly instilled courage and confidence in others. I recall the bubbly manner in which his feast day used to be celebrated.

The words of Jacob set me thinking of Bro. Charles. In 1947 when I came to Coonoor to join the Juniorate (it was then called Juvenate and we were called Juvenists), Bro. Charles was the assistant director under Bro. Mickael (Thatha as we knew him).

Bro. Charles impressed the youngsters with his punctuality, meticulous bearing , pleasant demeanour and personal spirituality. He was the organist in

the chapel where Thatha was the choir master. Bro. Charles was a musician and a composer. He taught us the new National Anthem of India "Jana Gana Mana". Sometime during the school year of 1947-48, Bro. Rembert Marie, the Assistant to Superior General visited Coonoor. Bro. Charles composed a song for the occasion. I still remember a few lines:

*Our banner of freedom waving in the breeze;
It's the gold, and the white, and the green ever so
bright,
Of a people contented and blessed. !*

In 1948 Bro. Charles was made the director of the Juniorate. He remained in that capacity for almost twenty years. He trained hundreds of youngsters, taught them good manners, English, palmer method of handwriting, basics of religion and encouraged each one to grow in his own unique fashion. He was always with the youngsters; he never showed fatigue or ennui; he never complained; he never spoke ill of anyone. As he supervised the juniors in the study, he read and wrote. Numerous are the books that he absorbed and he always had a copy book and pen to write down important passages and his own reflections. From time to time he would re-read the copious notes and rearrange them by subject and topics. That was his education. Denied formal education in a college, Bro. Charles more than made up for it, by his voracious reading and personal learning. Of course spirituality was his primary subject of study. Theology and Philosophy, as also psychology and metaphysics were his self-imposed curriculum.

In 1950 when my batch moved on to the Novitiate which was in the same premises, Bro. Charles taught us French. He continued to keep an affectionate eye on us and we were free to go and chat with him. Seven years later, on my graduation from Teachers college, Bro. Charles, who in addition was the director of the community of Coonoor, asked that I be appointed headmaster of the school. As an untested youngster of less than twenty three, I had my fears and doubts. But Bro. Charles instilled confidence in me, and encouraged me to undertake bold and risky reforms in the school. He was theanager and correspondent of the school. He made it known to all that he had full confidence in the new headmaster.

My tenure as headmaster for five years was successful certainly with the blessing and backing of Bro. Charles. I consulted him and the community on every aspect of the school. It was his unwavering support that I remember to this day with gratitude. He was also the director of the community of which I was a member. Our relationship was ever cordial. We spent many hours in conversation about every conceivable topic. His learning and well-grounded conviction after a lapse of seven years, was evident. Bro. Charles learned on the job. He matured in his thinking. He constantly examined

and re-examined every aspect of life and was willing to hear other points of view.

I would call the years up to 1960 his period of piety and devotion. In addition to his responsibility as director of the Juniorate he established branches of The Legion of Mary in the parishes of Ootty diocese. Bishop Padyara appointed him the animator of Legion of Mary activities.

By 1957 Bro. Charles was a member of the provincial council. Therefore he could at least persuade the Provincial Superior and those in authority to think out of the box. Also he did everything possible to ensure that St. Antony's was well served.

There were at least two times when I was to be transferred to other schools where there were emergencies. But Bro. Charles fought tooth and nail against such moves, saying that St. Antony's required a steady hand. In 1962 when I was asked to assume responsibility of St. Gabriel's, Kazipet, Bro. Charles could not very well protest. He let me go with his blessings. I still kept in touch with him.

In 1960, after a lapse of 27 years or so, he went back to Canada for a brief visit. He also spent a few months in Belgium where he attended the second novitiate. This was the time when Pope John XXIII had called the Council of Vatican II. Catholic world, especially in Europe and America, was agog. There were great expectations, loud debates, and hopes for modernizing the church. Bro. Charles was in Canada and Europe during that period and absorbed much. When he returned to India, he was a changed person in his thinking and outlook. We could call this the period of enquiry. He studied the documents of Vatican II and hoped for its implementation in the congregation and in the church. In 1965 he was appointed the Master of Novices in which position he served for several years. Later he was appointed animator of communities in India. Bro. Charles spent time in communities to observe, advise, and give talks. He was also invited by other religious communities and priests for talks. He advocated for priesthood in the congregation, though he himself declined the invitation to be ordained.

In 1967 when I immigrated to Canada, the immigration officer asked me where in Canada I wanted to go to. Unhesitatingly I said "Montreal" as I had heard so much about that city from Bro. Charles. He was born in the suburbs of Montreal, grew up in the city. He used to describe the climate of the place, the geography, the institutions, his beloved St. Joseph's Oratory etc. Etc. Therefore when I landed in Montreal it was as if I had known the place since boyhood. I kept in correspondence with him almost till the very last.



Figure 4.2: Br Charles with us

In 1982 I, along with a few of his former students, invited him to Canada and volunteered to pay his entire trip. He accepted. Bro. Charles had his brothers and sisters in and around Montreal. But he preferred to stay with us. He also spent many days with the communities of the brothers. He was asked to give conferences to various groups. When we took him to attend holy Mass in the local church, the priest invariably asked him to deliver the homily. The few months Bro. Charles spent among us were memorable. In 1997 a few of us who had joined the juniorate in 1947, decided to meet again in Coonoor to reminisce over the fifty years. We invited Bro. Charles to join and preside over the week-long retreat. By this time Bro. Charles had doubts about the possibilities of change and transformation according to the desires of Vatican II. I would call this the period of resignation. He was involved in Basic Christian communities- an idea that was borrowed from South american countries. Chennai where he spent the last few years was his field of apostolate. He did not involve himself in the communities of Brothers, though he followed with interest and some misgiving the changes taking place in India. But he concentrated in this field of apostolate in which he found some satisfaction.

Bro. Charles was one who lived what he preached. But he did not parade his spirit of poverty. He was a deeply spiritual person, always seeking, always ready for the Spirit (as he often remarked), willing to listen, ready to embrace all, and believing in Divine Providence. I cherish his memory.

I have written about Bro. Charles Garner (I preferred Charles to Charlie Darling, though his last name being Ladouceur, meant darling) and it was published in his obituary booklet. Suffice it to restate that he was one of the truly religious, sincere, faithful religious whom I have met in my life. He was a self-taught person. He was constantly learning. After he returned from his second novitiate his attitude to piety and devotions evolved. Bro. Charles was immersed in the study of the documents of Vatican II. He was invited to become a priest for the congregation. But he refused for very personal reasons. Instead he became a councilor to priests and bishops.

Incidentally Bro. Charles taught all his students palmer method of handwriting.

A version of that method is the unique handwriting of the brothers. There is much more to describe Bro. Charles.

Chapter 5

Br. John of God - Academic Entrepreneur

My first courtesy meeting with Bro. John of God was the day I arrived in Coonoor. It was the end of May, 1947, and Bro. John wanted to meet the new youngsters who had arrived with Bro. Bernard and Bro. John of the cross. Eappachan and I were the last two to arrive that year. Bro. John met with my father who had accompanied us to check the place out. Bro. John spoke fluent Malayalam. As I learned later he had been the recruiter of youngsters for the juniorate for several years, and had handed over the job to Bro. Stanislaus only the year before. Bro. John was preparing to go to Hyderabad, to assume the directorship of All Saints. Rayappa was recruited from Pondicherry, finished his high school in Tindivanam, and the Brothers sent him to St. Joseph's College, Trichy for his B.A. After he graduated with a B.A, he was sent to France for his Novitiate. Thereafter he went to London to do his teacher's training and earned the degree of L.C.P. Armed with these experiences Bro. John of God (as he was called in religion) returned to India. His first posting was in Hyderabad under the tutelage of Bro. M. Paul who was the rector of All Saints. Those were tough years, and Bro. Paul was an able administrator and strict with the young Brother. Even though Bro. John was the official principal of the school, Bro. Paul trained him to do everything, including looking after sports equipments. Bro. John never complained. As a matter of fact he never criticized Bro. Paul and gave him the reverence due to a mentor. Those formative years stood him in good stead.

His appointment as headmaster of St. Antony's High School, Coonoor, and director of the community gave Bro. John the opportunity to hone his skills as an administrator, and a people person. He organized the Old Boys Association, which in turn was in charge of annual football and hockey tournaments. These tournaments brought hundreds of spectators to the school.

These events also raised funds for the construction of new class rooms for the burgeoning student population.

Bro. John was popular among the civic authorities and prominent planters in and around Coonoor. His tact and influence were absolutely necessary during those war years. The juniorate was filling with youngsters whom Bro. John recruited from Kerala and Tamil Nadu. After high school, they moved on to the Novitiate that had been established under Bro. Michael. These houses of formation needed buildings. They also needed to be fed clothed. Everything during the war years was rationed. It was the influence of Bro. John that enabled all to be adequately fed and clothed.

As independence of India was imminent, he persuaded the education department to allow him to start an accelerated teachers training school, to prepare teachers for new India. Suffice it to say that the young scholastics who had just completed their novitiate benefited by the teachers training program which could be complete in twelve months, instead of the usual two years. Bro. John did yeomen service to the school, to the community and to the growth of the brothers in India. St. Antony's was on a sound footing and Bro. John would always remember coonoor as his first love.

In 1947 Bro. John was asked to take over the Directorship of All Saints, Hyderabad. As he had worked there earlier, he was familiar with the school and teachers and Nizam's Hyderabad. In addition he was fluent in Urdu and Telugu. Independence of India brought problems to Hyderabad. The Nizam refused to join the Indian Union. Sardar Vallabhai Patel had to use force to bring the state under the union. Patel's handpicked state administrator was Vellodi, a Malayalee. One of the first persons whom Vellodi contacted was Bro. John. They became friends and Bro. John was his unofficial advisor. Vellodi accorded special privileges to "native" Hyderabad residents in schools, colleges, and government employment for certain number of years. With Hindus and Muslims, Telugu and Urdu, the administrator had to walk on egg shells. Bro. John was an invaluable help.

The popularity of All Saints ascended by leaps and bounds. It was necessary to find new premises for the burgeoning student population. Bro. John started satellite schools, and in time became autonomous schools in their own right. Thus were started St. Peter's, Little flower, and St. Paul's schools. He also started an industrial school and orphanage on the outskirts of Hyderabad.

Bro. John was a member of the provincial council of administration. He persuaded the Provincial superior to send young brothers to Hyderabad, where they would teach by day, and attend college by night. He himself set

an example by doing his M.A privately. Bro. John informed Bro. Eleazar, the provincial superior, about everything that he was doing. Since they both had the prosperity of the new province in mind, they worked together. Occasionally Bro. Eleazar would call Bro. John “The nawab”, but never did Bro. John utter one bad word about his provincial.

In 1958, after eleven years in Hyderabad, Bro. John was asked to assume the directorship of Kazipet, and to be in charge of the juniorate as well as the scholasticate. There too he got permission to start a teachers training school, benefitting young brothers. St. Gabriel’s School under the principalship of Bro. Vincent was a smooth running institution, with a big boarding facility for the poor and the very rich of the state. Therefore Bro. John spent more time in the new teachers’ training school, and the formation of the young brothers. A few brothers got admitted to the local government college, again under the influence of Bro. John.

In 1962 when I was transferred from Coonoor to Kazipet, Bro. John was only too pleased to hand over the reins to a younger hand, leaving him more time to look after the formation of the young brothers. His proximity was invaluable to me. He suggested, without imposing; he assured me, rather than warn; he introduced me to government and civic authorities, thus making the transition smooth and painless. All the years that I was in Kazipet, and later in Nalgonda, I made it my privilege to consult him on all matters—school, community, personal, and spiritual. His advice was sound and practical.

In 1965 I was asked to be the director of All Saints. I begged my superiors to defer the responsibility, as I was re-evaluating my calling. Bro. John accepted to be the director of All Saints one more time, hoping that I would return after my sojourn in Europe for my second novitiate. I did not return and the superiors had to find someone else to direct the affairs of All Saints.

Bro. John asked to retire and spend his last years in quietude and prayer. He went to Yercaud and spent his remaining years as a model religious. In the annals of Montfort Brothers in India, the name of Bro. John of God should be inscribed in golden letters.



LIST OF NAMES ST.GABRIEL'S KAZIPET 1961-62

Seating/Standing Order:

T -4th Row[L-R]: 1KV Joy, 2(Br)Vincent Kereketta, 3(Br) Late Thomas Madappilly, 4(Br) CT Paul, 5(Br) Jacob Mathalikunnel, 6 PP Jacob, 7 KT Mathai, Fidelis Toppo, 8AJ Poonoose
T -3rd Row[L-R]: 1PP Joseph(PPJ61), 2 PV Scaria 3.Showraiah 4.TP George 5.KP George, 5.(Br)MM Francis, 7.PJ Joseph(PJJ61) 8(Br) Paulose Mekkunel(MVP61) 9 VM Kuruvilla
T -2nd Row[L-R]: 1(Br) Late Sylvanius 2.(Br) Stansilaus Joseph 3.(Br) Late John Of God 4 Late Thampi Raja (Ggeory)
B -1st Row[L-R]: 1 Emmanuel Thomas, 2(Br)Sebastian Kuruvannakkai(KMS), 3.MM Joseph, 4 K C Reddy, 5 Jacob Mathecken(MGJ61) 6.(Br)Joseph Kaimpanil (KMJ61)
7.(Br) John Vanipura(VVU61), 9.(Br) Chandy Thottiyil(KMC-61)

Figure 5.1: Br John of God and Others 1961 Kazipet

Part III

Some Early Luminaries

Chapter 6

Br Paul - Institution and Pillar

Bro. Paul hailed from Mangalore. His early studies were in Tindivanam. He was not sent to Europe as others were. Perhaps the superiors saw in him a streak of stubbornness, and his reluctance to learn French as indicative of preference to stay in India. But Bro. Paul got along well in Montfort School, Yercaud where he was the school treasurer for many years. When the Brothers were offered All Saint, Hyderabad, Bro. Paul (the M before his name was short for Majella) was sent as Director. He preferred the title of Rector. Since he did not have sufficient qualification to be the principal, some other person was named headmaster. But in actual fact Bro. Paul ran all the aspects of the school. He selected his own titular headmasters from among the lay teachers, though Bro. John of God, newly arrived from Europe, was headmaster for some years. All authority, however, was with Bro. Paul.

Bro. Paul was in charge of the school during all of World War II. Times were difficult. Hyderabad was under the rule of the Nizam. Bro. Paul was known to the Nizam, and the Rector astutely kept his relationship with the educational department and civic authorities in cordial terms. In spite of, or perhaps because of his strictness in all matters pertaining to the school, the students feared him, and the parents revered him. Years after he relinquished his rectorship, he returned to visit Hyderabad. There was a throng of old students and the public who crowded the railway station to receive him. The public reception accorded to Bro. Paul was historic. Very few brothers were sent to Hyderabad to work in All Saints. But those who went, did learn the art of administration from an expert.

In 1947 Bro. Paul relinquished his duties in Hyderabad. He was sent to St. Joseph's, Ooty as director. That one year in Ooty was more rest and relaxation than anything else. He had a community of two young brothers, and Bro. Corentin who was the titular headmaster. The two young brothers

remembered the strict treatment of Bro. Paul, and when they met their former director later in life, the listeners had a lot of fun. Bro. Paul had a wry sense of humor. The ribbing and the back-and-forth was all in fun.

Bro. Paul was a member of the provincial council, and therefore knew all the issues confronting the province. One major issue was the division of the community in Tindivanama. The French brothers ran the Industrial school, and a few Tamil brothers taught catechism in the nearby school and to the villagers. The French brothers functioned almost exclusively in French – prayers, food, recreation and daily life, whereas the Tamil brothers functioned entirely in Tamil. Such a division in one community had to be managed. Bro. Paul was asked to take charge of the community. He took over the directorship and united the community. The common language of the brothers in chapel was to be English. The industrial school functioned in Tamil. The Tamil brothers were encouraged to teach in Tamil and communicate among themselves in Tamil. The French brothers communicated among themselves in French. But Bro. Paul insisted that the official language was English. There was no revolt or rebellion. He negotiated with the diocese of Pondicherry to take over the orphanage, and the farm. Bro. Paul's reputation had heralded him, and therefore the priests, the brothers, the teachers and the students did not need to be told who he was. He was punctual, business-like and fair in all matters. The industrial school that had been languishing, became a source of income. More than the income, it was considered a model industrial school in the state.

In 1950 Bro. Paul secured seats in the teachers training school for young brothers, soon after their novitiate. Bro. Paul never seemed flustered with all the responsibilities: industrial school, orphanage, the community, brothers in training, the farm, and a host of other burdens of administration. He had time for everyone, and he joked and laughed with the youngsters, who in turn, ribbed him to the laughter of everyone. His was a happy and jovial community. And through it all, they imbibed his skills in administration.

In 1954, six years after being the director in Tindivanam, Bro. Paul had to be transferred, as per the rules. He was sent to St. Charles College, Sardhana, where there was already a community. His stint in Sardhana was short. A year later he returned to Tindivanam. Bro. Paul spent the final years of his life in Tindivanam. He is buried next to the farm that he loved. Bro. Paul was an institution, and a pillar of the young province.

Br Marshall Fauche was one of the three first missionaries in India

Bro. Louis was the first Indian Brother.

Chapter 7

Br. Amance - Donned Many Hats

Bro. Amance was the person ready to go anywhere, do anything, take charge of situations, fill up vacancies and a solid religious. He was principal of St. Antony's, Coonoor for several years, principal of St. Joseph's, Ooty a few years, headmaster of Montfort School, Yercaud for a few years, interim Novice Master for a few months, assistant to Novice Master at strategic times, Juniorate director for a short while, and a sincere advisor to the provincial superior. When Singapore wanted a Novice Master and Director of Spiritual formation, he readily went. Though he did not strut around as an administrator, he was a straight shooter and accomplished much. After years in India and Malaysia he retired in France before his death. Bro. Amance contributed to the young province's growth substantially.

Chapter 8

Br Baptist - Reliable and Responsible

Bro. Jean Baptist was a contemporary of Bro. Eleazar. They both did their high school exams in Yercaud. Bro. Eleazar was sent to Loyola, while Bro. Baptist started teaching immediately after. The only two schools where he could have been posted were St. Patrick's, Secunderabad and Montfort School, Yercaud. It was to the latter that he was attached for many years in various capacities, including as director. Bro. Baptist knew the history of Montfort School as very few others did. He knew the students and old boys of the school. He was also the editor of the Link the magazine for the Old Boys association of the school.

Bro. Baptist was a close confidant of Bro. Eleazar and his trusted counselor. The Provincial consulted him on every aspect of administration of the province. Bro. Baptist's sincere and honest advice was heeded by the Provincial. Even though he did not travel around as Bro. Eleazar did, he knew every brother and all important decisions. He edited the monthly newsletter and kept all the documents. He was the archivist of the province for many years. Whenever and wherever a responsible person was needed, he was available. Thus he had short stints as director of Tindivanam and Sardhana. He was also a teacher of novices. But his great characteristic was his love of the province and his full support in the growth and development of the province.

Bro. Baptist spent many hours in personal conversations with me. While in Coonoor as headmaster, he visited with me for several days. Over a drink or three he told me stories and incidents that have seared in my memory.

Bro. Baptist too retired in France. Many years after I left the society, we went to Nantes to visit him. Bro. Baptist was at a sea-side camp of the

brothers. We spent a couple of days in his company. Bro. Baptist took me to the tiny chapel and opened his missal to show me the holy picture printed on the occasion of my perpetual vows. That was the thoughtfulness of a truly gentle friend to many.

Bro. Baptist contributed a great deal to the growth and nurturing of the province.

Chapter 9

Br.Claudien - Torchbearer

Bro. Claudien was sent to France for his religious formation. He was a polyglot. In addition to Tamil, English and French, he could speak and read Malayalam, Hindi and Telugu. He did not go for higher education. He was a very ardent religious. He practiced poverty as very few others did. He had minimum number of personal clothes, most of which he washed by hand. He travelled light and in the most economic mode.

Bro. Claudien was the office manager of St. Antony's for many years. He was the one constant, steady presence when headmasters and administrators changed in that school frequently. Bro. Claudien knew every student in the school. Indeed he also knew most parents of the students. It was his ability as the connecting link that made it possible for Bro. John of God and other headmasters to appeal to old students in times of need.

After a very long sojourn in Coonoor, Bro. Claudien became the treasurer of Montfort School. There too his amazing memory for people, places and funds stood him in good stead. Never a person to waste money, he was, at the same time, willing to do anything that his superiors asked him. After many years in Montfort, he was made the treasurer of the province and the secretary to the Provincial. In that capacity Bro. Claudien had to travel to various schools all over the country. His visits were short, but full of news of all the communities and including all the gossip details. Bro. Claudien was a keen observer of people and places. Bro. Claudien did not want any directorship. However the tasks he performed, and did so expertly, were more than just being a director. He was meticulous, sincere in his love of the province and happy in its growth.

Bro. Claudien was torch bearer for the brothers.

Chapter 10

Br. Corentin - Deep Faith and Conviction

I had seen Bro. Corentin several times in Coonoor and Ooty. But my first interaction with him was in 1952, when I was selected to go to Loyola College, Madras (present Chennai) and Bro. Corentin was the director of the community during the four years I studied in Loyola.

Bro. Corentin had L.C.P., a degree in teaching from London . It was considered equivalent to B.ED degree. (Several other Brothers, including Bro. John of God, and Bro. Amance had that degree.) He taught in St. Gabriel's High School, Madras , when the Brothers ran the school from 1925 to 29. He taught in St. Antony's High School, Coonoor before I arrived there. From all the reports from the seniors who were his students, he was a good teacher. In 1947 he was appointed headmaster of St. Joseph's, Ooty, under the directorship of Bro. Paul. He also taught in Montfort School, Yercaud, . In 1949 Bro. Corentin was appointed director of the scholastics in Loyola, in which capacity he was in Madras for 12 years or so.

My first surprise in June 1952 was when we disembarked from the train in Central Station, Madras. Bro. Corentin bargained with the oxen cart driver and put all our luggage in it, and personally accompanied the cart , while the rest of us took the electric train to Loyola. Bro. Corentin truly led a religious life as he understood the calling. He was severely strict in his vow of poverty. He did not take a cab or even public transportation. When he had to go shopping for stationaries for the student brothers, he carried his bicycle to the ground floor. In the hot sun of Chennai he pedaled his way to the Moore market or wherever things were cheaper, even to buy a few pencils or note books. He had his shoes repaired a few dozen times. He patched his own torn garments. He rolled his own cigars from dried tobacco, and smoked a pipe with the left over tobacco.

Bro. Corentin insisted on a few essentials as he understood them: All must join the morning prayers and evening spiritual reading and rosary, and night prayers. All the young Brothers must play some game or go for long walks every evening. Other than that, he did not supervise our comings and goings – as long as we did not ask him for money. If anyone had difficulty in mathematics or English, or any other subject, he was willing to help. In fact, he was excellent in mathematics. Fr. Lourduswamy (later to be Cardinal Lourdurswamy) studies with us in 1952-53, and opted for the mathematics stream. As he had difficulty in the subject, he asked for help from Bro. Corentin, who tutored him and brought him on par with other students.

Bro. Corentin was a well read person. He spent a great deal of time in Loyola Library, read the newspapers and magazines and took out books. He took copious notes on what he read. Since most books he read were religious or philosophical or historical, Bro. Corentin's copy books were full of quotations about various spiritual topics. During the "Spiritual Reading" sessions, he read from his voluminous notes. They might have been dry, but substantial.

Bro. Corentin liked to play bridge. He encouraged the brothers to join him in the game. My life-long interest in bridge was due to his initiation into that intelligent card game. The young Brothers accompanied him on leisurely walk in the football field after supper. It is then that we learned from him about the pioneering Brothers who started Montfort School, and other institutions. The early builders of Montfort School had to trek their way up Shevroy mountains on foot, or the –weaker ones- had to be portaged by coolies in chairs. The Brothers cut branches of trees from the woods to shape them into hockey sticks for students to play. Montfort School was not then the elite school that it is now. The winding road and electricity came to Yercaud many years after the founding of the school.

Bro. Corentin loved manual labour. During the summer break when the young Brothers from Loyola dispersed to various communities, Bro. Corentin stayed in Montfort School. There he was seen levelling the grounds, collecting boulders and gardening. But he never once missed the spiritual exercises.

Bro. Corentin lived and died in deep faith. I consider him a typical example of a man of deep conviction. May his soul rest in peace. (Joseph Pathyil)

Chapter 11

The Nalgonda Moments-Satisfying

Written in February 2018 as St. Alphonsus' High School Nalgonda celebrates its golden jubilee.

I read the history of St. Alphonsus' High School, Nalgonda. I was pleased to read about the humble beginnings of the school in 1965 . Yes I am the founder of the school, then known as Bro. Eugenius, now living in Canada under my original name. Allow me to reminisce about that humble beginning.

We were three brothers in that small community. Bishop Beretta, in whose first name we named the school, let us in the newly built priest residence. That became our head quarters for the the first couple of years. There was an asbestos shed with four rooms that served as the class rooms. The nearby convent school sent us the students after their prima ry school. So we had enough pupils for three classes. The day we reached Nalgonda, the three of us went to a restaurant for lunch. As we were about to be served, I saw a family walk in from their car. I recognized the man; he had studied with me in Loyola College, Madras. I walked over to greet him. We were both surprised to meet in the most unlikely place in the State. He told me that he was driving from Guntur to Hyderabad to see if he could get his son admitted in The Grammar School. Mr. Kuruvilla Jacob, the principal, was a friend of mine. I told Mr. Rao (that was his name) that if he could not secure admission in Hyderabad Grammar Schoo, we were starting a boarding along with the new school. (I must confess we had not even thought of starting a boarding in the first year.) Rao returned the next day and asked us to look after his little son. Thus was started the boarding. The day after Bro. John of God of happy memory, sent us the son of a friend of his who needed personal attention. This young man became the school leader. Others heard about the new boarding and during the course of the next few

days we had a dozen boys in the budding boarding. By this time we had a cook and a table boy. The community and the boarders ate all their meals together, and had the same fare for all.

An OMI Carmelite missionary priest wanted to learn Telugu. He joined us and thus we had Holy Mass every day. Bro. Vincent, the director of Boys Town, had the altar, cross and the pews for the tiny chapel. The priest lived next to the chapel; the brothers had the next room, and the side room was designated for the director. We had tables set in the broad verandah which became our dining area and meeting place. The Rashtrapathy High Way connecting Nalgonda to Nagarjuna Sagar hds hardly any traffic. That became our walking lane most evenings. The large wells in the nearby fields were used for our bathing and ablution. Brothers and youngsters learned to swim in short order. The black stone hill (from which Nalgonda derived its name) which is now the backdrop of the school, beame our Mount Everest. We climbed it with our boarders on full moon nights.

One young gentleman doubled as Hindi and Telugu teacher. The brothers taught everything else.

We started construction of the Brothers Quarters. As Bro.Taska had planned it to be on top of a huge rock, the laying of foundation was ca herculean task. But very sloly, very methodically, the construction proceeded. The landed bought for the school ground was a cremation ground. In the first weeks of our starting the school, there were a couple of cremations. The District Superintendent of Police, who was a friend of mine, managed to stop further cremations. A shed used for postmortum too was relocated. All these took time. But the civic authorities were extremely helpful in all matters concerning the school.

In fact I remember how we managed to get a telephone connection that far from the nearest phone post. We were young; we were daring; we knew we could do it. Providence helped. Bishop Beretta, a saintly missionary, and a great supporter of the Brothers, helped immensely. The communities in Hyderabad were helpful. It was an enterprise full of love and daring.

When I left for Europe in May 1966, after handing over responsibilities to Bro. George Pral, I knew that the school will prosper under the stewardship of the Brothers.

A humble beginning indeed. But when I read about the thousands who successfully passed through the portals of the school, I feel gratified in my old age-February, 2018.

Bro. George Pral (07/07/1928 - 23/09/2022) RIP

P.L. George joined the Novitiate in 1946. His was the first vestition that

I attended in November 1947. His assumed name was Bro. Gonsalo Garcia. Twenty years later he reverted to Bro. George.

Bro. George was appointed as the office manager of All Saints. He manage not only the accounts, but was a great help in the running of the school. His cheerfulness even in emergencies endeared him not only to the community, but also to the staff and students of All Saints.

In 1966 I handed over the administration of St. Alphonsus, Nalgonda, to Bro. George. I knew the school was in capable hands.

Whenever I went to India, Bro. George and I would spend time in Neendoor or Kaipuzha. I considered him my older brother. Therefore when he visited USA, I urged him to come to Canada. I was happy to take him sightseeing in various places including Niagara water falls and down town Toronto. He was full of curiosity and warmth. It was a pleasure to have him with us for a few days.

The death of Bro. George saddens me. But he lived a full life, and fulfilled his mandate in this world.

My condolences to the Brothers and family.

May Bro. George rest in eternal peace.



Br George Pralel -

The Resilient Enigmatic Smile that lingers on

The Thespian who bridged and crossed the Frontiers of the 20th and 21st Century to merge with the Divine .

Montfort Brothers of St. Gabriel
Province of Hyderabad

Profoundly mourn the passing away of
REV. BRO. GEORGE PRALEL (UNCLE)
at 10.25 p.m. on 23 September, 2022
at St. Ann's Hospital, Jahanuma near Boys Town, Hyderabad
**Funeral Mass will be held at 03.00 p.m.
on Sunday, 25 September, 2022**
followed by the Funeral Rites at Boys Town, Jahanuma, Hyderabad

Birth: 07.07.1928 New life: 23.09.2022
First Vows: 13.11.1948 Final Vows: 31.12.1954

We solicit the presence of Pralel Family Members,
all Brothers, Fathers, Sisters, Collaborators, Associates,
Friends & Our old Students,
at Boys Town, Hyderabad,
to attend the funeral and pray for the repose of the departed soul.

Bro. Shine Alex S.G.,
Provincial Superior, Hyderabad Province

Figure 11.1: Br George Pralel

Chapter 12

Kazipet Memories 1962-65 - Facinating

M.G. Jacob sent me an email about the golden jubilee celebrations of his colleagues still in the congregation. My hearty congratulations to Brothers Joseph, Sebastian and Chandy, as also advance congrats to Bro. John and Bro. Paulose. Jacob's remembrances of his Kazipet sojourn brought to my mind a thousand memories of my years in the congregation, especially in Kazipet. His descriptions awakened dormant reminiscences. As one nears the sunset of one's life, memory plays tricks. (I turned 82 on October 4). Recent events fade fast and old incidents loom large.

When I was asked to be the director and principal of St. Gabriel's, Kazipet in 1962, I was less than 28 years old. The community of nine brothers was one of the largest in the province. My task was to lead the team of brothers, run the school, be responsible for the boarding (of two different classes), and the juniors. Next door was the scholasticate efficiently directed by my mentor and well-wisher Bro. John of God.

If I may say so, I was able to form the community in to a team. Once that was achieved, the rest was easy. Dedicated and efficient as the brothers were, they looked after all aspects of the school, the boarding, and the juniorate. The task of the director was to direct, to let others do their best in their own unique ways, to encourage and help when needed. Most teachers whom I inherited were dedicated and hard-working. They were paid well, and they were worth the money and more.

As for the students, they were the cream of the State and beyond. There was pride in belonging to St. Gabriel's. Of course there were pranksters and the occasional trouble-makers. But they added to the mix of the school. The school had a tradition of excellence from the time of Bro. Vincent, through Bro. John of God. And my philosophy of leadership was not to break things to mould in my own image. Traditions must be respected; if things are going well, do not interfere with the system. Do not reinvent

the wheel.(I had learned this lesson early in my career as headmaster of St. Antony's, Coonoor. As the new man on the job, fresh from Teachers Training College, Palyamkotta, where I had obtained a first class, I thought I would change the systems in my venerable alma mater. During the first teachers meeting, Mr. agoram Iyer, one of the early pillars of the middle school told me;" Brother, we are used to dancing to any tune that different headmasters play. But kindly remember that the school has a tradition of long standing" I stopped in my track, wound up the meeting hurriedly and thought of the profound statement of Mr. Agoram Iyer. And I resolved not to shape the school to my notions; but to respect the customs and traditions of the institution. That has stood me in good stead through the years.)

The most important goal was to ensure that the community, the teaching staff, and the students feel a sense of pride and ownership. To a large measure we did succeed. And I am grateful to all those who contributed to the cause.

I could write reems of pages about Jacob's pearls of memory. But let me touch on a couple. Summers in Kazipet were long and harsh. There was nothing to do and no where to go. With the help of civic friends including the Norias and the forest officers, we were able to get the forest bunaglow in Pakkal for a week. The community moved there along with the chaplain, the cooks, and the juniors. Needless to say it was a herculian task; but Bro. Tarcisius (Tarzan, as everybody called him) efficiently managed to feed us all very well.

Morning prayers, Holy Mass were the first order of the day. Then we went our separate ways to explore, to walk, to swim, and to laze in the cool stream flowing in to the lake. The very first night we were made aware of the wild animals that preyed on the stray cattle as we heard nightly roar of the tiger and saw the remanants of the carcass the next day. Tarzan and Bro. Alexis confronted a bear and they ran for their lives. We saw crocodile sunning themselves on the shore of the lake. The blue water of the lake where we spent hours, swimming and frolicking, was unfathomable.

Bro. Gregory and Bro. Donald took turns to play the bugle to call everyone for lunch, supper and other common activities. A few brothers from communities in Hyderabad joined us for the duration.

It would be remiss on my part, if I did not mention that during the first night, we went with Bro. Sala and his hunting companion, in to the deep forest to hunt for deer. They were able to bag two deer, that we carefully cached under the seats of the lorry. After a long night of hunt we returned to be stopped and perfuntarily examined by the forest ranger. We came to the bungalow unscathed, and happy about the prospect of the venizen at the next meal. We did have such risky adventures, including diving in to the shallow stream from atop tree branches. That no one broke his neck, or get mauled by wild animals, or crocodiles, - was sheer luck or great providence.

It must have been in 1964 that we spent a week or so in Ramappa, with similar arrangements made by the forest authorities. The lake and the

stream was full of fish. Youngsters forded the stream and caught basketful of fish. Tarzan fried them and we consumed them with fresh toddy, supplied by local tappers.

Bro. Robert Fernando had joined us. I threw him in the lake and he learned to swim. (Later, much later, he thanked me as he became a long distance swimmer in Mauritius.) Jacob mentioned the adventure on a log (rotten in the core that we did not know) to cross the lake. That too was a foolhardy adventure, conjured up at the spur of the moment. The lake was deep and wide. We dared to straddle it – quite a few of us – and traverse the lake. We sang boat songs, and encouraged each other... but the log broke and we were able to swim to the shore, without mishap. The walk back to camp was long and in the dark. But we managed to join our anxious companions and reassure them. The very memory of the adventure gives me shivers. The only excuse is that I was young – too young to be cautious.

I could go on. But suffice it to say that those were good years – formative to youngsters as also to the brothers. But the emphasis was the team, the community, the esprit de corps, the fellowship and... brotherhood. (What else!!) I am thankful for those years, indeed for the years starting in 1947 when I joined the Juvenile (as it was called then) to 1966 when I bade farewell to the congregation. If I have done some good, I am glad. If I have offended or scandalized, I am sorry. But today in the very late evening of my life, I look back, and I thank the Good Lord for all the blessings.

Part IV

Glittering Gems Alongside

Chapter 13

“Dorai” Br VK Stephen - Team Player

Br VK Stephen nee Br Nemesis a.k.a Br Robert Bellarmine

Velupparambil Kuriako Stephen was born in Uzhavoor on June 9, 1931. V.K. Stephen entered the Juniorate in Coonoor in 1946 and started his studies in Form III in St. Antony’s High School. The next year a few of us joined Form IV, and became the classmates and buddies of Stephen. Stephen was extremely fair, fair as a Caucasian. Therefore he was given the nickname of “dorai”. Stephen was easily the best student in our group. He was diligent, punctual, and organized. He got the top marks in most subjects. When we stumbled, we looked up to him for answers, Stephen’s constant smile, his childlike face, his equanimity, and his innocence won him favour with colleagues, teachers and superiors. While he did not excel in anything, he was a reliable team player. He did not take easily to games and sports; but he participated in everything cheerfully. While some of us risked violating the rules –big and small- such as having cash transactions that were expressly forbidden to the juniors, or indulging in the occasional cigarettes, or ganging up on some prudes or arrogant ones, or teasing, sometimes cruelly, the scrupulous and timid, dorai never did any of that. He was an obedient, faithful, dependent youngster. Teachers and superiors liked him. Mr. Dharmaraja Shiva, the interim headmaster of the school, also called him “dorai” affectionately.

We completed our S.S. L.C examination in March of 1950 and joined the Novitiate in April of the same year. Stephen easily held first rank in most subjects. In 1951 when the nine of us had our vestition, Thatha, the Novice master, chose our names to ensure that our patronal feasts would occur on the same day. We were given the names of St. Symphorosa’s seven sons who were martyred in the early church. The feast fell on July 18 in the Catholic calendar. Along with those were added Camillus and Cyriac who also cel-

celebrated feasts on the same day. Announcements of the new names were at least as eagerly anticipated as the donning of the new garb. Thus did V.K. Stephen become Bro. Nemesius. Another year and we took our first vows, and were allowed a few days at home. We returned to Yercaud, where the novitiate was relocated. Thatha, (having consulted Fr. Kuriakose Myalil, who had been our chaplain and teacher in Coonoor), announced that Bro. Nemesius, Bro. Frederick and I would go to Loyola College, Madras, and the others, except Bro. Cyriac, would go to Tindivanam. Bro. Cyriac was sent to Hyderabad. The surprise was not that Bro. Nemesius was chosen to go to Loyola, but that Bro. Frederick was chosen; and not Bro. Camillus and Bro. Justin. However, there were only three spots available in Loyola and the choice was made and God's will was made manifest. We started our studies in Loyola in June 1952. Bro. Frederick opted for the Mathematics stream, while I took history, economics and literature. Bro. Nemesius was expected to pursue science in which he had excelled in high school. However, he had doubts about it, and decided to join my stream. For the next two years we attended the same classes, listened to the same lectures, and did a lot together. Bro. Nemesius got first rank in the first term. After that I took over, secured first place consistently in all tests and examinations, received awards at the end of the year, with him as a close second. Bro. Nemesius had some difficulty accepting that someone did better than him. Perhaps due to that, after we completed our intermediate examination, he asked Bro. Eleazar, the Provincial Superior, to be sent to Hyderabad where he continued his studies.

Bro. John of God was the rector of All Saints in Hyderabad, and the uncrowned king of education in the city. He knew V.K. Stephen as Bro. John was his first headmaster in Coonoor. Bro. John received him with open arms. But he decided that the name Nemesius could conjure up mistaken notions of nemesis. Therefore he arbitrarily decided to change the name of Bro. Nemesius to Robert Bellarmine. Thus did my friend and companion, ne Stephen, a.k.a. Nemesius, become, willy- nilly, Robert Bellarmine. Needless to say his companions were not amused. Bro. Robert continued his studies in Hyderabad, completed his B.A. in two years and went on to obtain his B.Ed. and additional degrees including an M.A.. He served under Bro. John of God as headmaster of St. Gabriel's, Kazipet. for a few years. He was also the first headmaster of Palakurichy.

Bro. Robert taught in various schools, mostly in the center. He must have been an excellent teacher. He was meticulous in his preparations and in corrections. By 1965 he was miffed by the fact that while several of his companions were given positions of responsibility, he himself had not been made a director. The superiors asked him, therefore, to take up the directorship of Kothagudam, when Bro. Amancius vacated the post to take my place in Kazipet. But Bro. Robert was disillusioned within six months of the

new posting and requested his superiors to relieve him of his directorship. Thereafter he was content to teach in senior classes, and occasionally to take on more responsibilities. A brief stint in London did not satisfy him, and he was happy to return to India.

In 1997 Bro. Camillus and I arranged a reunion of our group in Coonoor, presided over by Bro. Charles. During that memorable week, Bro. Robert and I went for very long walks and shared our innermost feelings. Dorai was his smiling self. Youthful rivalry and jealousies had given way to genuine friendship. Years had matured him. But he remained the ever curious, ever concerned, friend. He was always ready with words of encouragement. He was my cheerleader and well-wisher. He liked my writings and my anecdotes. It was a pleasure being in his company as he boosted one's morale. As we were bidding goodbye in Coonoor, I asked him if I could do anything for him. He flashed his enigmatic smile, picked up my personally encrypted cross pen from my pocket and said he would have it. I was pleased that he would keep it as a memento. Whenever I went to India, I found some excuse to go to Hyderabad to meet him, or we met in Kerala, at least for a few hours. Those were very precious moments for both of us. The last time we met in Monippally, he told me about his bout with cancer and how he pleaded with the Lord to spare him for a few more years. His prayers were answered. Then a few months back I called him in Little Flower, Hyderabad. He sounded cheerful and full of pep. He asked me to write about our Coonoor days for the school magazine.(I complied with his wishes.) We exchanged pleasantries and I concluded by promising to meet again. He expressed his doubts of meeting again, but in his own inimitable, gentle style, thanked me for the call. That was the last I heard his voice.

Bro. Robert insisted on anonymity and on being one among the others. But he was more intelligent than most; more analytical than many; more cynical than enthusiastic; he was a practical person, who thought much, and feared to dream. His constant refrain used to be, "Who knows!!" and, he hastened to add, "Who cares!!" But he cared deeply for his friends and community and students. He was a good and faithful servant of the Lord and of humanity. May my friend, my companion, my soul mate, rest in peace with the Lord whom he served so faithfully.

Chapter 14

Br.Donald - One for All Seasons

Antony came to the juniorate a few days before I did -in 1947. He was admitted to Form 111 while I was in Form 1V. He was short, bright faced, smiling, and talented. He had brought a flute that he played for any occasion. He also could play bull-bull and mouth organ. (Later in life he learned to play the violin and organ. He could play most wind and string instruments.) He sang melodiously and would learn songs in Malayalam, Tamil and Hindi after hearing them once. He acted in plays as a hero most times. In some of the plays I too had supporting roles. Antony was an average student, who worked hard at his studies. He was not by any means one of the top students in his group. With the overshadowing presence of Mani Mezhukanal and N.M. Joseph who were both near geniuses, others were at best very good.

Antony joined the novitiate in 1951 and a year later he assumed the name of Bro. Donald. In 1953 when the aforementioned two brilliant companions of his joined me in Loyola College, Madras, Bro. Donald went for teachers' training in Tindivanam.

In 1955 he was posted to Coonoor where he became assistant to Bro. Charles to look after the juniors in addition to his duties as a full time teacher. In 1957 I joined the community as headmaster of St. Antony's. Bro. Donald and I became fast friends and confidants. He had his moods and his quirks. But he detected every emotion in my face and anticipated my wishes and expectations. He was a true friend who corrected me gently, prodded me vehemently; encouraged me greatly, and filled me with self confidence. In spite of his very busy day, he would find time almost every day, to sit with me in my room, and over a cigarette, discuss the events of the day, and occasionally open up his soul. I must say it was mutual. I would think out loud about various events for the school. He would listen patiently, ask probing questions, and give his frank opinions on all matters. Occasionally

he would get in to his moods and say “ I am not going to do anything for the Sports Day; find someone else”. I pretended as if I did not hear it, because I knew that when the time came he would get the juniors to decorate the grounds, plan every detail, and make sure the function was a success. When Parents Day came along, he would write original plays in Tamil, find actors, rehearse and prepare thoroughly with lights, sound, music and the works.

During the four years that he was with me, dozens of events took place. People obviously praised the principal for his leadership, little realizing that the real credit should have gone to Bro. Donald and such loyal helpers. But he would not want me to mention his name in public. In 1958 I took eight teachers and twenty three students on an all India tour. Bro. Donald accompanied me and that made all the difference to the trip. I was worry free as he was with me to share responsibilities. Bro. Donald was an excellent teacher. Students literally adored him, and figuratively ate out of his hands. He could teach the most complicated things in his own inimitable ways. Since his qualifications confined him to middle school classes, senior classes could not get the benefit of his pedagogical talents. I encouraged him to pursue higher studies. He could appear for college exams privately. I bought books for him, secured application forms and admissions. But he was too busy doing other things too important to the juniors, to the community and to the school. In 1961 Bro. Donald was transferred to Kazipet and was asked to look after the juniors there. Bro. John of God did not want to give him full freedom to look after the youngsters. The restraint brought him in to conflict with his superiors.

In 1962 when I took over the stewardship of Kazipet, his cup of joy was full. The Provincial Superior advised me to strictly oversee Bro. Donald and to give at least one talk a week to the youngsters. But I knew my man. I gave him full freedom to deal with the juniors, knowing that he would not let them or me down. He managed to be fully involved in the activities of the community. He too did not miss any of the after dinner celebrations and imbibings that I arranged for special occasions such as a feast or a birthday of the members of the community. During the long, hot summer vacations he brought the juniors to Ramappa and Pakal and had memorable times. In Kazipet too Bro. Donald was a sure spearhead of all activities of the school. We also continued to have long chats during which sessions he would warn me about some teachers and caution me about my own activities. But always gently, always charitably, always out of genuine affection and admiration. When he was transferred to the new school in Roorkee to be with my friend Bro. Julian, I lost a soul mate. In May 1965 I visited Roorkee while in Delhi and spent a few precious hours with Bro. Donald.

A year or two later when he was in Ranchi, he fell out with his director who wrote to me asking how to handle Donald. I told him to trust him

and give him autonomy to do what he wanted and that he would not let anyone down. Years later, in 1979 when I visited India with my wife and two sons we visited Montfort School Delhi in order to meet Bro. Donald. He told me that he was teaching in senior classes and enjoying it. He was solicitous about everything to do with me. He took the boys around to show the school. When I bade him good-bye I did not know that we would not meet again.

A few years later I learned of his untimely passing on 18 September 1994. I mourn his loss. With all the shortcomings of a human being, he was genuine as genuine comes. Farewell, my friend.(October 2014 Joe Pathyil)

Chapter 15

Mani Mezhukanal - Walked Miles Ahead

Formerly Bro. Edmond Campion- Linguist and Philosopher

(Journey of A Search thru different Religions and Philosophy that never ended)

Mani joined the Juniorate in Coonoor in 1947, the same year as I did. He was admitted to Form III, whereas I was in Form IV. Mani had studied in Malayalam class till Grade 7. Hence the delay of a year in “English” medium class. From the outset it was evident to anyone who met Mani, that he was smart. He was not studious, or hard working. He did not need to be. Mani was a natural genius. If he heard something – a poem, a story, a mathematical or scientific explanation- he would remember it. He had an uncanny ability to remember and retain information.

Mani was slight built and awkward in his movements. He was not adept at sports and games. But he made up for it by his intellect. He could argue on any topic, debate any issue, and find reasons to counter any proposal. His ability to explore aspects of any topic, endeared him to superiors, and caused jealousy among his peers. Mani had a caustic tongue, and shrewd observation about people and issues. During junior years and beyond, he collected enemies, as he impressed people with his erudition. In 1953 Mani joined me in Loyola College, Madras. He chose the Mathematics stream. That was to be expected. But what surprised all of us was his decision to take Hindi as a second language. He had hardly any background in Hindi. But he insisted. A few weeks into the first semester his Hindi Professor gently suggested that he could change his language stream. But Mani asked for a few months more. Suffice it to say, at the end of his 4th year, he was awarded the gold medal for Hindi by Madras University. Mani excelled in languages. Over the course of the next few years, he learned French, German, Italian, and Arabic, and a smattering of Greek, Hebrew and Latin.

Mani was posted to schools in the North. But he did not have robust

health. Therefore he had to be admitted in hospitals, and treated in several places. The superiors – especially Bro. Eleazar- had high hopes in him and gave him long leash. Mani was sent to Iraq (Mosul) where he started teaching in Arabic after the first two weeks. The Augustinian priests who managed the college in Mosul invited Mani to join them. He declined.

The Second Vatican Council had started in Rome. Mani was sent to study in Rome and Belgium. He began by studying and soon was invited to teach in the institutions. Thus , apart from the B.A. that he earned in Loyola, and B.Ed. in Kazipet, he had no formal degrees. However the lack of a doctorate did not deter him from lecturing in institutions of higher learning. Mani was recalled to India to be the director of the Post Novitiate. He was also, for a brief period of time, in Adyar. But all these did not satisfy him. He was given permission to go to Europe. Mani was the main architect of the new “Rule of Life” of the Brothers. He was pleased when, years later, he was called the Dr. Ambedkar of the Brothers!

While in Europe he fell in love with Danielle and decided to leave the congregation. Mani spent the rest of his life based in Fribourg, Switzerland. He was a member of a team of high profile scholars who conducted classes and seminars all over Europe. His main topic was Indian philosophy, including Buddhism. Mani was popular as he was conversant in many languages. He had made up for his lack of degrees by voracious reading. Mani was able to earn a decent living in the profession. (Much of the information about him after 1966 was told to me when I met him in 2005. We had been friends and confidants in religion. I was one of the few with whom he never clashed. We liked each other and respected each other. We had long phone conversations through the years.)

When I phoned him of my intention to visit him in Europe, he was pleased. I found Mani in feeble health. He needed crutches to walk. He had poor eye-sight. He could not sleep on a bed. But the mind was sharp. For the first couple of hours, he had his defenses up. But soon, we both stopped sparring, and spent the next few days in open, unfettered conversation. We both had much to learn from each other. We delved into each other’s innermost thoughts. Over glasses of wine, and excellent food prepared by Danielle, and while dining in restaurants, we did not stop talking.

I asked him if he had written anything for publication. He had decided not to do that. His reason was typical of Mani. He said he had doubts about his own thinking after he had verbalized them. Rather convoluted, but knowing Mani, I understood. We bade farewell very reluctantly. Mani and Danielle promised to try to come to Canada if his failing health would permit.

We kept up correspondence and phone conversations for a few more years. One day, a few years later, when I called, Danielle said that Mani “is gone”. He had indicated that he did not want to be a worse burden on his family. Switzerland had provisions for that.

Mani will be remembered by everyone who came into contact with him.
His memory lives in our hearts.

Chapter 16

Br Felix - The Caring Stalwart

PO Mathew was one of the first recruits of Br Stanislaus. Mathew came to the Juvenate (as the Juniorate was called then) in 1946. He had completed his Form III and had gone on to study short hand typewriting and telegraphy when Br Stani passed that way and invited to try out for the Brotherhood in Coonoor. When my batch joined a year later, Mathew was a helpful Fifth Former. That was the year India achieved Independence. We participated in the historic celebrations on August 15, 1947. Soon after that Rev Br Rembert Marie, the Assistant Superior General visited India. Br. Charles composed a son for the occasion. It said, in part: Our banner of freedom Waving in the breeze: It's the gold, and the white, Of a people contended and blest.

We sang this with gusto and then, in personal interviews, complained en masse to the Assistant General that the food was atrocious!

Mathew was a stalwart juvenist- literally and figuratively. He was well built, well proportioned. He was good in studies, though not brilliant. He obeyed rules and regulations without complaint. He was always helpful and kind towards new comers and the sick and the infirm. We went for long walks: played football and volleyball, both of which he played adequately well. When we went for day outings, he was full of fun and frolic. He knew how to rag people without hurting. We composed ditties about people and places that remained in our memories to this day. However, he would not participate in teasing the pig-tailed history teacher as the rest of the gang did. We put on skits and plays in Tamil, Malayalam and English, and he was regular participant in all of them.

PO Mathew was a fine athlete. During the three years that he was in St. Antony's High School, he competed in shot putt, discus throw, and long distance races such as 800 meters and one mile race. I distinctly remember that he won the very few trophies that St. Antony's secured during those years in inter-school competition, which was then called Gregg Memorial Sports. His approach to running these races remained emblematic of the person: unruffled, calm, smiling, steady: he started the race at a moderate

speed and kept the pace constant, without looking left or right or behind, till almost the end. Then in that last 100 meters he sped to the finish line and to victory.

I joined him in the Novitiate in 1950. Br Felix, as he was called from then on, was a model for all. But he didnt have the sanctimonious hypocrisy of some others. He knew when to laugh and when to be serious. Above all he was concerned for the weak, the sick, and the miserable among us. In 1951, having completed his novitiate, he was asked to do his college studies in Hyderabad, where he was given full time teaching duties too. Thus began a few years of postings to schools and communities where a reliable and efficient brother was required. We had our Three weeks of Ignatian Great Exercises in 1957. Fr Rayappar SJ was the retreat preacher. On the seventh morning we heard his shouting for help and some of us ran to his side. He died of a massive heart attack in the arms of Br Felix. Having completed his perpetual profession, Br Felix was appointed to onerous duties in various parts of the united Indian Province. Whether in Iraq, Ranchi, Hyderabad, yercaud, nalgonda or elsewhere, and later as Major Superior, Br Felix fulfilled his tasks with simplicity, humility, dedication and devotion.

During the General Chapter when he was unexpectedly elected as Assistant General, he was not flustered. Peace, confidence, and serenity were his hallmarks. He visited us in Montreal during his term as Assistant General. We spent long hours reminiscing, discussing and exchanging confidences. He had an admixture cynicism; but he wouldnot presume to challenge traditions, teachings and precepts. Br Felix had an extraordinary memory for names. He was also excellent at regular correspondence. In fact I received this Christmas card a few days after he died. His small typewritten was his mainstay even when Parkinson's disease affected his writing.

We visited him in Hyderabad and Muringoor and spent quality time together. I couldnot visit him in Snehanilayam where he looked after destitutes. Incidentally, after having spent hectic years to serve the poor and the homeless in a quiet part of India where he sought solace among the rejects of the society.

I was very much aware of his failing health. However, the news of his passing filled me with sadness. Br Felix was a "good and faithful servant" of the Lord. We must believe that, having run the great race, he has gone to his well deserved reward.

Chapter 17

Bro. John of the Cross - Convinced Religious

The First Indian Provincial Superior

Bro. John of the Cross was the first Indian Provincial Superior of The Montfort Brothers of St. Gabriel. He succeeded Bro. Eleazar (nee Louis Bureau), who was the first Provincial of India when India became a province in 1947. He held that post for twelve years. When Bro. Eleazar became Assistant General, the burden (rather than an honor) was imposed on Bro. John.

My earliest memory of Bro. John was in May 1947. He, along with Bro. Bernard, had taken their perpetual vows in 1947, and came on home leave for a few days. I joined them to try out in the Juniorate in Coonoor. Thus, even though he was not my recruiter, I used to boast that he brought me to Coonoor.

Let us go back a few years. Bro. John, Bro. Bernard, Bro. Denis and his brother Bro. George, and Bro. Augustine came to join the Brothers during the war years. As there was no Novitiate in India, they were sent to Singapore for their training. Second World War broke out and Japan occupied Singapore. Though the Canadian Brothers, who were in Singapore were not imprisoned, they underwent harsh times. The young novices completed their training in Singapore and managed to sail back to India. Bro. Bernard was sent to Travancore for teacher's training. Bro. Augustine and Bro. John went to St. Joseph's College, Trichy, for their B.A. Subsequently Bro. John did his B.Ed. in Meston College, Madras. After short term postings in St. Antony's High School, Coonoor, where he taught me English, (I still remember the Count of Monte Cristo by Alexander Dumas) and Montfort School, Yercaud, Bro. John was appointed headmaster of St. Antony's in 1950. He was an able administrator. He was an excellent teacher and He knew how to handle staff and students. Along with his determination to achieve good results, Bro. John was interested in sports and games. The

four years in Coonoor gave him self-confidence.

In 1954 Bro. John was asked to be the Director and headmaster of San Thome High School, Madras. Archbishop Louis Mathias handed over the historical school to the Brothers. It was the responsibility of the province to instil discipline and good learning habits. Bro. Eleazar could not have chosen a better person than Bro. John. His was a young community. I was a student in Loyola College, and volunteered my services to the community. Thus I was virtually an honorary member of the community. Bro. John and the community did everything together: pray, play, plan, and succeed in their goal to make San Thome a model school.

In 1969 when Bro. Eleazar became the Vicar to the General, he had no hesitation in recommending that Bro. John of the Cross become the Provincial Superior. The province was growing, and it had growing pains. But all of us wanted Bro. John to succeed. He got wholehearted cooperation from most Brothers. He administered the Province for six years.

I was fortunate to be one of his confidants. Bro. John came to Coonoor for long visits. So did he after I was appointed as Director of Kazipet. We would chat late into the night over a drink or three and a few cigarettes. I am grateful for the confidence he bestowed in me. I like to think that I reciprocated in kind. Bro. John wanted me to take on greater responsibilities. But since in 1965 I had doubts about my vocation, he allowed me to think through things. When I informed him in 1966 from Rome that I had decided to leave, Bro. John was sad. But he understood.

On my home visits to India, I had made it a point to visit with him. Thus I met him again as a priest in Kottayam and Yercaud and, last, in Anakkara. Needless to say we both were happy in each other's company.

Bro. John of the Cross was a convinced religious. He did not criticize his predecessor or successors. He minded his business entrusted to him. He left the rest to Divine Providence. Bro. John lived to a ripe age. He was one of a kind.

Chapter 18

Bro. Vincent - The Achiever

Some people get opportunity to excel. Others have to strive to achieve success. Bro. Vincent belonged to the latter category. In 1948 when a few Brothers were selected to go for higher studies in Loyola, Bro. Vincent felt slighted that he was not one of those. He taught Middle School classes in several places.

He was transferred to quite a few communities, not because he was a pest. In fact wherever there were problems, he was sent to help out. Thus he was a socius in the Juniorate, and in the Novitiate.

Through these years, in addition to the work load, he was determined to complete his higher education. Thus gradually he completed his B.A., took a Master's degree, and B.Ed. Bro. Vincent not only learned for his examination; he was determined to make up for not attending college, by voracious reading. He became conversant in history, political philosophy, in Economics, and in Humanities.

Bro. Vincent also observed the strengths and weaknesses of people around him. When he was appointed Principal of St. Gabriel's, Kazpet, in 1955, he was ready for the task. He approached the task with confidence. He was an excellent administrator. He also undertook construction of buildings, with or without the express permission of the powers that be. He respected authority. But Bro. Vincent could not suffer fools.

In 1958 he was appointed Director of Boys Town. Superiors could not have chosen anyone better for the task. Bro. Vincent upgraded the school, added extra industrial training; he cultivated a vineyard. He increased the number of inmates. Bro. Vincent befriended high officials of the Government and ensured continued help.

Though he was a workaholic, he was very meticulous in his religious duties. Was he a good director of the communities where he was posted, I am not certain. But he was task oriented, and unafraid to tell others what he thought.

Chapter 19

Br. Camillus - Another Jewel

Br. Camillus Nee K.T.Thomas

K.T. Thomas, P.J. Abraham and K.S. Joseph were the three musqueteers who hailed from Manimala in 1947. We were together through high school, novitiate and beyond. Thomas was short and dark. He made up for his stature by his intensity. Whether in studies or in sports and games, Thomas was intense. He was the butt of our boyhood jokes. But he took it all in stride. He did his darndest to conform. But when it came to his studies, he did not sacrifice it for play. Therefore he excelled in class.

V.K. Stephen (Bro. Robert Bellarmine) was the only one that K.T. Thomas could not beat in studies.

In 1952 when the names of brothers going to Loyola was declared, Bro. Camillus was heart- broken that he was not chosen. He was sent to Tindivanam for teachers training.

Subsequently he was posted to San Thome, and a few other places. In spite of duties in schools he readily took on like scouting, games and sports supervision, , he was determined to complete his higher education like those of us who were selected to study in college.

He did well in studies and earned an M.A. to crown his studies.

His first posting as Director was in Kailasapuram, Trichy, where a new school was to be constructed and administered under Heavy Bharat Electricals Company. The management of the school under the supervision of the Brothers, at the same time abiding by the strictures of BHEL was no easy task. Bro. Camillus did an incredible job entrusted to him.

In 1997, I suggested to Bro. Camillus that the nine of us who were together for many years starting from Coonoor in 1947, should celebrate the fiftieth year of our friendship. He readily undertook the responsibility of organizing it. Bro. Charles was invited to preside over the week-long sojourn in Coonoor. We all had a memorable time, largely due to Bro. Camillus' organizational ability.

Bro. Camillus held very responsible positions in the Southern Province,

including starting a school in Anakkara.

Chapter 20

Bro. John Bosco - The Artist

Bro. John Bosco and I were in Kazipet, Andhra State, in 1962 . We worked together there for several years. Bro. Bosco was a quiet young man then. But unlike a lot of young people, he was not hasty or excited. Very few things agitated him.

He was in charge of one of the dormitories, in addition to a full load of teaching. He did his tasks systematically and diligently.

We were a rather large community of nine or so persons. Some of them were mischievous; others were adventurous. Bro. Bosco joined them and found fun with his companions.

I remember being in a camp in Ramappa lake with Bro. Bosco. Eight of us, including Bro. Bosco, climbed on to a long log of wood and rowed across the big lake without much thought.

We sang boat songs, taunted each other, and pretended to be nonchalant.

As we neared the far shore the log broke in half. The lake was deep and the water choppy. We managed to swim to the shore and walked quite a few miles to get back to camp. By the time we returned to our companions, it was pitch dark. They were anxious about us and we were thankful to see them all again after a foolhardy and near fatal escapade.

Bro. John Bosco's character and personality can be traced, at least partially, to his ancestry. I have been to his house and I have met his parents and his siblings. The name of Nedumchira evokes respect, grace and nobility. A couple of his relatives were also in the congregation.

The early years must have been rough on Bro. John Bosco. But in time he blossomed and became an invaluable worker and has contributed much to the community and to humanity. His personal philosophy is purified in the fire of intense heart aches, and shaped on the anvil of personal experiences.

Bro. John Bosco is an artist. He sketched and painted pictures and portraits with extraordinary accuracy and beauty. Perhaps that particular talent explains the person.

He perceives things that ordinary folks do not see. Whether it be a rose

or a face, he sees lines, colors, shades, and shapes that only an artist can see or register. Along with that, he sees through the object and through the person into the very soul of the being. It is this uncanny perception that makes Bro. John Bosco different. All his life he has been watching and weighing.

His writings today are the quintessence of a life of observations and evaluations. And he has reached maturity of thought and fearlessness of consequence that impel him to speak and write with uncanny frankness and perspicacity. Long may he continue to observe and pronounce on matters of eternal import.

When Bro. John Bosco celebrated fifty years in Religion, I joined his friends and well-wishers to offer my sincere congratulations. Ad multos annos.

Chapter 21

Br. Montfort of the Cross- The Jovial Optimist

In the forties and fifties all the juniors in Coonoor knew most of the Brothers. The juniorate, novitiate, scholasticate, and the community in charge of the school, were all in the same campus. In addition, the annual retreat in the first week of May, culminating in vestitions and professions made Coonoor a gathering place for all.

Thus, even though I was more than four years junior to Bro. Montfort of the Cross, I knew him well. Then while in Loyola College, Madras, every year I was asked to help out in Montfort School, Yercaud. During those three months I was Bro. Montfort's roommate and helped in Charmette dormitory. In addition, I helped out in St. Joseph's Higher Elementary School, where he was the headmaster.

Later when he became the director of Palakurichy, I visited him from the salubrious climate of Coonoor, for relaxation. When I was in Kazipet, I asked for his help to run a satellite school. Thus Bro. Montfort and I had volumes of joint experiences and adventures.

After I left India, I kept in touch with him sporadically. We met a few times. But in January 2008 when we were in Kaipuzha, I was told by his brother Alex that Bro. Montfort was scheduled to be in Kerala for home visit. We met several times and spent a few precious hours reminiscing and communing with each other. Obviously our topics of conversation spanned half a century of joint and separate experiences. He was eager to know about my wellbeing as I was about his. We parted promising to meet again, but I think we both knew that such a possibility was remote.

Br. Montfort of the Cross did not leave behind many edifices and institutions. He was not a superior- local or major- for a very long time. But he was an excellent companion. I think his ability to enjoy the company of others, his simple, jovial, and optimistic attitude to life made him unique. He accepted life as it was dealt him. He loved and cared for his siblings as we all

should. Priesthood did not make him lose his moorings. He remained very much his old self. He was fearless in expressing his views. But he was not a meddler, nor a boor. Long illnesses made him even more compassionate. His innate qualities were honed in the fire of suffering.

That charming smile of his endures long after he has gone to his reward.

Chapter 22

Peter Reddy - A Saint for our Family

I was in St. Xavier's Teachers Training College in 1956. It was a November Saturday morning. I had gone to the reading room of the Jesuit Residence to read some magazines that were not available in the College Library. As I was immersed in my reading, I heard someone shuffle his way on the verandah. I did not pay any attention, until I heard a voice in English asking, "Are you one of those whom I should recognize?"

I turned to look. There stood a man bare-footed, wearing what must once have been white shirt and white dhoti, with long unkempt hair, gray beard, and spectacles on his nose.. I pointed out the door to my left and said: "If you need anything, go to Fr. Minister." "No", he said, "I came to visit some of my friends here." He pulled up a wicker chair next to me and sat down. I stared at him. How dare a beggar sit in one of these chairs, I thought. There was a distinct odour about him that indicated that he had been walking in the sun and was sweating profusely. As I was looking at him not sure how to tell him to get up and go away, Fr. Utaraidl, my principal, came down the stairs. He saw the man seated in the reading room and hurried towards him, exclaiming, "Peter!"; Peter!, where were you all these days?" Hearing the words of Fr. Utaraidl half a dozen priests came rushing to the reading room and greeted the beggar. There were the rector, the priests and others embracing the man, asking him how he was doing and all talking at the same time. After a few minutes, all sat down to chat enthusiastically. I was stunned. I quietly got up and slipped out of the reading room and sauntered to my room. I knew who the intruder was. I had heard stories about him, but had never met him.

Professor Peter Reddy M.A.; L.T, was a renowned teacher of History, an author, a powerful orator, and the man who left the ivory tower of college teaching to preach true Christian principles to anyone who would listen to

him. My first introduction to the extraordinary man was in 1952 when Professor Rajendran, who taught us Modern History in Loyola, spoke of his own professor of History who had written a scholarly book on European History. That was Peter Reddy. Prof. Rajendran spoke at length, and lovingly and nostalgically about how Peter Reddy used to keep his in class in thrall, how he was an ardent Catholic, who called "Reformation" a "Counter Reformation". Mr. Rajendran said that his hundreds of students were surprised when Peter Reddy quit teaching and became a mendicant preacher.

Once he was going to Ceylon (the present Sri Lanka), where he had been invited to speak to a Christian gathering. By this time Peter Reddy had abandoned his suit and shoes, had grown his beard and hair, and wore the garb of the beggar. The customs officer apprehended him as the ferry touched the shores of Ceylon, shouted at him for trying to enter an alien country without valid papers. Peter Reddy patiently listened to the harangue of the officers. At the end of their insults, they asked him if he had any documents with him. He took his passport and gave it to the officers. They looked at it and saw the name : Peter Reddy M.A., and the photograph of the professor. " You are an M.A.?", the officer asked. Peter Reddy nodded. Immediately, they changed their attitude and profusely apologized for insulting him. When the formalities of entry were over, Peter walked out of the room. As he was leaving, he turned to the officers and said, " You saw my name and changed your tone. But what I would like you to do is to see another letter in the passport that is missing." They were puzzled. Peter Reddy said, " You saw M.A. and immediately froze in your tracks. But you should add the letter N and then you will become better officers. MAN has to be treated better, even if he is a vagrant." He left them with wide eyes and wide mouths.

Mr. Peter Reddy could speak in English, Tamil, Telugu, and Malayalam, Hindi, Italian, French, German, and was conversant in Sanskrit, Hebrew, and Aramaic . He went from town to town, from village to village, from church to temples to market places and spoke to crowds about the true Christian principles of loving one's neighbor. He would accept no money from anyone. He carried with him a begging bowl, and a walking stick. He would sleep under the porch of a church or an open verandah. He would wash in the nearest well, go to the nearest church and after the service would ask to speak to the congregation. Those who stayed to listen to him would come again and again to hear him. He would only accept a bus ticket to the next destination, if it was too far him to walk.

After a few years of such preaching, Peter Reddy's fame preceded him and crowds came to listen to him. During one such tour, he came to my village of Kaipuzha. A few hundred people were present to listen to the

powerful speaker. At the end of his talk, my father invited him home. They walked home, immersed in religious discussions. When they came home, Peter Reddy sat on the verandah, admiring the western view of paddy fields and coconut grove. My father invited him to sit in the drawing room. Peter Reddy tarried saying that he preferred to sit on the verandah. But at the insistence of his host, he sat in one of the comfortable armchairs in the drawing room. My mother invited them to the dining room for lunch. Peter Reddy stretched out his begging bowl and asked her to put some food in it. She chided him and insisted that he go to the dining table. Peter Reddy complied with the wishes of the gentle hostess.

At the end of a long, leisurely visit, it was time for Peter Reddy to leave. My father told him of his admiration and respect for Peter Reddy. Peter Reddy turned to my father and said, " Mr. Abraham, why don't you join me?" My father stood frozen. He looked at his wife, the house that he was proud of, the fields that were ready for harvest, and thought of all the enterprises that he had assiduously tended, and told Peter Reddy, " Let me think over it." Peter Reddy smiled. He refused an offer of an envelope of money. He took out enough money from that envelope to buy himself a ticket to Kottayam, and returned the envelope with thanks to my father. That must have been in 1953. My father had recounted the story to me when we met some time later.

I thought of all these stories as I sat in my room. After about an hour, I decided to go back to the Jesuit Residence in the hope of meeting Peter Reddy. When I went there, he was bidding goodbye to his friends. I waited and as he was walking to the gate, I accompanied him. I began by apologizing for mistaking him to be a beggar. " That is not unusual. If people do not mistake me at least once a day, the day is not complete." said Peter Reddy smiling. I asked him if he remembered Abraham Pathyil. " In Kaipuzha?", he asked. I told him that I was his son. Then he spoke fondly of my parents and how he was a welcome guest in the house. " Do you remember M.P. George?", I asked him. "That brilliant mischief maker?" he asked. I told him that M.P. George married my sister and he asked all about his old student. After a few minutes of conversation, I said goodbye to him at the college gate. I watched him walk away in the horizon.

The next day I went to meet some friends in the headquarters of the Brothers of Sacred Heart, situated near St. Xavier's and told them of my chance meeting with Peter Reddy. They were full of news about him. In the final years of his teaching, Peter Reddy was their guest. Apparently, for years he was donating all his salary to the poor, the needy and the students who could not afford to pay their fees. But he was not satisfied, as he had to pay rent for a room where he was staying. So he asked the Sacred Heart Brothers if they would let him sleep on their verandah. They accommodated

him, gave him a room, and invited him to dine with them. With the money he thus saved, he gave scholarships to more students. It seems he stopped wearing shirts and instead would wear a scarf and a jacket on top of that to hide his nakedness. He ate boiled peas and drank water. He was never demanding and always grateful for the shelter and sustenance. It was at the end of his sojourn there that he decided to quit teaching completely and spend all his time preaching true Christian values.

I was appointed headmaster of St. Antony's High School, Coonoor in 1957. One day I was searching the archives that included the logbook by my predecessors. As I was leafing through the pages, I discovered to my total surprise that Mr. Peter Reddy M.A.; L.T was the headmaster of the school for a brief one year in the early thirties. I poured through the entries to see if there was any clue in his writings about his future activities. There was no indication other than his recurring theme of Christian values to be taught in the school and his constant concern of helping the poor students.

After a year in Coonoor, he was invited to teach in a Jesuit College. For the next sixteen years or so, he taught History in St. Joseph's Trichy and St. Xavier's, Palayamkottai. Then he decided to quit academia completely and, imitating Francis of Assisi, become a preacher.

In 1957 there was a huge Conference of Catholic lay people in Trichy. Three thousand people attended the three-day symposium. (Bro. Rosius, a member of the Coonoor community, and a confidant of mine, represented the Brothers at the conference. The following incident was narrated by Bro. Rosius.) During the inaugural plenary session, after the welcome speech and the keynote address by an Archbishop, the Master of Ceremonies announced. "The next speaker will be Mr. Peter Reddy." All eyes were turned to the front row. There sat all the dignitaries, a dozen bishops in their purple finery, chevaliers and community leaders. Then the crowd heard a commotion at the back. Some volunteers had stopped a beggar from walking through the center isle towards the front. The organizers saw the incident, and realized it was Peter Reddy walking up to the podium. They rushed to escort him to the platform. Mr. Peter Reddy spoke for 45 minutes to a receptive audience. He addressed the bishops and told them to abandon their gold chains and gold crosses, in favour of wooden crosses, to come down from their mansions and look after the poor and needy. He exhorted the audience to live a true Christ-like life. To thunderous applause, Mr. Peter Reddy concluded his address, and walked out of the hall alone as he had come.

Mr. Peter Reddy lived a lonely, some would say, eccentric life. He preached not to please, but to shake the lethargy of people. He demanded the rich to give to the poor; he asked the poor to help themselves and other poor people. He spoke of the true Christ-like qualities of love of one's neigh-

bor. He lived a life of abnegation and renunciation. He wrote tracts about various topics of importance at the time. He exhorted people to help each other.

My father started St. Vincent de Paul Society in Kaipuzha, which still thrives in that parish and in the neighbouring parishes. He also organized the Third o Order of Franciscans in the parish. My father used to recount his meeting with Peter Reddy, and would say, with a deep sigh, "He invited me to join him; I wonder . . ." and his words would trail off. Peter Reddy's desire was to live on the streets of towns and villages, and ultimately to die unknown and uncared for. He achieved his desire. In 1958 he was found dead on the pavement of Palayakottai. News of his death spread all over South India. Many came for his simple funeral. Mr. Peter Reddy lived and died as he desired.

As my father told him, "Everyone admires you; very few can imitate you." His was a unique calling. He was an extraordinary character that cannot be contained in a box and labeled. His spirituality was not traditional. His teachings were not his own; but that of his Lord and Master. He literally lived the Gospels. Persons such as Peter Reddy are rare. They are the true Christians, since they are Christ-like and follow the example of Christ. In the process of trying to live a Christian life, they are misunderstood and some times ostracized by their society. Since these men and women transcend the ordinary rules and morals of society, and since they have a greater awareness of the eternal in the empirical, I would call them transcendentalists. The impact of the transcendentalists, in the long run, is often shocking. They shatter the fabric of society. This may not be done deliberately; but their very presence in our midst is a constant reminder of the phony and hypocritical world that they have observed and rejected. They reject conformity, bigotry, and vulgarity; they are on an intuitive avenue to truth. They forge for themselves an art of living; they are in quest of simplicity and beauty. These people practice virtue to heroic degrees.

Paul Chinnappan Reddy, popularly known as Peter Reddy or Peter Paradesi, has been elevated to the status of "Servant of God" by the church. His cause for canonization is being vigorously pursued by the diocese of Palayamkoai. The late parents of Bro. Robert Fernandes were close friends of Peter Reddy. Montfort Brothers of St. Gabriel should be proud to have had Peter Reddy as headmaster of St. Antony's High School, Coonoor. Mr. Peter Reddy is our saint.

He died on 21st June 1958 and is buried at Palayamkottai.

(His full name was Paul Chinnappa Reddiar, aka Peter Reddy / Paradeshi Peter. He is also known as the greatest learned mendicant the world has ever seen. He was born at Perioor Ammapetei, Thirumangalam, Madurai district,

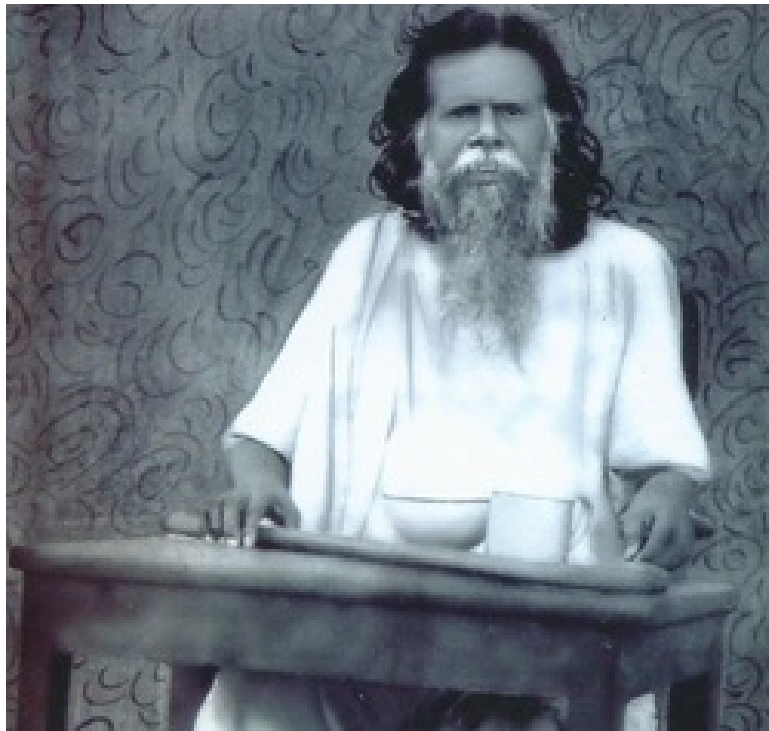


Figure 22.1: "Servant of God" - Peter Reddy

Tamil Nadu. He was a teacher by profession with degrees in M.A, L.T (B.ed of today). Except Tamil and English, he learnt Hindi, Sanskrit, Malayalam, Italian, German, French, Hebrew and Aramaic after the age of fifty. He is credited to have written 9 books and over 50 Tamil devotional songs. His spirituality emphasized on evangelical poverty, evangelical mission, ascetic life and obedience to the call of Jesus and the Church. “I do not look at the man who insults me but look at Jesus standing behind him. I will do as Jesus did when he was insulted.” He was greatly devoted to the Holy Eucharist and to our Lady. He was influenced by St. Francis of Assisi and St. Alphonsa-(Source: <http://ofsindia.weebly.com/our-patrons.html>)

Chapter 23

Mathew Kunnakkattu - A colorful life

Formerly Bro. Alphonsus Pacheco

No, this is not an obituary. Far from it and written in October 2020.

This is the celebration of a birthday.

Mathai Chettan, as a lot of Malayalees in North America call him, will turn 96 years old on October 10, 2020. This is a tribute to my friend who also happens to be my brother in law. Mathew was born in Monippally on October 10, 1924. He was full of life and mischief during his childhood. He had a disarming smile and sunny disposition. He was popular among his friends, and was a leader in their adventures. So it came as a surprise when, in 1939, Bro. John of God persuaded him to go with him to Coonoor and try studying in St. Antony's High School. Mathew readily agreed as this was going to be another adventure.

Mathew was admitted to Second Form (roughly equivalent to Grade 7). He thrived in the salubrious climate of the hill station among new found friends, and caring Brothers. He was willing to do anything to please them. He was good in sports and games, in spite of his short stature. As Bro. John of God himself was short and was an extraordinarily good football and badminton player, he found in young Mathew a potential imitator. Whenever Bro. John needed to send someone on errands, he sent Mathew. Studies were not a real concern for the young man as the teachers were thorough and Brothers insisted on discipline.

In 1944 Mathew completed his SSLC and was admitted into the Novitiate. Under the continued guidance of Bro. Michael, he spent two years in religious training. In 1945 he and his friends had their vestition and was given the name "Alphonsus Pacheco". His companions were Bro. Antony Francesco, who would later become the Provincial Superior, and First As-

sistant to the Superior General. A third was Bro. Peter Bruno who would leave in 1948. Another companion was Bro. Rudolph (Philip Nedumchira) who would quit the congregation ten years later. (They were named after the Jesuit martyrs killed in India in the 16th century.) Bro. Pacheco took his first vows in 1946.

Bro. John of God had persuaded the Department of Education of the Madras Presidency to let him start an accelerated teachers training program in St. Antony's to prepare for the high demand for teachers in the emerging independent India. This enabled the young brothers who had completed their high school to train as teachers. The program was only 14 months long instead of the usual two years. Bro. Pacheco and his companions thus became certified teachers in time for school opening in 1947. (When I arrived in the Juniorate towards the end of May 1947, the training school session was still going on.) Bro. Pacheco and Bro. Rudolph were posted to St. Joseph's High School, Ooty under the directorship of Bro. Paul. Bro. Pacheco got along very well with Bro. Paul who was a notorious disciplinarian, while Bro. Rudolph and the director could not tolerate each other. Bro. Corentin was the titular headmaster. The adventurous Pacheco went visiting friends, and making new acquaintances under the pretext of going shopping (he was the procurator of the community).

In 1948 the Provincial Superior, Bro. Eleazar selected Bro. Alphonsus and a few others to go to Loyola College, Madras, for higher studies. He had the freedom to go anywhere, meet any one, provided he, along with the rest of the Brothers got up at 4.30 a.m. for morning prayers, and would play at least an hour of games in the evening, and join the community for the daily spiritual exercises. Bro. Pacheco cultivated many friends, some of whom went on to be top Government officials and diplomats. The first two years of intermediate studies were easy. In 1950 he chose to study B.Sc. chemistry. Between his ever widening circle of friends, and the tough courses in chemistry, something had to give. He did not succeed in his first attempt in B.Sc. exams in 1952. Subsequently he completed his Bachelor's degree and B.Ed. in Osmania University.

Bro. Alphonsus (he was called by either name) was sent to Kilinochi, Ceylon (Sri Lanka) where the Brothers had taken up a School, under the direction of the Canadian Province. Bro. Alphonsus was the Indian contribution. After a year or two there, he returned to Andhra where he was posted to various schools, including to Kazipet.

In 1960 he was appointed headmaster of San Thome High School, and Bro. Antony, his old companion was made the Director of the community and Manager of the school. Since the manager did all administrative func-

tions of the school, the headmaster was miffed and asked that he be relieved. In 1962 he was appointed Director and headmaster of Nirmala High School, Kolathur. After a short stint there, he was posted to Ranchi. In 1964 he joined Bro. John of God as his assistant in charge of the scholastics.

In December of that year, Bro. Alphonsus Pacheco decided to quit the congregation and fend for himself. He went to Jaipur where St. Xavier's High school needed a science teacher. Thus at the age of forty, Mathew started anew. He was valued as a senior teacher with administrative experience. The Principal (with whom he had a life-long friendship) considered him an asset.

In 1967 I married his sister in Montreal.

In 1969 we sponsored Mathai. He joined us in the spring of 1969. He was hired by The Montreal Catholic School Board and taught there until his retirement. He married Irene Thayil (Kottayam) in 1971. Jimmy, their only son, was born in 1973. He liked sports cars; he has a collection of expensive fountain pens, watches, and other pretty things. He was a dedicated husband, a loving father, and a good teacher. But he found time to visit shopping centres. He was a meticulous dresser. However he would not buy anything on impulse. He would identify the suit he wanted and wait for it to go on sale. He enjoyed beating the system. Irene died of cancer in 1991. Mathai Chettan looked after his son and himself all these years following her demise.

About six years ago, he had a bad fall and subsequently had to be admitted to a nursing home. He is there now. The staff in the nursing home looks after his every need, including feeding him. Though he has lost his short term memory, he recognizes people, can hold conversations, can still sing in Malayalam, Tamil, Hindi, English, French and Latin. He has a very pleasant disposition. Far from being grouchy and disgruntled, he exudes lightness and joy all around him.

Most years we would gather around him for his birthday. The pandemic has prevented us from visiting him in the last few months. But Jimmy visits him regularly and gives us periodic updates. Mathai Chettan is doing well. He is keeping a bottle of Royal Salute for his centenary. We wish him continued good health and cheer. Happy Birthday. Ad Multos Annos. **The Last of the Pioneers - Mathew Kunnakattu**

Mathew Kunnakkattu (97) passed away in Montreal on March 2, 2022. Irene Thayil, his beloved wife, had predeceased him in 1991. James, his only son and Mikey, his grand son live in Montreal. Josephine Pathyil (Mississauga) and Cecily Kannan (Jaipur) are his surviving siblings. In addition, his numerous nephews and nieces mourn his passing as do his friends and well-wishers everywhere.

Bro. John of God recruited him and a few others from Travancore in the late thirties. A juniorate was started in Coonoor under the supervision of Bro. Michael who had to leave Thailand at the beginning of World War II. Thus started a flow of recruits from Kerala to the Brotherhood. Mathew completed his high school in 1944. He, along with Bro. Antony Francesco (later to be Provincial, General assistant, Vicar etc.) , Bro. Rudolph Neduchira (an uncle of Bro. John Bosco) and a few others entered the newly set up Novitiate in Coonoor. After his first profession in 1946, he studied Teachers Training Course in Coonoor, and was posted to St. Joseph's High School, Ooty. In 1948 Bro. Paccecco was sent to Loyola for higher education along with half a dozen Brothers. After four years in Loyola, he was posted to several schools, including as the only Indian contribution to the school in Kilinochi, Sri Lanka, that was managed by the Canadian province. Thus he was a pioneer in several categories. After postings in several places, he decided to quit Brotherhood in 1964.

Mathew taught in Jaipur for a few years, and he joined us in Montreal in 1969, and was a teacher in Montreal Catholic Commission till his retirement. In the last few years Mathai Chettan (as he was fondly known to all in Canada) was in an old age home in Montreal. The end was peaceful. Mathai Chettan leaves behind a grieving family. But we also celebrate a long life.

Thus passes the last of the first pioneers from Kerala. May the Good Lord receive him to His Heavenly Abode-(Joe Pathyil 3 March 2022)

Chapter 24

Joseph Arimelikara - The Adventurist

Formerly Br Martialis - RIP July2022

Joseph Joined the Juniorate in Coonoor in 1946. After his High School, and Novitiate, he took his first vows in 1951. Joseph, now called Bro. Martialis, was sent to Hyderabad, where he completed his B.A., and B.Ed. After several postings, he was appointed Director and Principal of Little Flower. In 1964 he took over the Rectorship of All Saints. In 1965 Joseph decided to leave the Congregation.

Joseph married Alice Koppuzha, and after several stints in India, he taught in Africa for a few years. He returned to India and settled in Kottayam with his family. Subsequently Joseph and family immigrated to U.S.A. where he taught for a few years.

A.T. Joseph was one year senior to me. He was a risk taker, adventurous, and self-confident. He was good in studies, and was social. Along with P.O. Mathew (Bro. Felix), he was the leader of his group. We had kept in touch with each other sporadically. The last was a brief conversation when he was in Houston.

Joseph's last few months were in a Nursing Home in Alwaye, India. His death did not come as a shock. I cherished his friendship and we had spent several hours reminiscing about our lives in Coonoor and Hyderabad.

May the soul of my companion find Eternal Rest.

Chapter 25

Bro Patrick - The Ace in the Game of Life

Formerly Isaac, My Nephew -RIP 8 April,2015

Bro. Patrick, whom I lovingly call Isaac, was very special. I was instrumental in his joining the Juniorate in Kazipet, in 1955. under the watchful direction of late Bro. Vincent . Isaac , not only finished his high school, but learned English, Hindi and Telugu. He admired the unique qualities of Bro. Vincent.

Bro. Vincent was one of the best administrators among the Brothers and he was also a visionary - qualities that Isac acquired in the years to come. After his two year stint in the Novitiate at Eachinkadu under Bro. Stephen, and two more years of Scholasticate under Bro. John of God, Isaac was ready and itching for action in schools.

Whether in Montfort school or in RSK, Isaac excelled in organizing sports and games. He earned the admiration of his students by his youthful enthusiasm and involvements with the boarders and day schools alike. Isaac believed in the old adage that the battle of Waterloo was fought in the playing fields of Eton. He spared no effort wherever he worked to fill his students with a love for games and sports. (In fact recently his name was under consideration to be the person in charge of special Olympics in Tamil Nadu. He declined the offer.)

A few months back the Holy Father warned Religious Superiors about the evil of gossip. Pope Francis said, rather than gossip behind the back, confront those whom you want to criticize, even to the danger of occasional fisticuffs. Bro. Patrick was one such. If he had anything to tell his local superior or major superiors, he confronted them. But he was also willing to listen and to be corrected. Through it all, he loved the congregation and every action he undertook was to advance the name of the society and to

bring credit and acclaim to the Brothers.

Bro. Patrick's appointment to manage the Press in St. Louis and later to direct the institute opened up new vista to his life and a new vision. After having worked for the rich and the privileged in schools such as Montfort and R.S.K., he plunged into the service of the handicapped and the marginalized. The experience transformed his whole outlook on what it was to be a religious Brother. Serve the under privileged and the unwanted of society and therein one will find rich reward - not material reward, but emotional and spiritual fulfillment. Thus the years in St. Louis transformed him. Providential help from NGOs such as Cardinal Leger Foundation and others helped him achieve his dreams.

At the end of his tenure in St. Louis, he requested his superiors to allow him to do social service full time and exclusively. It is to the eternal credit of his Superiors, that Bro. Patrick was given a free reign to beat a new path - a path that nobody had ever pursued before. The acclaimed services of MCDS is testament to the newly acquired passion for the underprivileged. His was an option for the poor. He got much satisfaction and his life had new meaning. Not that he spurned the admiration and the friendship of his old students, the privileged and the powerful. In fact he shrewdly used these connections to advance the cause of the poor. It was only fitting that the Good Lord call him at the peak of his activities. Well done, good and faithful servant, said the Lord, receive the reward promised to those who love the poor and the wretched.

My dear nephew, my Protege and confidant, farewell. We will meet in the Everlasting Playing Fields above, surrounded by our dear and near ones.

Chapter 26

Rev.Sr.M Vincent - Model Religious

Sr. M Vincent - Sibling sister who made life Pleasant Positive smf Prayerful
(Sr. M Vincent lived from July 10, 1924 to December 19, 2008)

Sr. Vincent had been stricken with cancer last year. Soft tissue sarcoma had attacked her leg first. A surgery removed the affected tissue and the doctors declared that if the illness did not appear in any other part of the body in the next eighteen months, she would be considered free of that cancer. Unfortunately in November 2008, she had breathing problems, and while in the hospital, doctors discovered that the same cancer had spread to her lungs and was creeping to her brain.

Pennamma, my sister , informed me on Dec. 10 that Sr. Vincent was conscious, that she could talk, and that she was eating light food. I found a ticket on that day and reached Kidangore hospital on Dec 12. I was privileged to spend a week with her.

Sr. Innocent, our niece and former Mother Superior General of The Visitation Congregation, was with Sr. Vincent constantly till the evening before her passing. She was fully conscious, would chat, would joke, would ask about everybody and participated in conversations with others.

On Dec.20, she spoke to Sr. (Dr.) Deepa when she came on her rounds. Then she turned and kept her eyes closed. At 9.20 a.m. she breathed her last peacefully. Sr. Charlie, a tutor in the Nursing College, who was attending on her that morning and who was with her in the last few hours, told me that Sr. Vincent's last minutes were absolutely peaceful.

The Visitation nuns in the communities in Kidangore looked after her lovingly and constantly while Sr. Vincent was ailing. The body was brought to her beloved Kaipuzha convent and exposed in the chapel that she loved and where she had spent a great part of her life. The nuns and relatives, as also hundreds of well-wishers came to pay their respects. Archbishop emeritus Kunnacherry prayed the Office of the Dead and spoke briefly about

Sr. Vincent.

On Dec.20, Monsignor Vellian, The Vicar General of Kottayam, officiated at the farewell prayer service in the convent chapel. The body was carried by the reverend sisters outside the chapel and handed over to the family members who carried the mortal remains to St. George's Church, Kaipuzha. A sung Mass was concelebrated by dozens of priests. Fr. T. Tharayil, the parish priest of Kaipuzha, spoke simply and lovingly about Sr. Vincent. Mar Moolakattu, the Archbishop of Kottayam, spoke about his association with Sr. Vincent, and presided over the final prayers and interment. Hundreds of people were in the church to pay their respects to Sr. Vincent.

Sr. Vincent, nee Achamma, had joined the Visitation Congregation in 1942. She had her religious vestition on April 26, 1944, followed the next year by her first vows. She made her perpetual profession on Feb 11, 1951. Sr. Vincent worked as teacher in various places and after her retirement from schools, continued her service in onerous responsibilities. She was efficient; she was a leader; she loved her congregation; she was assistant superior till very recently. She was generous to a fault. Always pleasant, always positive, always prayerfully hopeful, she lived the simple life of a nun. As Mar Moolakattu said, she managed to find freedom in her vows of poverty, obedience and chastity. The dozens of persons who visited her in the hospital, and hundreds who came to her funeral are a testament to her gregarious and charitable nature.

As her siblings we mourn her passing. But she lived a full and prayerful life, convinced in her faith and her vocation. We are honored to have been associated with such a simple and noble person.

May the soul of Sr. Vincent find peace in the heavenly reward she faithfully yearned. May she enjoy eternal bliss in the company of our kith and kin who had preceded her. And may we all be worthy to join them eventually. (I hope to write at length about her at a later date.)

Chapter 27

Babychan - The Enabler

The Return of the Native - Who made lives of others better- A Tribute

Babychan, the youngest son of my eldest sister Mariamma Chamakala, has gone to his eternal rest. He was not yet 65 when he died of a massive heart attack. Babychan did all things well. He stayed home under the tutelage of his father and learned not only the art of agriculture, but also community service. His father, a heart patient, died prematurely at the age of 69, in Babychan's arms. Babychan and Kunjumol looked after my sister, and fulfilled every desire of hers. Babychan built a magnificent house in the spot of the old ancestral home, so his family and his siblings could find a home of comfort and opulence.

Babychan did not sit back and enjoy the fruits of his labor. Instead he spent much time in community service. On the urging of several friends and admirers, he became a Panchayath member, in which capacity he worked tirelessly, night and day, for the uplift of Kaipuzha and Neendoor and adjacent places. He devoted his energies and resources for the less fortunate, not only in his ward, but all through the villages. His service was not confined to his fellow Christians, but also to other religions, regardless of caste or creed. In 2000 when he relocated to Dallas, a lot of his benefices were heart broken.

Babychan and Kunjumol worked in USA for less than 18 years. But during those years, they managed to put their two sons Kochumon (simon) and Mathukutty through high school and college, to get them jobs, to marry them, to help them with their first homes, to help bring up their children. Even while in USA, he did not forget the poor. He organized the St. Vincent de Paul Society of the Knanaya Catholic Church, collected funds and sent thousands of dollars to the needy. Babychan, having done his duty by his family wanted to return to Kaipuzha which was his world, where he had his roots, where he was recognized and appreciated. Thus, the native returned home to Kaipuzha. He was certain that it would be possible to commute between India and America, and get the benefits of both. The expectations

were modest: Modest because he did not want elected office; but wanted to serve the people. He was a natural leader. He knew how to get the cooperation of people. Thus he invited a few friends and neighbors to clean the canal of debris and floating flora and fauna. More than two dozen persons volunteered and did the job in record time, and made a celebration of it. He helped with drinking water pipes, planting trees, maintaining roads, beautifying the premises of the church which he helped build- all on his initiative, all out of a sense of service. This was the dream of the native son, who returned home to his world. However he could serve barely three years the community he so loved.

We all miss Babychan. He was an amalgam of several clans: Tharayil-Chamakalayil, Pathyil-Kalluvelil, Makil-Pannivelil. Babychan was not just a member of these clans, but an active, involved, participant. Whether it be a wedding, a birthday, a funeral, any function of these clans, Babychan attended and actively served. Babychan was not a great conservationist; he did not sit to debate philosophical propositions. Babychan was a doer, an organizer, a leader of action and activities.

Babychan's love of his kith and kin was so obvious and effusive and so sincere. Not only did he show his love and solicitude towards his wife and sons and their families, he was expansive towards his cousins and nephews and nieces.

All considered Babychan a special relative, a friend, a helper, someone one could depend on. The sense of loss that we all feel is precisely because we all individually have felt the radiance of his smile, and the legendary hospitality of Babychan and Kunjumol. Each of us have stories to tell of Babychan's affection. For instance, after the family get-together in Dubai, my wife and I went to Kerala for a brief visit in 1999. Our intention was to stay in Little Flower, though Theyamma Pengal was still in Dubai. But Babychan would not let us stay alone in Little Flower. He cajoled us to stay with him in Chamakala. During that brief stay, we experienced the love and care that only the closest relative could have showered on us. In fact when parents of our future daughter in law came to visit us, Kunjumol and Babychan gave them a grand reception. Others came to visit us and Babychan was effusive in his reception. Everyone in the clans have similar experiences with Babychan. Thus we mourn his passing, because this is a great loss to the family and to the community.

"It does not matter how long one lives, but how well you do it", said Martin Luther King. By that measure Babychan's was a rich life, though much too short. Yes, we are perhaps selfish; but we wanted a few more years of Babychan, the ever radiant, the most loving, and the most serviceable person.

Our Lord said "Whatever you did to one of the least of my brothers and sisters, you did it to me" Therefore "Come you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the

world." Farewell Babychan. Go to your eternal abode, there to live forever in the company of your parents and ancestors.

Au Revoir, my Babychan

Chapter 28

Pennamma - Requiem for a Life well Lived

My sister, Pennamma, has gone to her eternal reward. Her children, many grandchildren, great grandchildren, siblings, cousins, and the extended families are in deep sorrow. The home where she lived is empty. We will go to the kitchen where she had a chair to supervise the cooks, and find it stands vacant. The dining room where she piled gourmet food for near and dear and strangers, where she regaled all with laughter and fun is empty. The bedroom where she cuddled her children and their children is bereft of her presence. The sit-out where she entertained family and friends is silent. The road to Mannattuparampil on which every day dozens of cars wound their way to see her, ply no more. The ancestral home is desolate.

Pennamma married Philip Mannattuparampil on April 29, 1949. Ever since then she was an integral member of not only the family, but the island of Paravanthuruthu, as well as Kallara. Through family connections and her husband's popularity as also Pennamma's affectionate care for neighbors and strangers, she was known all over the area. She was not just a housewife. Especially after the untimely passing of her beloved husband, she managed the affairs of the family, the vast holdings of fields, the many servants, and frequent visitors with enthusiasm and care. Whether it be the poor families in the vicinity, her numerous family members, politicians, priests, bishops, nuns- all received of her unstinting generosity. Pennamma helped the needy, not only in the neighborhood, but to all and sundry. No one who asked for help, went away empty handed. She gave from the heart, and all those who received of her generosity remembered her magnanimity. She gave and gave, and never tired of giving. Pennamma gave "in full measure, pressed down and running over". She was the quintessential giver.

Pannamma's children loved her to death. In sickness and in health, they

supported her without a whisper of reluctance. They were willing and ready to take her to any doctor, any hospital, any country to make her whole and healthy. They showered her with affection and consideration. Her every wish was their command. In fact they anticipated her desires and catered to her every whim and fancy.

One cannot say enough of her love for her own family. In addition, The Pathyil family was her constant concern and care. Pennamma was also the connecting link with the Pannivelil clan. She was instrumental in organizing get-togethers for the clan members. They will all, individually and collectively, miss her presence. Her joie de vivre, her ebullience, her optimism, her love of life, made Pennamma unique.

Eight Six years seem long. But in the case of Pennamma, those years were well used. She was a legend in her own life. With her passing an important chapter in my life and in the lives of many, closes.

Well done, good and faithful servant... Your grieving brother .. Up-pachan. (Joseph Pathyil)

Chapter 29

On Departures and Farewells

Musings on the passing away of a dear classmate James Manthuruthil on 19 April 2022

(Written on 19 April 2022)

The last few weeks have jolted us with a string of deaths. First my brother in law (Mathai Kunnakkatt) died in Montreal at the ripe of age of 97, on March 3, 2022.

Then came the shocking news of the death of a dear friend, Alex Kokkatt of London, Ontario, who dropped dead in the vicinity of our condo in Florida on March 19, 2022.

On March 23, 2022 Thomas Kutty, my nephew, passed away , too young to go.

The death of Rosamma Sebastian Mundamplackal , a friend in Toronto and Florida, was expected. Rosamma had cancer and her husband Babychan had looked after her for two years, willing and wishing her to get back to some semblance of health. But her time had come and the family had to let her go on April 13, 2022.

Thommachan Vanchipurackal (Bro. Adrian OFM.Cap) my neighbor in Kaipuzha, passed away recently.

And, today, April 19, we got the shocking news of the sudden death of James Manthuruthil.

Jimmy, as I had called him for over 80 years, was a classmate and companion of mine in Kaipuzha. We walked to school together; we waded in the rain water on our way to school and home; we laughed and frolicked; we talked about everything and anything. (Chacko Manthuruthil, the father of Jimmy, revered by all in Kaipuzha, and Abraham Pathyil, my father, were the two central figures who were responsible for the success of the founding convention of Knanaya Catholic Congress in 1938.)

Jimmy and I had gone our separate ways in 1947. Then we met up again about 40 years later, and renewed our friendship. By this time Jimmy had a Ph.D. in Metallurgical Engineering from a top university in Germany and

had settled in Brampton, where he worked as a scientist in a Bottling Plant.

Jimmy was a rational human being. His years of training as a scientist enabled him to analyze everything. Whether it be politics, community affairs, or religion, Jimmy had thought through things; he had read voraciously; he listened to arguments and reasoning; and he drew conclusions.

We visited him and Thankamma more often than they coming to our place. They loved to entertain. Jimmy preferred long visits, leisurely conversations; he would give one a tour of his garden. He had a story for every rose bush. He would painstakingly describe how he protected his plants from the rigors of Canadian weather. And once inside the house, he would take one to his cellar where he had a variety of bottles of wine. Each bottle was unique. Jimmy was a connoisseur. It was a pleasure listening to his descriptions of aroma, and taste and bouquet. Then, a glass in hand, we would delve into our past; remembering our old school, the teachers, their peculiarities, and some of the classmates, long gone or forgotten. Jimmy was an admirer of Kaipuzha – a village that does not exist now (if it ever existed). His romantic notions of the school must have made his brother Jose and the siblings to spend an enormous amount of money to rebuild the old St. George's School.

It was only a few days ago that we chatted over the phone and exchanged news of our ailments. I described my cardiac conditions, and he elaborated on his failing kidneys. He did not want dialysis, if it ever came to that. Jimmy was an independent minded person. In spite of failing health, he drove to shopping centers and doctors' offices. We kidded each other wondering who would be the first to go. But little did I think that he would fall in the bathroom and meet his Maker.

I will miss the long conversations, the gentle clash of ideas, the solicitude with which Jimmy would inquire about my wellbeing, his incessant curiosity about matters concerning the community, and his genuineness in everything he said and did.

Our most sincere condolences to Thankamma, Jimmy's beloved wife, as also to Dr. Sachin, his much loved son, and all the members of Manthuruthil and Kunncharry families.

May Jimmy rest in eternal peace.

Farewell my friend. "The rest is silence".(Joseph Pathyil)

Part V

Bridge - Game of Life ... Playing to Living

Bridge - Game of Life ... Playing to Living

This part highlights how to remain happy and live life by remaining connected. The Diary Notings are masterpieces of learning to write one and experience life.

By reaching out to people around and beyond, exploring places and building up reciprocatory relationship wherever life takes one to, one becomes partners in one another's joys and sorrow by lending one's ever reliable shoulders for others to lean on.

An avid Bridge player, Joe has been able to build a network of friends thru the game of Bridge. The lateral spin off from this game took Joe and family for globe trotting trips across different continents and countries. Out of these experiences, there emerges beautiful Diary notings from Joe Pathyil.

There is a saying "Chess is the game of gods and Bridge the game of lords"

In a sense, life can be looked at as a mix of both. In the game of chess, there is a general opinion that one tests his/her skill and understanding with that of one's opponent which is not true entirely- a chessplayer actually plays mostly against his/her self and mental capacity and not the opponent. Similarly in life one remains a recluse or an island engrossed within oneself all through life. One can see it all around us- be it in work place, or in religious pursuit or in sports.

Whereas in the game of Bridge, one learns to reach out to his/her partner with communication, together respond to the opponent's play. In life, when one reaches out beyond oneself, life gets a different hue and flavour for all.

There are bridges for everyone to connect with time distance space and people, to connect with ideas, thoughts and deeds, to connect with emotions, passions, joys and sorrows

The key to joyful living is to bridge across...

One begins to move and progress the moment one finds his or her way to these bridges..leaving behind the road travelled hitherto to step into the tomorrow to where it takes...

Aren't we islands until then...?

Chapter 30

1967- A crucial year in my life

I was principal of schools in India from 1957 to 1966. In 1966 I went to Europe on a study tour. I was to return to India in February 1967. While in Rome, in mid-January 1967 on a whim I walked in to the Canadian Embassy and asked to see the Immigration official. I enquired if I could immigrate to Canada. Normally my application had to originate in New Delhi, he told me. However since I was in Rome, he asked me to fill the necessary application form, which I did.

A week later I had a phone call from the Embassy asking me to appear there with a chest X-Ray. I secured my immigration visa on January 26, 1967. I requested Air India agent in Rome to reroute my ticket to Montreal, which he did via New York. Thus I arrived at Dorval airport on January 31, 1967.

No one waited for me in Montreal or in Canada. However I had met several Canadians in Europe, many of them Quebecois, who told me about the highly anticipated centenary celebrations of Canada and about Expo '67. Therefore when the Canadian Embassy official asked where in Canada I intended to settle, I did not hesitate. It was to be Montreal. But the cold and the snow and the howling arctic wind were new experiences for me. The bus driver who took me downtown asked in which hotel I was staying. I said, "the cheapest". So he dropped me off in front of the YMCA on Drummond Street. I stayed there for 2 days.

I had the address of the Montreal Catholic School Commission. The next day I found my way to 3737 Sherbrooke East. The sidewalk was slippery, but I saw people hurrying to the nearest metro. So I stopped by a shoe store to ask why I was slipping and sliding. He looked at my polished shoes and smiled. He suggested that I buy a pair of "rubbers" to slip over my shoes. This I did (\$1/) and I was on my way. The personnel officer at MCSC was kind and hospitable. After a leisurely interview he told me I was hired. However there was a Province-wide strike by the teachers of Quebec. As soon

as the strike would be over, I would have a teaching position. I was happy, but I worried about how I would manage in the interim. I relocated to a rooming house on St. Denis street near Sherbrooke east for \$9 a week.

Then I found a job as a substitute teacher in Montreal Prep School, where I worked odd hours till the strike was over on February 21, 1967. I was asked to teach in St. Joseph's School, in Park Extension, Montreal, (and subsequently in John F. Kennedy School, and much later in St. Pius X School.)

1967 was the centenary of Confederation and the highlight of the celebration was Expo '67. The world exhibition opened in April 1967 and ran for six months. I bought a "passport" that allowed one unlimited access to "Man and His World".

I spent many hours every week visiting pavilions, meeting people, and just relaxing on the two islands on St. Lawrence. Emperors and potentates, Queens and Kings, Presidents and Prime Ministers, people of every walk from everywhere came to Montreal. Millions came from The United States, tens of thousands came from Europe, Asia, Far and Middle East. "Hey friend, say friend, come on over..." was the theme song that invited the world to Canada, the second largest country on the planet with a mere 20.4 million people.

And they came, not just to Montreal, but also to see and experience Quebec, Ottawa, Toronto, Niagara Falls, Vancouver and places in between. Canada, in short, was the cynosure of the world during that brief heady year.

On August 26 of that year Josephine and I were married in St. Francis of Assisi Church in Park Extension. Thus began a fifty year romance that still goes steady. Canada has been good to us and our sons. We are enormously grateful to Canada and we consider this our land, our own country. And we like to think that Josie as a nurse, and I as an educator and political and community activist have contributed our mite to shape the mosaic of Canada.

As we celebrate the 150th anniversary of our Confederation, we look on 1967 as a pivotal year not only for our country, but also for us personally.

((Written in 2017).

Chapter 31

Eva - Fountain of Human Goodness

Friend on the Bridge of Life

My friendship with Eva was of recent origin. It is hardly seven years since we started playing bridge, which developed into friendship between our families, visits to each other, and of course, the journey of discovery in her loving company two years ago to Austria and Hungary .

It was in Europe that I realized how much she had undergone, and how she had survived tragedies and hardships. My understanding of Eva and admiration for her grew with that visit. I have written elsewhere about my days in Europe with her and Peter and Regina and Ruth... and all her old friends. What a rich experience, such rare honour to witness first hand her past, her organizational skills, and her tenacity.

She repeated that it would be her last visit to Europe and to her past. Though I tried to protest, we all knew that she knew the truth about her dreaded illness.

She was fiercely protective of those whom she loved. The children -the three of them- and the grandchildren were primary in her scheme of things. I knew of the fights and quarrels that sometimes ensued as a result and which she narrated to me. But she protected those whom she loved - sometimes even when they did not need protection.

Eva was full of affection for those who had the good fortune to be her friends. I was one such lucky person. Yes, we did fight, we walked away from each other. But we would come back to each other. We were both control freaks and that led to some pretty interesting episodes. However, we loved each other's company and got back after very short duration of pouting and

pretension.

I cannot describe how much I miss her. To me she was a generous, giving, unselfish, well-wisher. Of course she would not brook anyone else taking me away from her for bridge or whatever. I had the privilege of analyzing and speaking out loud to her my assessments about things. She would listen with curiosity, though she might not always agree with me. We spent more time with each other (on computer) than we did with our spouses.

In the last few years she waited for my call to begin a few hours of bridge-a game in which she was so far superior to me, but she wanted me to come up to her standard. Numerous were the notes that she would write for me to improve my bidding techniques. But undisciplined as I am, and not too serious about the game, I used to disappoint her. Nothing daunted, she would continue to be my partner and my booster and cheer-leader.

When the family asked me to take anything from her home as a memento, I chose a picture from her den because I knew that she used to stare at it as we were playing bridge and she was frustrated with my bidding or my moods. I have hung it up above my computer as a reminder of my dear Eva.

I am thankful to Monika for phoning me as soon as her dear mother passed away. I am very grateful to Lisa for keeping us together in spite of ourselves. Peter was his mother's strength, and our guide and companion in Vienna and Budapest. To the three, to their spouses and children and others, our very sincere thanks. I hope we will keep in touch.

Whether we went to New York or India or Malaysia for a few days I always told her and she insisted on my contact numbers. She was solicitous of my whereabouts and phone numbers and kept in touch with each other. Oh how much I miss my friend Eva.

Chapter 32

Travelogue Malaysia India 2001

Diary Notings

September 8, 2001, 10.15 a.m.GMT

We are in the “Comfort and Care Station”, where, in theory, one should be able to doze off till it is time to board the next plane. But even I, accustomed to sleeping through most noises and disturbances, cannot do it. Babies screaming, children running around, people talking above the din, the air-conditioning in the room working overtime and one can only resort to writing to while away the time.

Vince had dropped us off at Pearson International Airport in Toronto little after 5 p.m. The luggage has been booked all the way to Kuala Terengganu where we are to be the guests of Dr. Surendra Menon. We are going to meet Menon and his family for the first time. Menon is an acquaintance I met on the Internet while playing bridge. When we met some time ago and told him of our plan to visit Malaysia, he insisted on our coming to his place. Thus our plan to be in Malaysia for a week on our way to India.

Why India, at this time? For one, September 21 will mark 25 years since my father died. My brother and I want to be in Kaipuzha to commemorate the date. One of my brothers will turn 75 on September 23. These and other excuses inevitably attract us to India. I have lived in Canada longer than in India. But the pull takes us to India every few years. We are very happy to visit India, and even happier to return home to Canada.

I am reading a bridge book by the world famous bridge player Zia Mo-hamood (Incidentally this is one of the gifts I am taking to Menon, autographed by Zia himself, whom I met in Toronto in July during the Bridge National Competition). Zia says this: “Throughout my years spent abroad, I had always looked forward to regular visits back home even though the number of days spent there have been few by comparison, I have always identified closely with my country of birth, and I have always thought of it as home.... I am not sure why my loyalties are so strong. Perhaps it's connected to the nostalgia of seeing the house I lived as a child, the warmth

of greeting family and friends. It might be no more than sentimentality, but maybe it's something deeper, an inseparable bond with a culture to which I belong yet hardly know". My sentiments exactly.

Coincidentally, Dr. Menon's son is flying back from a business trip from London to KL. Of course I have not met him yet. When I asked Menon how I would recognize Vinod, he said "fair, beak nosed, crew cut ... he will find you". When I got the boarding pass at the Malaysian Airlines Counter here in London, I told the personable young man - Mohan Singh - about Vinod and he has left a note for him to seek us out. Mohan Singh was born in UK 33 years ago. Since we both had some time to kill, we fell to talking. He does not like the stereotyped portrayal of Indians in the movie "East is East". And he is still looking around for a compatible girl, not necessarily of Punjabi origin, as he himself is. However, he does go to his ancestral home in Ludhiana every few years - unlike Frank and Vince.

Frank, my eldest, simply says "No" to going to India even though Mary-Ann, his wife wants to go and visit her grandmother and other relatives. Vince, the second son, has no such vehement sentiments against visiting India, but he has not thought of it as a priority. One hopes, that one-day, they will visit the land of their ancestors.

A coffee and a tea cost \$4.00 at the Heathrow Airport and they gave me change in UK currency!!

I already miss bridge!! Somerset Maugham wrote: "Bridge is the most intelligent and diverting game that the wit of man has ever devised. I would have children taught it as a matter of course. You can play bridge as long as you can sit up at the table and tell one card from the other. In fact, when all else fails, bridge remains".

September 9: - The beak nosed son of Menon never showed up. (However when we sought where to board the Malaysian Airline, I asked a young man whether that was the line-up to Malaysian Airlines and he said "Yes". I am almost certain that is Vinod.) The service in Malaysian Airlines is excellent, on a par with the best. After 12 hours of comfortable flight (as comfortable as an economy class can make it, given that Mohan Singh kindly assigned us seats to stretch our legs) we arrived in Kuala Lumpur. British Government can take lessons from its former colony of Malaya, where Malaysia Government has built a reasonably efficient, spacious, clean and classy airport, a tent design absolutely spic and span. We have three hours to kill before we board the plane to Kuala Terrangannu. Incidentally the word "Kuala" means estuary. Lumpur is swamp. We flew over Lake Korson (??), the biggest man made lake in South Asia, bigger in size than Singapore, with its ecological consequences.

We arrived in Terrangannu at 11 a.m. Dr. Sir Sunrendranath Menon was waiting for us at the airport. The luggage that was booked directly from Toronto to Terrangannu arrived with us. Menon looked just like his picture

on the internet. We embraced as if we were long-lost friends. He took us to his clinic, where Usha his wife who herself is a doctor and who helps him in his practice, was waiting to meet us. We chatted with them between visiting patients. Eva Marcovici, a very good friend of mine on internet bridge had sent e-mail about something care of Menon. She called later in the evening and brought us up to date with our plan for hosting a dinner for bridge people in Montreal in August of next year.

We went to the Menons' house where a sumptuous lunch awaited us. They have an Indonesian live-in-maid who does every household work, including cooking and cleaning. And then we started chatting. Today (September 10) we are still talking. Suren had to go to the clinic for a couple of hours and returned in the evening. We went for dinner to an open-air food court, where the Menons ordered us Malay, Chinese and more Malay food. Fish, hot, spicy, fried on banana leaf, barbecued shishkabab on a stick, boiled rice, pineapple drink etc. etc. This was a simple, unassuming place. But the food was delicious. We had driven around some of the richest areas, where the wealthy live near a golf course. We also saw the houses of Malays: tin roofs, the whole house on stilts. The Chinese houses are different. Being merchants mostly, the shops are in front; storage at the back; living quarters upstairs, extending all the way to the river, which is used to receive all the effluence.. We drove to the beach near the Menons.. South China Sea: The sand is white, the water calm, and, except for the occasional walker, deserted.

Later at night we sat around the dining room table and talked till 2 a.m. The intimate exchanges, that only the night seems to bring out: family tensions, and father-son relationships, as also the biographies of each one, took us to 2 a.m. We had missed two nights sleep. But that did not matter, as the heart-felt communication was so absorbing and important for all of us. Needless to say, we had to force ourselves to retire for a few hours rest.

September 10:- Vikram, the second son of the Menons, lives with them. Apart from pursuing his studies, he is also involved in several business deals. At 23, he is a wheeler-dealer, with connections to the rich and the powerful. He is bound to go far. Malaysian Political System seems to be fascinating. The country achieved independence from the British in 1957. Thirteen states joined into a Federation. These states except Penang and Malacca, which were British Trading posts, had been ruled by Sultans. After independence these Sultans were retained as titular heads of states, they are independently rich and also have privy purses. They select one among them as the king of all Malaysia every five years. Malaysian population is a mix of three ethnic groups: the Malays-Bhoomi Puthras- Sons of the soil are about 53%, Chinese form about 35%, and 7% is of Indian origin. The Indians, mostly Tamils were brought at the time of the 20th century as workers in rubber plantation owned by the British Industrialists. Most stayed on to do menial work, and prospered. Chinese came from mainland China through the century and were tin-mine workers, traders and businessmen. They are the richest group. The

Malays, though the majority are given special privileges to own property, to get Government subsidy, to gain easier admission to universities. It seems to me that when independence was declared and the Constitution enacted, Tunku Sambanthan, the leader of the Indians was either bought or duped to sign the special deal for Malays.

The country has done better than many other newly independent colonies. In the 70's and 80's with the discovery of oil, (run by Petronas, the company that operates the oil business is a government corporation,) has made Malaysia rich. Rubber plantation are being replaced by Palm Oil Plantations.

Josie volunteered to cook "Fish Moilly" and Usha and the maid took immediate advantage to learn the dish and probably other gourmet dishes that she has the time to demonstrate.

Malaysia is officially an "Islamic" state. In the recent past fundamentalism is coming to the fore, and threatens to shake the very foundation of the difficult coexistence forged in the country.

Sunrendranath Menon's father, Mr.M.K.Nair, came from Palghat, in Kerala, in the early thirties when still in his late teens. He, along with his brother and sister - except one who stayed back in Palghat who could not come a WWII intervened for him to find passage to Malaysia - started working in estates. Life was difficult, but they at least had jobs, and because of their hard work and smarts, worked their way up to managerial position. That was when WWII started. Japan conquered China, occupied Indonesia, Singapore and Malaya. The Indian workers in Malaysia knew how to adapt to situations. Mr. M.K. Nair learned Japanese within a month, and was appointed one of the official interpreters for the occupying Japanese forces.

In the meantime dispute raged in India among the freedom fighters as to the best means to achieve independence. Gandhiji affirmed that only non-violent actions can achieve the best and the most moral victory. Subash Chandra Bose asserted that the British only understood violence. Bose fell out with the rest of the Congress leadership, escaped to Germany, tried to negotiate with Hitler, failed and managed to find his way to Japan and ended in Malaya. He mobilized the Indian expatriates, formed a rag-tag army, and prepared to march with the Japanese army when it would invade India. Mr. Nair, joined the Indian National Army (INA) and became an ardent follower of Netaji (as Bose was known). The Allied Army drew its best forces to Burma under the command of Admiral Mount Batten and stopped the Japanese forces. After the surrender of Germany, and the atom bomb dropped on Hiroshima and Nargasaki, Japan surrendered. Bose went to Japan and died in mysterious circumstances. INA was disbanded. Nair resumed normal life. Suren Menon (Nairs being matriarchal lineage got the name of his mother's maiden name of Menon) completed his high school education in Malaysia, was sent to Christian College -one of the foremost colleges along with Loyola in Madras,- and went for medicine in Tanjore

Medical College. He graduated there and met and married Usha who was also a student in the same medical college. They were in their mid twenties. They returned to Malaya, which by now had become Malaysia and decided to practice medicine in Kuala Terrangannu. Subsequently he went to England and did his MRCP and returned to practice in Terrangannu. Though he is by training a cardiologist, his knowledge of the various medical branches simply amazes me. He practices also general medicine, and abhors surgical practices such as angioplasty. He is convinced that in most cases heart ailments can be cured through drugs, exercise and diet. Usha helps in his practice. An unassuming office, they practice seven days a week from 9 a.m. to 10 at night with two breaks for lunch and an evening intermission.

September 11:- Dr. Thomas and his wife Dr. Tessy who are the neighbours of the Menons dropped in late at night for a short visit and stayed till 2 a.m. Thomas, like Suren, is a first generation Malaysian, his father having come here around the same time as Mr. Nair. He too went to India - Manipal - for his medicine. Their knowledge of India is confined to the years of their education in India, the stories narrated by their parents, and then personal readings. They both have unabashed admiration for India, probably transmitted by their parents who feel nostalgia for the motherland. I find the psychology of the exile fascinating and must explore this further tomorrow.

Suren Menon is a medical scholar of the first waters. His language, his inflexion, his very physical pose change when he talks about medicine. He is also extremely curious about other things - from the geography of Kerala to Arab-Israel relationships. He writes poems as one of his hobbies along with bridge on the internet. Incidentally he also advises freely a lot of people on medical conditions on the net.

Usha took us to visit the fruit market. At 11 a.m. the market which opens at 5 a.m. was almost ready to close. As in many other places, Chinese like to pick their own fruit. Doarian was one of those specialties that Josie tried a couple of days ago and after two bites decided against further adventure with that fruit. The taste is mushy, and the stink is horrendous.

Suren decided to take us through some of the outlying villages to visit one of his patients. The villages are very green - fruit trees, gardens, tin-roofed houses, interspersed with the occasional luxury homes; the rural road system is unexpectedly good. Older houses are on stilts. We reached the 89 year old man's home at about 2 p.m. He had lost his right leg to gangrene. But he goes around on a specially equipped motorbike. The Old man was pleased as punch at the visit of his beloved doctor. The visit was brief but both were pleased and we were even more pleased. We reached home for a very late lunch and decided to nap. It was after that and when I was on the computer that Vinod called from KL to alert us on the horrible tragedy in NY and Washington. We have been glued to CNN ever since. What evil

minds that could master- mind and execute such abhorrent acts.

September 12:- We reluctantly pulled away from T.V. and drove by the coastal road towards Seremban; where Mr. Nair- lives. The 500 k.m. drive was interesting. The two sections of the Malaysia economy- oil palm and petroleum - were visible all through. We also stopped at a rubber plantation to compare it with the rubber estates of India.

We reached Seremban at about 6.30 p.m. Vidhya, the charming daughter of the Menons, had come from KL where she studies to meet us. The Nairs had gone to the temple for a brief visit. Soon after we reached, they returned to greet us. Krishnan Nair was born in 1916, and came to Malaya in 1933. Most of his life was spent in rubber and oil palm plantations- first as a labourer and then as a manager. He has done well for himself and for his children. He, along with his 71 year old wife live a healthy, hearty life. It was 4 years ago in N.J. when he was visiting his son and contracted chicken pox , that he visited a doctor for the first time in his life. A very sumptuous dinner awaited us. Krishnan Nair's younger brother dropped in on us. We went to visit his family after dinner.(He offered us a drink. Krishnan Nair had promised his mother before he left India that he would never touch alcohol. He, as also Suren, keep his promise.) It was a long day and we retired to bed around midnight.

September 13:- I woke up at 6 and went for a walk with Krishnan Nair. For his age he is in excellent shape. We walked rather briskly, up and down several hillocks and did not want to return home till about 7.30. He had many stories to tell about his involvement with INA and the WWII, and also his personal family life. We all went out for a leisurely breakfast and drove to K.L. Having checked into Hyatt, we took the cab to a posh house of a friend of the Menons. Anwar is an international commodity trader. The lunch over, we sat around and talked till about 4 p.m. and drove to another house - that of the in-laws of Prem (the wife of the brother of Suren who is in N.J.) Then we took the LRT, built by SNC Lavalin of Montreal and returned to the hotel. I was happy to return to a comfortable surrounding. Vinod, the eldest son, an aerospace engineer, working in KL, came to visit us. He was indeed the same person whom I had seen in London .. I could hardly keep my eyes open and he left with his parents for a late dinner and we chose to sleep.

September 14:- We bade goodbye to the Menons as they had to drive back to KT. We walked around the grounds of the comfortable hotel, which unfortunately is isolated from the city of KL. In the afternoon a tour guide took us on a quick visit of the city. He had a captive audience of the two of us! We were not keen on getting out from the air conditioned comfort of the van in to the inferno . So we saw the twin tower (a bomb scare yesterday forced an evacuation), the petronas tower, the monuments etc got quick visits from us. KL is different from the villages and towns that we had

visited. We decided to see a few places tomorrow.

September 15:- We went to the Sunshine Pyrammid - an upscale shopping centre where Vidhya joined us. Josie bought a few pairs of shoes - excellent ones, at good prices-. Then we decided to have lunch atop the Petronas Tower's revolving restaurant. Late in the evening we said goodbye to Vidhya and left the hotel for the airport to fly to Chennai. Security was tight, I think due to the disaster in USA.

Bro. Patrick, my nephew, and Kuttan, his nephew- were waiting for us at the terminal. Mathaikunju and Susy, having visited Lisa in Japan, and after seeing the country side and city of Tokyo had come by an earlier flight. By the time we reached Br. Pat's residence it was past midnight. Thank God he has an air conditioned room ! We exchanged notes and decided to sleep at around 2 a.m.

September 16. It is almost like being at home. We went to the Basilica of St. Thomas for the 9.30 Mass, that turned out to be a mistake. The Director General of Propoganda Fide in Rome is here and the parish priest of the Cathedral has decided to give him a hearty welcome- as he expects to get a substantial contribution from Rome for the renovation of the old basilica. I am not sure if they overplayed their hand. But Mgr. Prince, from Ontario, valiantly sweated through the 2 hour ceremony. We stopped in San Thome Higher Sec School to meet an old friend of mine -Br. Thomas Tolentino. Though disabled - he needs a walker to move around- he still does very useful work. Several of my grand nieces who are studying in various colleges are with us for the day. Tessy's daughter Sneha;Tommykunju's children: Deepa and Tina; late Cici's daughter-Maria.. all spent the day with us. In the evening we drove to the beach and saw some of the places where Br. Pat's social workers toil. Then we dropped the girls off at various institutions. We had a long chat with the Principal of Stella Maris College. Sr. Annamma Philip heads the most prestigious women's collerge in India. She had come to Mississauga to meet some of her alumni. Unfortunately we were not aware of that. Mini Paulose, the mother of Mar-Ann is an old student of this college. The Provincial Superior of the Brothers and a few of his companions joined us for dinner. A good day..

September 17: Sara Chellam and her husband came to take the ladies to the exclusive saree shops. My brother and I were happy to see them go.. They have the credit cards and we have peace! We sat in at the office of MCDAS, founded and directed by Br. Pat. The heads of several of his projects told us about the integrated social work that they do in the slums of Chennai. A Herculean task, that needs dedication and planning. The belief that drives them is that slum dwelling is an inevitable result of urbanization. Rather than fight slums, do something to make their "tomorrows better". And they seem to succeed. Children, drop-outs, teen-agers, handicapped ones, women, - all these are catered to in various ways.

The Archbishop of Chennai (the old name being Madras) is a personal

friend of mine . We were to meet him today. But his Secretary messed up the appointment...or Pat got it wrong... We will meet him on our return in November or so. I bought a few shirts and-on the spur of the moment decided to get a suit stitched. I hope it is not a rash decision.

September 18:- We went to visit some of the projects of MCDS. Handicapped children who need constant attention, children who need help in their studies, women who are at the mercy of their husbands, children who are labourers- all these and more are helped.

We went to Chigelpet to visit Br. Selvanathan, a student of mine, who is the principal of a large school. He and his team had prepared a special feast for us. We were happy to meet each other. He made me promise to return to the school in November to address the whole school – in Tamil!!

When we returned to Pat's place I called Archbishop Arul Das James who requested us to meet him immediately. We packed and proceeded to the Archbishop's residence for a hearty visit. We are friends from 1957. Then to Central station where we boarded the train to Kottayam. Air conditioned facility of the sleep class was a welcome surprise.

September 19: A lot of our nephews and others were waiting for us at the Railway station. It was good to see them all. We drove straight to my sister's house. She had recently lost her husband to cancer ten months ago and her son in law to failed kidney two years ago and is still in grief. We will stay here in Little Flower till we leave Kerala. A beautiful house, and all imaginable comforts, and only a few yards away from my ancestral home. My brother and his wife stay there till they leave on October 5th. So it is going to be fun. My sisters -Annamma, Sr. Vincent and Pennamma came to be with us for the day. Our two brothers – Chackochan and Thommykunju- too came. It was almost 9 p.m. when they left. It is good to be home.

September 20: We went to church at 6.30 and went to Sr. Vincent's convent for breakfast. I had studied here 60 odd years ago. Not much has changed in this place.. The school, garden, chapel, convent building – all seem to have remained much as I left it more than half a century ago. Indeed Kaipuzha seems to be frozen in time. All of the changes the world over has bypassed Kaipuzha. Of course they rebuilt the church. Some of the roads have improved imperceptibly. More houses have mushroomed. This village has more of its sons and daughters abroad than any single village in India. They are in America, Canada, Germany, The Middle East- and elsewhere. The expatriates return to visit their folk. Some build immense mansions with the hope of one day living here. Hardly anyone has returned for good. Who knows if some will... My ancestral home that was the envy of the neighborhood then is an antique structure now. But it is quite livable, as needed repairs were done recently. We visited Cinema Cheduthy – 90 years old- and the matriarch of the Tharayil clan in the Kaipuzha hospital. Theyamma has contributed to building a room in memory of her husband. From there to Caritas where Fr. George Pathyil – my cousin- whom we

had feared we would not see as he was dying of internal bleeding only a few months ago- is comfortably settled among the senior priests of Kottayam. He looks better than the last time I saw him . I am sure the salubrious climate of this area, as also the loving care of his near and dear contribute to his good health. I was very pleased to meet Mgr. Peter Uralil who was our guest in Montreal almost 30 years ago. He recognized both of us and his aides were surprised that he started talking to us.

September 21: This was the day for which we came. My father had died 25 years ago today. As my brother and I had never before joined for the commemoration, we had decided to be here. All the children went to the parish church for Mass. There was, but we visited our family tomb and prayed . Then we went to Aripparampil where we spent the greater part of the day. Kunjachachan – my surviving maternal uncle- a millionaire in his own right- joined us. In the afternoon the ladies went to Kottayam shopping and I decided to stay in Little Flower . For the first time in many days I was alone... and I liked it. The feeling of being at home, of peace and contentment lasted for a few precious minutes until someone came to visit with me!

September 22 :- Pennamma, just 18 months older than me, is full of life and fun. Road to her place is terrible. But we still we went to spend time with her as her husband was celebrating his birthday today. Philip is no more than the vibrant person he was a few years ago. But Pennamma manages to run a household, look after her ailing husband, keep in touch with her children in UAE and in Kerala, and yet find time for her sisters and brothers. On our return we stopped to visit Annamma Kalarickal- good friend of my sister's- and who is suffering from Parkinson's disease. Thommychettan's children had gathered in the ancestral house and we joined them for dinner. But no get-together is complete without the usual items of entertainment. It was past eleven when we ate dinner. Tomorrow is another long day.

September 23:-About two hundred people had been invited to the church in Needoor and the Community Centre for the celebrations. The "manthra" for my father is not the only reason for the get-together. My brother turns seventy five today. His great grand child is being baptized today. We are also celebrating the 90th birthday of Sr. Nicholas the oldest in our clan. Br. Pat surprised all of us by his unexpected visit this morning and we must at least mention that he is turning sixty in a few days time. The church ceremonies and Mass took us to about 12.30. Then in the hall my brother cut the cake and was congratulated by the children and his kith and kin. There were dances, speeches and gifts during the lunch.

Later that evening we all assembled in Kuttampuram- the residence of Thommukunju- to have dinner with Pat.

September 24:- Thommachan Vanchipurackal – a childhood friend of mine, who is also a Capuchin brother- joined us for a few hours. Pat spent some time with us too.

September 25:- Now that the busy schedule of Kaipuzha is over, Josie and I went to Monippally to visit her folks. She will stay with her sister Mary for a few days. Sept 26. My sister Theyamma and I visited the facilities of Caritas Ayurveda Centre and decided to book a ctooage for a week starting on October 9.. We also visited James Makil, my admirable cousin, with whom I could spend hours talking about a lot of topics. In the process I skipped lunch- a great boon in a place where people incessantly stuff you with food!.

September 27:- Sr. Vincent insisted on our going to her convent for lunch. My nephew –Thomas Kutty –eldest son of Pennamma- joined us there. He has come for a week from Dubai. We went to Theyamma’s for a few hours of quality time.

September 28:- Thomykunuu, Daisy and I left for Chennai in the afternoon. Simon and his sister Linsey joined us at Ernamulam. They are the children of Molly, my niece.

September 29:- Pat was at the airport to receive us. His sister Sr. Innocent from Bangalore is already in Chennai. So are Molly and Xavierkutty. At around 11 a.m. the superior of the Jesuit house near by came to celebrate mass. The staff of MCDS had prepared a very interesting programme to felicitate Pat. His nieces too contributed to the festivities. It was a very nice programme and a cozy Mass. Sr. Innocent spoke and so did I. Walter Thevaram, the Inspector General of Police who is still hunting for Veerappan- the most wanted man in India joined us for lunch.

September 30:- We went to the Basilica of San Thome, and on to Stella Maris College to meet and wish Sneha for her birthday. Sneha is the eldest daughter of Tessy who was widowed when ten years ago her husband died in a car crash. Therefore there is much sympathy and love towards the children. (Maria and Kuttan- the children of CC who died a few years ago, are also in Madras.)

There was a public function on the beach attended by a few thousand people. A minister of the Government of Tamil Nadu made an appearance briefly. It was “Elders Day” and the blind orchestra performed for about 2 hours.

October1:- We went to Mahabalipuram for the day. This was the capital of Pallava kingdom in the 7th and 8th centuries. The remnants of the palaces, temples, sculptures etc are world famous for their clarity and beauty.

October2:- Sr. Innocent left in the morning. I decided to go to Loyola to visit my Alma Mater. I could have walked around the hostel building blindfolded. The building is of course older and need a coat of paint very badly. But the Jesuits have kept the beautiful stately trees in tact. Indeed it is surprising that more than 80 years ago they had the foresight to acquire so much land for the college. I met the Warden, and then the Principal of the college. The new building housing the MBA course and the MSW course are impressive. The relatives who were in Madras and Pat surprised me by

celebrating my birthday in anticipation.

We left in the evening by train. As Thommykunju and I were preparing the beds for the night, one of the berths fell on my forehead. It was a glancing blow. Much blood and some consternation ensued. A caring fellow traveler managed to stop the bleeding. I slept listlessly.

October 3:- Josie took one look at my forehead and went into efficient action. She patched up the wound. One hopes for early healing and no permanent scar. Today was the day when Pennamma is celebrating my birthday, Thomas Kutty's birthday and that of his nephew – all of which fall on Oct 4. But since Thomas kutty has to return to Dubai early tomorrow morning, we all met in Paranthuruthil. It was a fun-filled evening.

October 4:- Theyamma greeted me with birthday wishes and a beautiful set of juba and Mundu. We went to Peroor where the death anniversary of Mathew Vellappally was commemorated. Then we visited the beautiful house that Salvi and Philo built for themselves; then to Bapuji's and to visit the widow of Alexander Vellappally. Alex was very dear to me. Not only was his a successful businessman, he was very well known in high circles all over India. His untimely death has left a big void in my life. Then we visited the Old Age home where my cousin Fr. Vijyan and a few others are spending happy days.

The evening saw us all in Kottayam for a get-together at Job's. More entertainments, drinks, songs, speeches etc. I mentioned that 67 years I was born in Kottayam, in the home of the Makils, and that it was appropriate that James Makil was with us for the evening.

October 5:- We stopped for lunch at Thenakara. Mathaikunju and Susy left in the afternoon to Singapore, Thailand, Korea and Vancouver before flying to Montreal.

October 6:- We went to Ernakulam where Albert's wife Hessy is celebrating her 60th birthday. Albert has invited quite a few people for the occasion. We had promised Bobby and Betsy before we left Toronto that we would go for the day to felicitate their mother on her 60th. Then to Memmy luxury apartment for a brief rest and to Joppan Vellappally for supper. Joppan is a favourite of mine not merely because he is my cousin, but we had studied in Loyola together and correspond regularly.

October 7 Josie is not feeling well. So I joined Pat his senior staff who is visiting the High Ranges today. We visited Peermede Development society, and saw their work. Then to Thekady and to Anakkara where my good friend Br. John of The Cross was waiting for us. Sr. Vincent had decided this morning to accompany us. She had a good time in spite of the long stretches of places where we had to walk.

October 8:- We went to Caritas Ayurveda Centre where Dr. Bindu examined the three of us. (Theyamma is scheduled to join us for seven days .) She has prescribed separate massage therapies for each. I am looking forward to the ointment massage therapy as I have never done this before.

People extol its virtues. I have seen my father undergo the therapy and the regime that follows it. I hope it will be what it claims to be. We returned home. I went to our ancestral house to watch the sun set- a sight like no where else. The sun sets on the fields that are ready for cultivation. (It was only last week that the fields were water-logged. Huge pumps have emptied the fields; fishermen had a frolicking time catching pots-full of fish.) The glowing sun sets rapidly. But it is a daily experience to behold. Darkness comes on abruptly.

October 9:- We went to Kaduthuruthy to visit with my uncle and aunt. Though 81 years old, Kunjachachan is full of life and has many stories to tell. (Josie's cold is worse and did not join us.) The history of the Pannivelil family which is one of my last chapters is almost fully given to me by him. He spoke about the controversy regarding their ancestral tomb. It seems my grandfather should not have been buried in Kaduthurthy, since he had belonged to Kaipuzha. But Fr. Njaravelly let his body be buried in Kaduthurthy. My aunt, the wife of Joseph Kuplikat, was also buried there. Then the same priest let another body be buried in the Pannivelil tomb. This enraged my eldest uncle who decided to dig up the body and deposit it in the priest's room. Accompanied by some thugs he went to the church. But Fr. Jacob Tharayil asked him to consult a couple of prominent lawyers like Mr. Thomas Makil and Joseph Malyekal. Then tried to get the Bishop to intervene. When the Bishop was not physically available for the confrontation, a suit was filed in court. The case became a cause celebre as the Bishop himself was summoned to appear in court. It was at this time that Fr. Thomas Tharail and Fr. Thomas Choolapparampil returned from Rome to visit their old school mate Joseph Panniveli. They persuaded him to drop the charges. In return the Bishop signed a declaration giving permanent and exclusive right to bury the Pannivelil-Nelluppadathu dead in the tomb at a cost never to exceed to Rs.10.1 Quite a story.

We came prepared to stay in the Ayurveda Clinic. Theyamma Pengal has decided not to join us there for the time being. But since the doctor found that Josie and I have cold, new assessment will be done tomorrow. The cottage is comfortable. We will stay here till tomorrow.. Nearby are two Italian ladies in the neighboring cottage. They will be here for a few weeks. One was here last year and her friend seems new to the clinic. The Administrator of the Clinic is Annie Amma, the daughter of Kavil Tomas, the legendary teacher of St. George's Kaipuzha. He is still around. I must visit him when I can. But Annie Amma is full of solicitude towards us.

October 10:- Dr. Bindu came at 9 am. After examining Josie, she simply said that with the fever and cold that she has, she cannot undergo the rigors of the massage therapy at this time. I too have a bad cold. But since Josie cannot have the therapy, we decided that we will not undergo the therapy this time. It is a great disappointment. In fact it was Josie who wanted the treatment, for which we had extended our stay here by two

weeks. But what can one say to unexpected eventualities. We will while away two weeks and more in the company of family and friends. But Josie has to get better before we venture anywhere else. We thanked the young doctor and Annie Amma, who refused to take any fees for the services.

October 11:- We went to Kidangore to visit the Hospital there. Again Josie is staying home. We visited the Kollappallil's. Nimmy and Babu (their only son) is due to come to Canada in March. They are both engineers and very well placed in UAE. However, for the sake of their children, they have applied for immigration to Canada. They will land in Canada in March and then decide what to do next. I wonder if job situations in Canada are good after Sept.11. When we go to UAE, we will discuss further with them on the pros and cons of settling in Canada. We stopped in Pathyil house. Our ancestral house has been pulled down and in its place a beautiful, huge; Saibu has built granite two-story structure. His father who is over 82 years old and his wife are living there. I hope the children will come regularly to enjoy the house and visit Kaipuzha. But I think it is a bit too much for the old couple to maintain.

Owe unto anyone who phones any of my relatives between 7.30 p.m. and 10 p.m., when they are all immersed in watching soap operas. These serials, as they are called, are very much part of the everyday lives of especially retired people. Since Josie and I cannot get involved in these stories, we spend a good part of the time in the sandy courtyard, about 100 feet long and 35 feet wide to walk up and down. Occasionally Thommykunju Chama joins us for vigorous workout and scintillating conversation.

October 17:- Josie has been recuperating from her fever, which turned to bronchitis. I am nursing a cold too. But it seems to be better. So we are on our way by train to Madampam, where Josie's sister – a widow, 80 years old- lives. She has a servant, and the children live not too far. We were on our way from Payannur to Madampam in a jeep that Thomas, her son and my student, had brought. We had to stop in a spot to let her other son Stephen drop something off to a lawyer. There was a slight delay as the road was too narrow. One of the cars behind had a few police officers. To show his annoyance at the delay, he asked the driver for his papers, kept the documents and asked him to collect them at the local police station. We went on and to Madampam. In the evening when we returned we went to the police station where the sub-inspector at first seemed angry with the driver for delaying traffic. But when I explained the quandary of the driver, he was mollified and returned the papers. He just wanted to show his authority. Perhaps if I had not been there, he might have forced the issue or harassed the driver.

October 19:- We too the Kurala Express, that goes on the west coast of India. The scenery is breathtaking. Kerala is lush with vegetation. Coconut trees, plantain trees, paddy fields, meandering canals, farmers leisurely walking in the fields; water wrens brooding over the fields... a very peace-

ful scenery. The beauty is almost monotonous and I was wondering if one could simply get used to this. When the person sitting opposite me said “I envy that farmer”. I asked him to explain himself. He is a businessman from Mumbai (Bombay), dealing in opticals. He has distributors all over. He is worth millions. But he is afraid to show his wealth. He had bought an expensive car earlier in the year. The mafia phoned him to give two and a half million rupees, failing which his only son would be killed. He gave the money, sold his car and says he lives a modest nondescript life lest the mafia threaten him again. He says he cannot enjoy his life in Bombay. Well, I told him Kerala is beautiful. But the cash crops, which used to bring much-needed foreign exchange to India, have lost their value. Coconut, rice, rubber, cashew, pepper, arracanut... all these are not worth one third of the price they fetched three years ago. We stopped at Ernakulam. After visiting a few people who are related to Josie, we stopped at Albert’s house. Albert’s wife Hessy and Josie are very thick friends. So I let them have a couple of days together. I returned to Kaipuzha by an evening train.

October 21:- I went to the church with my sister, and returned with Sister Vincent. We visited a few houses and when we reached home, my brother was frantically trying to get hold of me, as Jose Makil, my nephew had died in Kottayam of a massive heart attack. He was three days short of 75. His son went to U.K. only yesterday to join his wife. Jose was a successful lawyer and a sensitive soul. At least he worked till the last. This is unusual in Kerala. Most people retire before they are sixty and then they while away their days waiting for death. Most Christians would go to churches almost every day. Long prayers in the morning, more in the evening, retreats, adoration, and so on. Church has a strangle hold on the old. Visiting the cemetery, going for funerals, visiting the sick... death seems to be everywhere. Well.. Each one to his own. As for me, I want to live.

October 26:- There was still another sudden death of a sister of P.C. Thomas, who has married a niece of mine. Almost the same mourners as the other day. I guess it is also a social occasion to meet people. I went to Alapuram to get Josie where she had gone to visit her sister. Then to Caritas to visit the new born daughter of Jubee and Jules. We returned home with the favorite ice cream of Sr. Vincent.

October 28:- We drove to Ernakulam at about 8 a.m., in plenty of time to catch the train to Hyderabad. I decided to go by train to visit three states on the way. My sisters I met yesterday and I my brothers were at home to see us off. Theyamma came with us to the railway station. She had company in us as long we were in Kaipuzha. Now she will be alone again and the prospect saddens her. She had opened her entire household for our comfort. The best room in the house, a car and driver, her several servants were all at our beck and call. Above all she had offered all her affection and care for our comfort. It was the best vacation that one could have had. Nothing

was left to chance. For her love and consideration we remain grateful. The parting was heart wrenching on both sides. But one has to say goodbye at some time.

October 29:- Jall Noria was waiting for us at Secunderabad railway station. We are old family friends for close to forty years. Jall's eldest son is in Toronto. He and Bacha-his wife- come to Canada off and on and always spend a few days with us. Therefore they had insisted on our staying with them in Hyderabad at least for a week. We will be here till November 3rd. Gustie, the youngest son of Jall and his eldest brother in Canada own a jewelry factory, employing more than 1400 people. They manufacture costume jewelry for export purposes. Faruk, the president based in Toronto brings orders and looks after the sales and marketing abroad. Business has been booming at least till 9/11. The domestic market is the monopoly of Estelle, as the company brand is known in India. They live in a mansion, with a fleet of cars, chauffeurs, servants and every luxury. Bacha supervises the household activities from her easy chair. At 80 she has difficulty walking. But she is still her efficient self. It is her birthday today. Jall is 83 and going strong. He goes to the factory where he supervises the maintenance of the technical electrical units. He is a versatile genius. Gustie the youngest son is the Managing Director and is extremely efficient.

November 3:- It has been a string of visits to see some of our old friends and visit a few of my old haunts. I was happy to go to Kazipet where I had been principal of school for three years. The present principal is an old student of mine and was happy to receive me and show me around. I also visited with very good friends of mine: Br. G and A Pralel, Dominic and of course Felix. Felix has bad case of diabetics now. But he seems to manage well, better than when I had seen him last when he was suffering badly from Parkinson's disease. Ayurvedic treatment seems to have done him some good. He is celebrating his fifty years as a brother tomorrow. But since I had already planned to leave Hyderabad today, I spent time with him yesterday and the day before. Br. Philip, from Thailand has come to celebrate together. Since he too was my college companion, and I had met him a few years ago in Thailand, it was a nice get-together. In the evenings it was a series of dinners in the houses of Zarine and Admiral P. Poonja (daughter of Jall), dinner with Rohinton and Anu Noria. Rohinton was my student in the 60s. In the meantime, Anu, his wife, who is a travel consultant, had found that our flight does not go to Dubai and beyond. Therefore she is routing us through Los Angeles where we will spend three days with my nephew before going home to Toronto. The cancellation of our visit to UAE is disappointing. We had hoped to meet our nephews and nieces there. We had also scheduled a side trip of four days to Cairo to visit with Sajimon, area coordinator of Messer International. Sajimon's mother Crissy is my niece and she too is in Egypt with her son. Well.. Another time I expect. I was determined that Bin Laden should not topple my plans. I

guess he did do it.

We took the train back to Chennai. Esthappan, my old student and Josie's relative was at the station to see us off. So was Jall. The parting was poignant. We were surprised to see our compartment teeming with police. We were told that there is an important minister in the train and that since we are passing through Naxalite infested territory, extra security was needed. We were thankful for that. (I did not mention to the Superintendent of Police traveling with us that Sathyamurthy, the most wanted Naxalite in the country had been recruited by me as teacher in Kazipet in 1962. Of course he was an excellent teacher. Then he turned into an ideologue and a revolutionary.)

November 4:- Kuttan came to receive us at the railway station. On coming to Pat's residence we find that he has to have surgical intervention for a prostate problem. He is delaying it because of our visit and a visit by a delegation from Montreal, who are to be here on November 8. I hope he will recover soon from the surgery. We are due to fly out to KL tomorrow. I have sent an e-mail to Menon to tell him of the change in our flight schedule from KL.

November 7:- Yesterday was a very long day. We started at 1 a.m. (6th of Nov) from Chennai. We reached Kuala Lumpur at 6. 45 a.m. Suren Menon's parents came to the airport to meet us. After getting our boarding pass, we went to a hotel to freshen up. Mr. Nair and his wife were full of conversation. And we were delighted to see them. They left us at 11.30 and we had a leisurely shower and lunch at the hotel and returned to the airport to board the Malaysian airlines plane. It was only one fourth full. Apparently that is better than a few days ago when the plane flew almost empty. In Taipei we were subjected another detailed search. They confiscated my nail cutter.. And I told them to keep it. When we reached Los Angeles it was around 4 p.m. The airport is almost deserted. Jose, my nephew, came to pick us up. We are spending a couple of days with him and Celine. Sabitha (Manichi) is so happy to see us. Their son, Jeslu is in College and called us. Jose's new house is a mansion. It was a long day – almost 40 hours long.

Today we drove around the vicinity of their house. Roads are not as busy as they usually are in L.A. Redondo beach, which should be teeming with people, looks like a ghost beach. The occasional jogger. a few stragglers.. Restaurants and fish market empty.. 9/11 really did hit all of America.

November 8: We flew into Toronto at night. Vince received us. It is nice to be home again. I wish we could have gone to Dubai and Egypt. But there is no point in regretting it. Two months and a day we were away from home. We need to get used to the old routine again. But that is what every trip does to us: the journey is fun and the return is more fun.

Chapter 33

Travelogue Europe 2005

Introduction:

We spent close to five weeks in Europe starting on May 21 and ending on June 23. Our reasons for going to Europe were several. We had an opportunity to hear, see, and experience the tragedy of the holocaust, and the horrors of the Nazi regime, as also the triumph of the survivors. We could not ask for a better guide than Eva, our family friend, and my bridge partner. Secondly, I have always been interested in European history. This was an opportunity to see some of the places that I had studied and read about. Thirdly, I was fascinated by the new experiment of European Union, a union without wars or violence, and curious as to how it is unfolding. We would spend many hours chatting with all and sundry on the subject. The people on the street, and in the trains, as also others whom we met, would be the most reliable sources of information. Lastly, there were relatives of ours that we wanted to meet again. And I had to meet one particular friend whom I had not seen in close to forty years. We are very thankful to all of them for their warmth and cordial hospitality. It is not the usual custom to thank one's own wife. But Josie is the best traveling companion that anyone can get. She is interested in all these topics, asks numerous questions that go to the heart of the matter; her remarks about people and places are pertinent and straight forward; she remembers tiny details and big responsibilities; she is solicitous of my every need, and knows when to say "enough" when I want to go on. She reads me better than I do myself. This journal is dedicated to her and to our friend Eva.

May 22: Hotel Kaiserin Elisabeth in Vienna. Exactly 5 p.m. local time. Austrian Airlines was two hours late starting from Toronto and so everything got backed up by two hours. In addition, some of the luggage took an hour to get to the baggage belt. But we are here, and the luggage safe and unharmed. Eva, her son Peter, and Peter's wife Regina, were waiting four hours to receive us. But let me start at the beginning. In November last, when Josie and I planned to go to India, my friend and bridge partner,

Eva Marcovici, 77-year-old beautiful person who lives in Montreal, wanted to visit India too. I discouraged her thinking that the journey would be too long, the culture shock too great, and the strain would be too much on her, as she was recovering from the beginning of cancer. So, when we returned, she invited us to go to Vienna in May. We readily agreed, as we had wanted to visit Austria and some of the former East European countries.

After juggling dates, we decided on the dates and had planned to arrive in Vienna on the same day. We arrived a few hours after she did. And her son Peter met her at the airport and waited for our plane, that should have arrived in Vienna within one hour of her landing. With the delayed arrival and the fact that there is a marathon going on in the city, because of which some major arteries are closed in Vienna, Peter had to take a circuitous route to get to our hotel. It is an excellent hotel from what we see as to its location and elegance. Robby, the cab driver, and an acquaintance of Eva, is to be here in a few minutes to take us to dinner with Eva and a few of her friends.

Eva has meticulously planned the next two weeks for us. We will spend a few days here, then to Budapest for a few days, drive back to Vienna, until June 3 when we will take the Eurail pass for three weeks to see more places. I hope and pray that the trip will be satisfying for all, and the health of all of us will hold up. In any case it will be a test of my ticker, after the angioplasty of last October. I have left a message to Jaisy Thenakara, to meet us tonight after dinner. It will have to be an early dinner and an early to bed, in order to be ready for tomorrow.

At 5.30 p.m. the designated driver, Robby, came to the hotel to take us to Heuriger Wagner Restaurant for dinner. On the way Robby, who speaks good English, pointed out the palace of the former emperor of Austria, the present residence of the current chancellor, various museums, and some other attractions of Vienna. This city is steeped in history and architecture of various periods. These would take us many more days to absorb and appreciate.

In the restaurant were gathered a small group of some of the closest friends and relatives of Eva and her late husband Mendi. Eva was born in Budapest. When the Nazis occupied Hungary, Jews were rounded up and taken to concentration camps all over Europe. Eva's father was sent to an Austrian camp, her mother was killed, and Eva and her brother Tom escaped. They lived in hiding until the end of the war. Subsequently, when the Communist government ruled Hungary, Eva and her family, including her son Peter, escaped to Austria in 1953. In 1956 she married Mendi, who had escaped from Rumania, Mendi set up business in Vienna and later migrated to Montreal, Canada, where he did very well in the Jewelry business. He died a few months ago.

The friends and relatives who were gathered in the restaurant are some of the closest friends of the family. Apart from Peter, Regina, Ruth the widow

of one of Mendi's brothers, and her son, there was Dr. Leon Zelman, Director of Jewish welcome services in Austria, sponsored by the Government.

Robby and Ernie, have known Eva and Mendi the longest and were their closest friends. Eva stays with her sister in law, Ruth, with whom she is on very intimate terms, and it is Ruth, along with Peter, who has arranged several of the events for Eva. There were others we were introduced to. But we will meet them again and I hope to be able to remember their names. This is a restaurant for the cognisanti and the glitterati. Conversation was lively and the food was excellent. We were served dinner under the trees, a gentle breeze blowing, and they spoke and they spoke and spoke. They were apologetic when the conversation was in German, but I encouraged them to carry on and not to concern themselves with catering to me. I did not want our presence to curb the flow of conversation. After all, these are families and friends meeting Eva after several years, and they have so much to remember and such a lot to say. At 8.30 p.m. Robby, our driver, came to take us back to the hotel. We phoned Jaisy to meet us at the hotel. She came at 9 p.m. Jaisy is the daughter of my nephew, Avarachen Thenakara, who is settled in Lippstadt, Germany, along with his family. Avarachen's mother is our eldest surviving sister, 85 years old, and still full of life and energy and affection. Just before Jaisy was leaving her apartment to meet us, she had phoned her grandmother, who was thrilled to hear that she was meeting us in Vienna. Jaisy is the head of the marketing and communication division of a multinational company. A beautiful girl, Jaisy speaks German, English and Malayalam with equal fluency. She had just returned from a hiking expedition, having climbed a mountain about 7000 feet high. Jaisy had much to talk about, so had we. But she realized that we needed rest. So she left at 10 p.m. promising to visit us again. We were ready for bed. After almost 4300 miles of journey from Toronto, we need to get adjusted to Europe and its time zone.

May 23: We were up early this morning due to jet lag and time difference. However we stayed in bed till 7 a.m., when the restaurant opened for breakfast. The meal- for it indeed was a meal- was excellent. Unlike continental breakfast served up in ordinary hotels and motels, this one had a full course breakfast-eggs, cereals, fruits, bacon, coffee, tea, different types of breads and croissant, and all served with elegance. We decided to walk to St. Stephen's Square, just round the corner, the heart of Vienna. St. Stephen's cathedral is only half a block away. By 8 a.m., the Square was filling with people – commuters, businessmen, tourists, and hawkers. We walked into the church and started with a visit to the side chapel where the Blessed Sacrament is exposed and Josie decided to spend a few minutes there quietly. I walked around the Gothic Cathedral. The foundation for this church was laid in the 9th century. The first part of the structure, completed in the 11th century is in early gothic style. The last part was completed in the 19th century. During World War II, parts of the cathedral was bombed. Austrian

government and Cardinal Stepinach reconstructed the Cathedral, which is now the most precious historical and architectural heritage of Austria.

The population of the country is, at least in name, 80% Catholic. There are 357 Catholic churches in Vienna alone. We walked in and around the cathedral. Then we decided to walk in the Square. The paved squares of Europe, where people congregate to walk, eat, talk, and generally spend their leisure time, are always interesting. We returned to the hotel by 11.30 to rest a bit.

At 12.30 Eva and her son Peter came by and we walked over to Sacher restaurant where she is planning a party on the 31st in memory of her late husband. We had a light lunch there, and inspected the rooms where the party is to be held. Sacher is world famous for its fine cuisine and internationally renowned cakes. From there we walked over to the Opera where Eva had arranged to buy tickets for a show later next week. We drove leisurely to Peter's house. He has a 3- bedroom house in a posh part of the city. Vienna is 41.5 square kilometers with 24 districts, and over 2 million people. Regina's hobby is gardening and we could see the hand of an expert in their garden. A beautiful sit-out with an enclosed pavilion, an arcade with creepers, mums in full bloom, the lawn immaculately trimmed, the walkway kept in perfect condition, and a relaxed atmosphere. We sat outside for the better part of three hours, enjoying the company, getting to know each other, and having a few drinks. Regina struggles with her English. But she is so loving, caring, and effusive-an adorable person. Peter is an artist, an excellent photographer, a collector of artifacts, and he showed us his precious collections, including his porcelain paintings. At about 6 p.m., we went back to St. Stephen's Square, where a prestigious new restaurant, highly popular with the elite of the city, was expecting us. Leon, with his connections, had booked a table for us. He and Ruth were there waiting for us. Each of us ordered something different. Leon is a fascinating character. He gave us his autobiography, translated in English, which we hope to read during our train journeys. He is a survivor too of the holocaust and has written extensively about that and beyond. An extremely influential person, Leon is in great demand as a speaker and organizer of events. Time flew by as the conversation was lively and the food was delicious. By 10 p.m. we walked back to the hotel, happy and thankful.

May 24: We slept late and had to hurry our breakfast as we were expecting to be picked up by our tour bus this morning. Exactly at 9 a.m. we were escorted to the bus waiting for us near the cathedral. We went over to the tour bus depot, where our designated bus to Habsburg palace grounds was waiting. We started in the crypt where kings, queens, emperors and royal family members are buried. Some of tombs are baroque and heavily ornate, while others are simple and unostentatious. There are 143 of them buried in the crypt. We bought extra tickets to see the lipizaner horses during the morning workout.

The white stallions, specially bred and trained to dance to music are one of the sights of Vienna. We spent an hour watching them being trained by expert riders. From there we went to the palace to visit the living quarters of King Franz Joseph and Elisabeth. The tour guide had tried to dispose of us – one hour watching the horses, and the rest of the time asking us to rent an audio guide in order to tour the museum. I pointed out to her that we paid good money in the expectation that a guide would describe the exhibits to us, rather than a mechanical device. She got the message, and was our true guide for the next 90 minutes or so.

Elisabeth was a first cousin of King Joseph. His mother, Sophie – known as the only “man” among the royalties of Europe, chose her niece to be the wife of her son. Elisabeth was from Bavaria, and disliked Vienna, and being a princess. She also was anorexic, though she bore her husband four children. After the age of thirty, her face was hardly seen by any artist, and all the paintings and sculptures are more imagined than real. Franz Joseph ruled for 60 years, until he died in 1916 during WW1. An Italian anarchist, whose life’s ambition was to kill a member of the Royal family of Habsburg, stabbed Elisabeth to death. He could not have selected a more willing victim. The palace is kept in very good shape.

After three hours of tour, we went on our own to view the porcelain and jewels belonging to the royal family. But Empress Elisabeth must have fascinated the people. She was mysterious, hated pomp and ceremony; she was meticulous in personal hygiene; she wrote poems that were discovered after her death. In the poems she speaks of her son, of desolation and isolation, how she disliked her titles, how she felt her life was a voyage without destination, without a harbour. The poems are not particularly religious. Hers was a simple life. She liked to travel and stay in ordinary hotels. As her retinue resented such pedestrian places, Elisabeth insisted that they stayed in luxury, while she herself stayed in ordinary inns. Thus she traveled to Greece for the sun, and several other places including Bad Kissingen (where we hope to visit Maggie and Heinz in a few days), for relaxation. The farther she went away from Vienna the healthier Elisabeth felt. Her bedroom- cum- study and sitting room in the palace was half the size of her bathroom. Her chamber pot, her bathtub, her bi-weekly ablution of her long hair –ankle length – an event that lasted a whole day- all these make the palace tour worth it.

Each Austrian king (they were at various times also kings of Hungary, Rumania, parts of present day Germany etc. etc) built his own palace. Spanish court was the model of Austrian etiquette. Thus the noble men who were invited to the dinner table of the royalty could not, naturally, start eating before the king and queen. Franz Joseph ate very quickly, and Elisabeth hardly ate. So when the king ended his meal all nobility had to stop eating. They got up hungry from the sumptuous table. Sacher, a smart businessman, started a restaurant to cater to the hungry nobles. The place

soon became famous and now is a landmark in Vienna. (We will have a dinner next week in Sacher in memory of Mendi.) In the palace itself we saw the serving plates, mostly golden – as porcelain started being used only for dessert and soup- and dishes belonging to the Habsburg family are on display including a set given by queen Marie Antoinette of France, and her husband Louis XVI, to her brother the emperor of Austria. The Austrian monarch had gone to Versailles to visit his sister a few years before the French Revolution that saw the beheading of Marie Antoinette. . . . Very interesting place, the palace. . .

Peter, Regina, and Eva came at 5 p.m. to take us to Prater – a park in the middle of Vienna, which acts as the lung of the city. Prater has thousands of acres of woods, playground for children and families. One of the many restaurants is a favorite of Eva's and she wanted us to taste the food there. The soups and the dishes are delicious. I had cabbage soup and ribs, and found that I simply could not finish the huge portions. Then we walked around, took a ride on the slow moving wheel that lifted us to great heights – but slowly- and Eva and Peter pointed out landmarks and places of interest. The United Nations has a major presence on the banks of The Danube. We walked in the woods leisurely and talked about environment and politics. Peter told us that many years ago Austrian government had built a nuclear power plant. But due to strong protest from the people there was a referendum to ask if the population was in favour of nuclear energy. It was roundly rejected and the plant was never commissioned. The hydropower from the Danube lights the city now.

Tomorrow we drive to Budapest. Apart from the beauty of Buda and Pest that span the Danube and its history, there are personal reasons why we want to go with Eva to Budapest. Eva was born there and until the Nazi occupation of Hungary in March 1943, she had lived a sheltered and luxurious s life. Then the Nazis rounded up the Jews, including her parents and relatives. Eva and her brother, along with her mother took refuge in the Danish embassy. But her mother feared that they would be hunted there by the Germans. She ran for her life, but was caught by the Nazis, bound together with a few others, brought to the Elisabeth Bridge overlooking the Danube, shot and thrown into the river. Her father was taken to a concentration camp. Eva and her brother escaped. After the war their house became a refuge for many. Eva met and married Prajor. Peter was born in 1950. Hungary was under Communist rule and the family escaped to Austria without papers. (Austria itself was occupied by Allied forces, divided among the Soviet Union, USA, Britain and France for a few years, until 1955 when it was allowed to govern itself.)

Eva and Peter lived in Vienna, Salzburg and back to Vienna for a long time. Her husband helped Eva's best friend escape, only to attach himself to her. Eva felt betrayed and desperate. He challenged her to divorce him, which she did, however much of a hardship it was going to be. In 1953 Mendi

Marcovici escaped from Rumania to seek his fortunes in Vienna. His parents had gone to Israel with one of his brothers, while the other siblings went with Mendi to Vienna. Mendi was a popular young man about town. His best friend Robby had married Ernie. In 1956 Mendi met and fell in love with beautiful Eva, and married her. In 1968 they immigrated to Canada. There he started jewelry business that brought him prosperity. Though Peter, the son of Eva by her first marriage, remained back in Vienna, Mendi always thought of him as his very own. His brother married Ruth. Ruth's husband died in 1990. Her daughter died unexpectedly at the age of 29, four years ago of a heart problem. They both are buried in the Jewish cemetery in Vienna where we will stop tomorrow on our way to Budapest. Thus this is a trip down memory lane, for Eva to revisit her roots, and for us to understand the past. Eva thinks it is her last journey back to Vienna and Budapest. We hope not. I want very much to see everything of her past. I hope she will be up to the task of facing, remembering, recounting the years in Budapest.

May 25: Robby, our cab driver, who is also a Jewish émigré from Hungary came to pick us up at 9.15 a.m. We had repacked to take only one suitcase to Budapest and left the rest in the hotel for our return on Saturday. The first stop was the Jewish cemetery where we visited Ruth's husband's grave and that of her daughter. Robby has his mother buried in the same cemetery too. Eva had even remembered bringing for me a skullcap to wear in the cemetery and the in the synagogue tomorrow. We placed pebbles (again painstakingly brought by Eva) on the graves, a Jewish tradition. We got on the highway to Budapest, no different from any in North America. At the border the passport inspection was rather casual. We stopped to change some money. Though Hungary is part of the European Union, it has its own currency, unlike the "older" countries that have adopted Euros. On the way

Eva told us the story of how her family had escaped from Hungary in the dead of winter in 1953. They walked on the railway tracks on a December night, cold, snowy, and poorly dressed. They had to lie flat in the snow when trains passed. There was just one spot in the high electric fence at the border through which they could crawl to Austrian side for freedom. After that they were on their own. The child-Peter- started crying at some point. Eva had to keep the baby quiet and promise all kinds of monetary rewards of her twelve companions and their leader to let her be with them. She only had the clothes on her back and a few bare necessities for the child. The remembrance of those events have seared in her memory. Peter remembers very little of that perilous journey to freedom.

We had to drive over the Elisabeth Bridge to cross to Budapest, the same bridge from which Eva's mother was thrown into the Danube. She closed her eyes and looked away from that bridge. We are booked in Hotel Marriott, overlooking the Danube, and with an unobstructed view of the beautiful Buda. Soon after checking in, we went to one of the restaurants of the hotel for lunch. In the afternoon Eva took us to the building, which used to be her

home. Now it is part of Le Meridian Hotel. In the corner is a beauty salon, which used to be her father's store. He used to import textile from all over the world. The family lived upstairs in comfort and luxury. We walked in that hotel, but Eva refused to go in. In fact she did not want to linger there, overcome with emotion. Then she saw the school where she had studied – A Catholic School run by nuns. She ran towards it, happy to see it again. She must have spent many happy years in that school. In fact they write to her occasionally during anniversaries and special occasions.

We walked back to where a sumptuous dinner had been booked for 6.30 p.m. I had planned to have a typical Hungarian meal. I had a gulache soup, and while waiting for the main course, bit into a special bread that Peter had ordered, made of goose fat. I felt nauseated. I could not touch the rest of the meal and struggled with my food. Not knowing what happened, Eva was sorry that she had invited us to a Hungarian restaurant. After dinner, when the rest decided to go for a walk across the chain Bridge, I excused myself to return to the hotel. A few minutes later I felt fine again. I walked on the bridge hoping to find them. But they had taken the funicular train to the top of the hill. So I walked back and enjoyed the leisurely crowd that was promenading on the side of the Danube. There were hundreds of them strolling about, or drinking coffee or beer or wine and having fun, while boats and barges went by in the river. By 9.30 I went back to the room to find Josie desperately looking for me. I assured them all that I was all right.

She was concerned since I have had the angioplasty about anything that upsets me. Eva too had to be assured. Ruth thought that the noise of trains by the Danube would keep her awake at night. But all that will work itself out in time. When I say “we”, I mean Eva, her son Peter, his wife Regina, Ruth, Josie and I.

Eli and her husband, who used to live in Montreal for many years, were to have received us in Budapest. Unfortunately the man is in hospital on life support. Poor Eli, faithful to her dear friend, came to visit with Eva and the rest of us briefly, even as her husband lay in hospital between life and death. Eli used to be Eva's bridge partner for many years. I had brought for her “The Da Vinci Code”, under instructions from Eva. I wonder when she will have time to read the book.

It was a good day. Tomorrow promises to be even more interesting. What is needed is for Eva to feel happy that she has come to the city that she loves and hates.

May 26: We began the day with a sumptuous breakfast in Marriott. An old friend of Eva's, well connected in the Arts world, about 80 years old, brought our tickets for the opera tonight. He also eagerly accompanied us to the cemetery where Eva's grandparents are buried. Eva managed to identify the gravesite after searching frantically. Peter helped. Along with the graves of her grandparents, there are memorials for her their children, including Eva's mother and her uncles. Eva kept repeating this is the last time she

would visit this place. From the cemetery we went to the synagogue, one of the oldest and the largest in Hungary. Eva and her family used to worship here. In the courtyard is a memorial tree (conceived by Tony Curtis), for the martyrs who perished under the Nazis. The tree is shaped like a palm tree. After searching, we found on leaf 75 (LXXV) the names of Eva's father who died in the concentration camp, and her mother who was shot and dumped into the Danube. A poignant story, a touching moment, and we are privileged to be privy to it.

Lunch was in Gulgas, the famous restaurant, next to the zoo, where 58 years ago Eva's wedding reception took place. We sat in the garden and had a leisurely lunch. We decided to take the metro back to the hotel- one of the oldest underground train systems in the world.

At 5.15 we were ready for the opera. But Eva wanted us to see the Catholic cathedral called St. Stephen the King's Basilica. The church was bombed by the Allies and has been reconstructed. The cupola and the towers are interesting.

A short walk away was the Opera where we attended a ballet. I had feared that the ballet would be long and boring. Instead Coppelia was delightful. The story though simple, was compelling. The dances were fast moving and light. Eva had forgotten nothing. She had arranged to have a few drinks and sandwiches during the intermission. After the show we walked back to the hotel for rest.

May 27: I had wondered how churches and synagogues remained opened during the communist rule. It seems the first president under communist regime in Hungary was a Jewish émigré called Rakkori Matias, who surrounded himself with Jewish advisers. All hated him, as he was ruthless. But at least he and his entourage tolerated religious practice. After the revolt of 1956, under Kadr the regime relaxed its strangle hold.

After breakfast we crossed to Buda by the Chain Bridge, went up the hill by cable car, which they call "funicular" train, and wended our way to Matias church and the statue of the Holy Trinity. The church was rebuilt several times. During the Turkish rule this was a mosque. After defeating the Turks, it was rebuilt in a baroque style. The interior of the church has gothic arches and splendid columns. Frigyes Schuluk did the interior painting. The stained glass windows dating to the mid 14th century are superb.

We walked on the paved streets to the palace of Buda. After taking a few pictures outside, we went in to see the paintings on exhibition of the great Hungarian painter Mihaly Munkacsy (1844 – 1900); the best known of the Hungarian painters. Individuals and governments must have commissioned most of his salon paintings and religious paintings. Munkacsy lived most of his life in Paris. He was brought to prominence by John Milton of Paradise Lost fame. But his landscapes, particularly "Going Home", a powerful painting of the setting sun, the cows heading home, and the day's work is done, appealed to me. I wanted a copy of that painting to give to Eva, but they

did not have one. We returned to the hotel for a short rest.

At 3 p.m. Ruth and Peter took us to the market. In most of Europe the market is a place visited regularly by the locals- rich and poor alike. They carry a bag or bring a trolley, going from stall to stall, examining vegetables, fruits, meat, eggs, chicken, sausages of various kinds, most sold by farmers. Peter is hosting a barbecue n Sunday and bought stuff for that. We wandered around looking for gifts and artifacts. Ruth is great with her hands and collects artifacts that are invaluable. She told us, on our leisurely walk back, about her concentration camp experiences in Poland, and how she survived. She escaped while her Austrian parents perished in Auschwitz. She returned to her aunt after the war, married Mendi's brother, a very successful businessman. After his death, Ruth managed the business for some time and sold it and is now living comfortably in the 17th district.

Eva had not accompanied us to the market as she was expecting some old friends. Just before dinner I looked at Eva and thought she had seen a ghost. It seems she indeed did see someone that frightened her. The couple that came to see her were friends in Hungary had escaped to Vienna and Eva had opened her doors for them; but she was shocked at how they had aged. She hardly recognized the man, though Eva could make out the woman. They visited with her for an hour. (Subsequently Eva heard that he died a few days later.) Eva went over to the Danube to throw some flowers in the river to remember her mother. We had dinner and after chatting a while, went to bed. Eva waited for a phone call from an old admirer of hers named Pishta.

May 28: Last day in Budapest. Eva asked us if we would accompany her on a nostalgic trip. When she was young her parents used to rent a condo (a chalet) in the hills overlooking Budapest, where the family would spend many happy days. In winter they skied down hill, and in summer they swam, they hiked, and roamed the hills. She remembered the hills and slopes and the valleys carpeted with crocuses and lily of the valley and acacia trees in bloom. In fact ever since we came to Vienna she had been searching for acacia trees. She was thrilled that her son's sit-out was built with acacia wood. She took us to a small train station from where we boarded the train that took us to Buda and to the hills. There were hardly a dozen persons on that train. At the last stop we got out to walk to the tower that Eva remembered from her childhood days. We walked up the hill, up the winding road, and were getting exhausted. So we stopped in a hotel and asked if we could get a cab. The cab driver we got was not from the locality, but promised to take us to the tower. Eva told him how to get there. But he thought he knew better. After several twists and turns, and after asking for directions, he at last took us to the Elisabeth tower, built by Emperor Franz Joseph, as a lookout to oversee Buda. Unfortunately the tower itself is closed and so we could not climb to the top to see the view. According to Eva the view would be spectacular. But hikers and picnickers use the place. We saw several of them, some in groups, others alone. Thus we met

Gino Szepluck, a computer specialist, who used to be a pilot in Hungary, and who escaped after the 1956 revolt against the Soviet Union. He escaped to Montreal, where he lived on Goyer street for a few years; but he disliked the cold of Quebec and moved to California as an aviation technician. Now that he is retired, he comes to Hungary for 3 months every year. He likes to go for long walks and keeps himself in good shape.

We drove back to the city Eva's friend and admirer had booked a lunch in an elegant restaurant for us. Over a leisurely lunch we chatted about life before, during and after the communist regime. Pishta had decided to stay in Budapest as his knowledge of languages was limited to Hungarian, and he was a communication and media person. In his work in the theatre the communist government rarely interfered. But, as he said, even in the most open democracies, there are restrictions.

Pishta took us back to The Marriott and the rest of the group was waiting for us. Eli was there too, having rushed here to bid goodbye to Eva. Pishta's companion, Christina, was there too. We said our final goodbyes and drove back to Vienna with Robby who had returned to Budapest to take us back to Vienna. We were in our hotel before 6, and after checking back into the same room, Robby took us to the apartment of Josie's nieces – Ancy and Poppy, and Ancy's children. Ancy's husband is in India preparing for the wedding of their eldest daughter. Nica had met a young man, on the Internet, fell in love with him, and in spite of the initial reluctance of the parents, they are going to get married soon. As for Poppy, she used to be here for a few years. Now her children are doing well in Indian schools, she came back to make a final decision whether to return to Austria or not. It looks as if she has decided to return to India. The fear is that the children may not be able to get into good universities due to language difficulties, whereas in India they are sure to study well.

After dinner, they brought us back to the hotel via the "U", the underground train system of Vienna.

A long day, but very satisfying on the whole. For the sake of Eva, we would have liked to have spent more time in Budapest. But she needed to bid farewell to that city and to Hungary. She keeps saying that this would be her last journey to Vienna and Budapest. We hope it is not. She is in top form, arranging events, meeting people, organizing every little thing, and being concerned with big and small details. While the rest of us complain of fatigue and discomfort, she goes on regardless.

May 29: We went to St. Stephen's Cathedral for Mass at 9 a.m. There must have been about a hundred attending Mass, though there were a few hundred milling around in other parts of the basilica. At 10 Robby came to take us to Ruth's house. She and her husband had designed the fabulous house about 30 years ago. In spite of the heat wave that has hit most of Europe in the last few days, Ruth's house is cool and comfortable. The parlour, the kitchen and receiving areas are on the main floor, while the

bedrooms are upstairs, the lower portion opens to the swimming pool and garden and the woods behind the house. Josie has volunteered to show Ruth how to cook a chicken curry. Her maid is ready with all the ingredients. The three of them stayed in the kitchen, while Eva showed us the house and the surroundings. Ruth's grandson, Maurice, is in the pool and needs an eye. Ruth's son, Michi, is a successful businessman selling goods on e-Bay. As he told me, his major problem is that the developing countries such as Thailand, China, and some of the East European countries cannot be relied upon to supply goods steadily and for a duration of time. While the quality is good, one cannot be certain if supplies would flow reliably regularly. He travels all over the world visiting suppliers and sourcing for new products. He was quite capable of eating the hot chicken curry that Josie prepared. His girlfriend is vegetarian. So Maurice is vegetarian with the mother and non-vegetarian when with Michi and Ruth. We spent a few relaxed hours at Ruth's. We had champagne and snacks prepared by Ruth. Peter was getting a big barbecue and we did not want to stuff ourselves. He picked us up at 4 pm. I had asked Jaisy to join us at Peter's. Peter and Regina are excellent hosts. They had prepared a real banquet for us. We ate and drank till 7 p.m. Robby came to fetch us to Salomia, the sister of Molly- Jaisy's mother. We arrived there to find a family was visiting them from U.K. N.M. Mathew had taken early retirement from St. Stephen's College, Uzhavoor, to be with his wife in UK. By the time we met him, he was inebriated and intelligent conversation was well nigh impossible. So after making excuses we left to return to the hotel. Salome drove us to the U and Jaisy accompanied us to the hotel.

It seems UK is inundated with Kerala nurses. Now they do not recruit them anymore. The salary is not bad. But the living conditions are poor. Several of the Kerala families that had gone to UK are returning, as the quality of life in Austria is better than in UK. In Austria the welfare system, the unemployment insurance, old age pension, free education up to and including universities, are all being threatened in the European Union. Today France has rejected the constitution of the European Union. Without France and Germany (German voters have toppled a government in one of the most populous provinces), The European Union could be in trouble. But I am sure some formula would be found to work around the problems.

May 30: Today we went to visit Schornbrun Palace. Last week's tour highlighted Franz Joseph and Elisabeth; In Schornbrun can be seen the life and times of Maria Theresa Maria Theresa (1717-1780), archduchess of Austria, Holy Roman Empress, and queen of Hungary and Bohemia, began her rule in 1740. She was the only woman ruler in the 650 history of the Habsburg dynasty. She was also one of the most successful Habsburg rulers, male or female, while bearing sixteen children between 1738 and 1756. Maria Theresa was the eldest daughter of Holy Roman Emperor Charles VI. In 1711, Charles VI found himself the sole remaining male Habsburg. An old

European law, the Salic law, prohibited a woman from inheriting her father's kingdom. Concerned that he may not father a son, Charles VI issued a decree in 1713, known as the Pragmatic Sanction. This document guaranteed the right of succession to his daughter. At this time, many of the great powers of Europe agreed to her succession of power, at a price. Upon the death of Charles VI in 1740, however, challenges to the Habsburg lands led to the War of the Austrian Succession when she lost Silesia to Prussia. She built the royal palace to house her many children and the entourage. The palace has over 360 bedrooms. (One of her daughters was Marie Antoinette of France.) The empress had a long reign, which spanned forty years. She died on November 29, 1780. Some historians have termed Maria Theresa as the savior of the Habsburg Dynasty. Her efforts to transform her empire into a modern state solidified the Habsburg rule. Although when she came to the throne, her state appeared on the brink of dismemberment, Maria Theresa provided a strong foundation for the continuation of the Habsburg Dynasty into the modern era. The gardens are well laid out and the ballrooms and the parlours are remarkable. After W.W. II the rooms that housed the royalty were leased to common people. Those living in them still pay the same rent as in 1946.

We drove by several parks, one of them memorializing Mozart, Schubert, Beethoven, Strauss and Freud. We saw the church that Franz Joseph built to thank God for escaping assassination called the Votive Church. The Habsburg rule ended in 1918, at the end of WWI, after 900 years of continued reign. The empire at one time had 55 million people.

But at the conclusion of WW I, according to the treaty of Versailles, Austria was reduced to its present boundaries, and 8 million people. We also saw the Belvedere Palace, built for Prince Eugene, a soldier and general of fortune. It was Eugene who defeated the Turks and helped the Austrian army to become viable. It was in this palace that, on May 15, 1955, the Allies signed the treaty that granted self-rule to Austria. In the treaty is a peculiar clause that demands that Austria maintain the monument to thank the Soviet Union for liberating Austria from the German occupation.

The tour also took us by The Opera and the Sacher restaurant. Sandstone was used for construction of most major structures in Vienna, and it is no easy task to clean the buildings of the pollution that sandstone absorbs. But Vienna does an excellent job of keeping itself tidy and neat. There are literally thousands of tourists, in spite of the heat.

At 4 p.m., we went to a restaurant along with Eva and Peter, joined by Leon and Ruth. Robby, our driver came at 9.30 to fetch us back to the hotel. I must be careful to pace myself while going on tours. I tire easily, perhaps due to the heat wave. We have almost a month of visiting and seeing people and places. I must be cautious of my health.

May 31: The first item of business today was to take Josie to the hairdresser. As she was being groomed, Peter and Eva asked me to accompany

them to Peter's father grave. He is interred in a mixed cemetery. We lit candles and placed stones on the tomb. Peter is not happy about the place and shape of the tomb. It was all his half brother's and stepmother' idea. Peter has placed a personal plaque declaring his love for his father. When we returned, I found Josie ready. Whatever the hair stylist did was excellent, as she looked stunningly beautiful. We drove back to the hotel while Peter walked back home. On our way we saw Vienna woods.

In the afternoon we decided to explore the Stephen square and neighbourhood for a couple of hours. Across from the cathedral is the Jewish Welcome Services, where Leon is the director. We met him briefly, and walked over to St. Peter's Church, a stone throw from the big cathedral. St. Peter's is a beautiful church, one of the side chapels dedicated to Archbishop Estaveria, the founder of Opus Dei. One of the priests, in soutane, greeted me as he was going to the confessional. I told him about a man dressed in Franciscan habit in the square begging and offering to sell medallions and scapular, and asked if he knew whether the man was genuine. He had no idea, but apologized on behalf of all the priests if the man was phony. Next we visited St. Augustine's church, again in the vicinity, Apparently the hearts of the royalty are kept in this church, the intestines in St. Stephen's, and the bodies in the capuchin crypt. We returned to the hotel to get ready to attend the dinner in Sacher. One of Vienna's aristocratic hotels dating back to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Sacher distinguishes itself with its ornate rococo decor, a restaurant that is the social hub of the Viennese elite and an old-world coffee-house that created the rich chocolate cake called the Sacher Torte. The Sacher is centrally located near the Opera House.

This was Eva's big day. She had invited 27 of the closest friends of Mendi, to celebrate his life and remember him. Eva, Ruth and Peter were already there deciding on seating plans. Of the 27, 2 couples asked to be excused. So there were 23 who came by 6.30 p.m. Irmie and Robby, Sacha and his wife, Michael and his former girl friend, and of course Leon, we had already met. Most spoke English. In any case Eva had thoughtfully arranged for us to sit beside someone who could converse with us. Josie sat next to Eva, and Irmie sat next to me. Cocktails were served in an adjoining room. There were four servers to attend to the 23 of us.

The dining room was beautifully decorated as only Sacher can. We sat in predesignated seats. Peter rose to welcome the friends of Eva and Mendi. Then on his invitation Eva spoke from her heart to thank those who came, and to remind them that Mendi had hosted a similar dinner two years ago. It was a heart warming and touching tribute to Mendi and to the friends. Those around the table knew Mendi, and had spent many years in his jovial company, and had admired his many qualities, and envied his irrepressible spirit. Elizabeth, a widow, had come from Brussels. Others were Lajesi and Judith, Jaeno – a great collector of paintings and his companion Mercy; Julie and Kurtie, Doft and Hannia. Some of these had known Eva and Mendi for

many years, including a few, in concentration camps. Leon spoke thanking Eva for arranging the get-together, reminiscing about the old days. Speeches over, dinner was served. What dinner!1 What service!! What crockery and cutlery! The menu was thoughtfully written in German and English for us. We spent over three hours over food, drinks, and chatter, and when the famous dessert of Sacher was announced, we enjoyed it immensely. By about 10 p.m. we bade goodbye to all and walked back to the hotel.

June 1 : Eva and the two of us set out early today to go to Salzburg. I had several reasons for asking for this trip: to see the country side, to see the famous Salzburg of Sound of Music fame, and more importantly, to visit the dreaded concentration camp on the way in Mauthausen that was reported to be as evil as Auschwitz. This was the camp where Eva's father died of infection. My question to Eva, as we were about to step into the camp was: "How can you forgive these evil doers? If anyone so much as hurt my own father, I would kill him."

The detainees were brought to the rock quarry there, known as the "Wiener Graben", where they began to build the granite fortress-prison of the main camp, mostly with their blood, bodies, bare hands and backs. It was known as the "mother camp" for all of Austria, comprising some 49 sub-camps. Between Aug. 8, 1938 and May 5, 1945, about 195,000 persons, men and women, were forced into these camps. Most of the people were imprisoned under the Nazi "protective custody" laws, that is, they were considered dangerous to the Third Reich of Germany and Austria, and therefore, these two nations, now joined, had to be "protected" from these people because of their racial origin, nationality, political affiliation or religious belief. It should be noted that Austria contributed more volunteers for the SS, per capita, than did Germany.

The Mauthausen camp was one of the most infamous in the entire Nazi alternate universe of human destruction. Many people, most of whom were innocent of any crimes, were tortured to death in its rock quarry, and in the tunnels of Mauthausen-Gusen, the most infamous of the sub-camps. The policy of death through work was instituted by Chief of SS, Reichsfuhrer Heinrich Himmler. Prisoners were to be given only the most primitive tools, and also, whenever possible, they were to work with their bare hands. This policy was known as "Primitivbauweise". In Mauthausen it resulted in a harsh, stone world, deprived of any human kindness and compassion. It is there today still... sitting on a small mountaintop in the astonishingly beautiful and bucolic Austrian countryside, maintained by the Austrian government.

Thousands of detainees were forced to work long hours, with very little food and water, climbing the steep hill, tortured and shot if they hesitated or tottered. The guards constantly beat them and kicked them. Some SS had binoculars and picked off those who were weak and shot them dead. One SS man boasted that he had killed 360 men in one day using an axe as his

weapon. In addition to it being a work camp, it was also an extermination camp, with gas chamber and crematorium. The cruelty of human beings, the utter contempt for life, the immense horror of Nazi camps, can only be equaled by the ignorance of the world to such atrocities. How can one forgive and forget the perpetrators of such atrocities?

We drove on to Salzburg, in silence, each one wrestling with different emotions. Then I remembered the dinner in Sacher last night. All of them had suffered the atrocities of holocaust, some in this very camp. But they had survived. Indeed, they had more than just survived. After all the tribulations and sufferings, they had triumphed, each in his or her own way. The joyous laughter, the carefree conversations, the *joie de vivre* of those around that dinner table was proof enough that a people can be killed, but their soul cannot be destroyed. While people all over the civilized world condemn Hitler and his henchmen who perpetrated the worst crimes in human history, this race has triumphed beyond the dictator's worst nightmares.

We reached Salzburg at about 1.30 p.m. On the way we passed the village of Braunau Am Inn just across the border from German Bavaria, where Hitler was born. Adolf Hitler would one day lead a movement that placed supreme importance on a person's family tree even making it a matter of life and death. However, his own family tree was quite mixed up and would be a lifelong source of embarrassment and concern to him. His father, Alois, was born in 1837. He was the illegitimate son of Maria Anna Schicklgruber and her unknown mate, which may have been someone from the neighborhood or a poor mill worker named Johann Georg Hiedler. It is also remotely possible Adolf Hitler's grandfather was Jewish. Maria Schicklgruber was said to have been employed as a cook in the household of a wealthy Jewish family named Frankenberger. There is some speculation their 19-year-old son got her pregnant and regularly sent her money after the birth of Alois. Adolf Hitler would never know for sure just who his grandfather was.

We took the cable car to the top of the fortress and ordered a leisurely lunch. Aruna, a Nepalese waitress who had come to study in Salzburg a few years ago, and who works here in the restaurant full time now, served us. She pointed out places of interest as we were being served. Eva herself had lived here over 50 years ago when she first came to Austria as a refugee. This was more a nostalgic trip for her than a sightseeing one. Next table to ours was Dr. Paul First from Los Angeles with his family. They are doing a tour of Austria on bicycle. The city has a famous university, a church built in late renaissance and early baroque style. (Renaissance originated in Venice, while baroque started in Rome.) We took a horse drawn caleche to see some of the interesting places of the city. But Eva was upset that the first cab driver was a Moroccan who was new to the city and knew nothing about the town. She wanted to show us the famous park and the market. But the driver did not know where those were. But I was content with the view from the fortress built by a prince archbishop who was in difficulties

when the king and the pope feuded. Thus began the fortress that saw several changes, additions, torture chambers, rebellions and upheavals through the centuries. We returned towards Vienna at night.

June 2 : Our last full day in Austria. Robby came to bring us to Ruth's place at 9 a.m. I had gone earlier in the morning to the west railway station to check out the start of our train journey tomorrow morning. After having asked around, I was reasonably sure as to where to go, where to stand, how to catch the train etc. etc. Another reason for my morning outing was to test out my legs that had pained all through last night. When we were at Ruth's place, I mentioned the pain to Eva. Ruth immediately gave me an ointment, which was rubbed, into the affected area. The relief was instantaneous. One or two more applications, and the problem should be under control.

We had been invited to see the art collection of Dr. Jaeno whom we had met in Sacher. When he started collecting paintings of relatively lesser-known artists many years ago, his friends did not understand what he was doing. Now he has one of the best collections of some of the Hungarian and Austrian painters of the 20th century, worth a few million dollars. He sells some and collects more. In addition, rare silver collections, furniture, pottery and vessels are on display in his large apartment. His wife died a few years ago. His only daughter is in Tel Aviv. Her advice to her father is to continue to collect; not to sell. It must cost him a tidy sum in insurance and upkeep to keep the collection in the apartment. We were thankful for the rare opportunity to see the collection. After a drink with him, we went to lunch in a choice restaurant. By the time we got back, it was past 3.30. We got ready and walked over to the Opera.

This was our first experience seeing an opera, though I had seen bits and pieces in movies and on stage. The Vienna Opera is one of the best concert halls in the world, built in the 19th century, and rebuilt after WWII. We had a loge for ourselves. In front of us were tiny screens on which appeared the translation of the opera in English or French or German or Italian as the actors sang. The opera of the night was Verdi's Don Carlos. And lasted five hours with two intermissions. The stage director took some liberties with the piece and added some new stuff that the purists did not like at all, and they hooted in contempt. A dream sequence and a media frenzy that the director added to Verdi's play were not well received by the audience. Eva had arranged for us to have champagne and dinner during the first intermission. Unfortunately after the late lunch we could not do justice to the delectable fare. The show itself was very interesting, though I had anticipated some boredom; I was really enthralled by the opera. At 10.30 the show was over and we walked to the hotel, having said goodbye to Eva and to our new friends Ruth and Peter and Regina. Eva meticulously planned these last few days. One cannot forget all the loving effort that went into organizing everything. We are very thankful for the opportunity.

June 3 : We were up early to go to the west railway station. Vienna has

four or five major train stations unlike in North America, where a central station or Union station is the hub of all trains. Robby came to take us at 7.30. (We left a suitcase in the hotel, as we are due back here in three weeks.) The ICE (Inter city Express) train started exactly at 8.30 a.m. We were about 20 passengers in the first class compartment. Instead of choosing a room, we decided to sit with a table in front of us and watch the countryside go by.

These are the best trains that run anywhere in the world. The windows are spotlessly clean; the seats are extremely comfortable; the dining car is next door; the washrooms and amenities are well maintained. We had the map of Austria and Germany with us; a few books to read, and my copybook for notes. The landscape changed every few hours. : mountains, fields, valleys, towns, hamlets, and vineyards, to undulating stretches. Austria ended in a couple of hours and Germany began with no perceptible difference of terrain. With European Union, there are no more borders, or checkpoints, or passport controls. We followed the Rhine for several hours and saw the castles that are famous on both sides. (We have planned to take a boat trip on the Rhine just to see the castles). Avarchen, my nephew, in Lippstadt, had specifically asked that we visit with him this weekend. Otherwise we would have gone to Switzerland, then Frankfurt, and then to his place. As it was, we crossed most of Germany to reach Dortmund after 11 hours in the train. There was a steady downpour when we reached the station. Avarachen and Molly were waiting for us. We drove to Lippstadt, about 20 kilometers away from Dortmund.

Molly had come to Lippstadt in 1972 to study nursing, got a job in the local hospital, brought one of her sisters, married Avarachen who joined her in 1979, and they have been living here ever since. Jaisy and Jenz were born here. In fact the last time we visited them was 20 years ago when Molly had just given birth to their son. Jenz returned at night after having completed 9 months of community service, in lieu of military training, one of which is compulsory in Germany.

Avarachen's house, a single family detached one, unlike most dwellings in Europe- was bought about ten years ago. Molly grows flowers, vegetables, and fruits in her garden, as her hobby. The solarium is a cozy place to sit and chat and that was what we did well into the night. Molly's sister and her husband, who live literally next door, came over to join us.

Germany is going through a deep malaise. Integration of both Germanys has strained the not inconsiderable resources of West Germany. The generous social welfare system available for decades in West Germany has to be given to the newly integrated East. In addition, tens of thousands of Germans returned from the old Soviet block countries, draining the resources further.

The defeat of the ruling party in the recent elections in West Falia, the defeat of the referendum on the constitution of the European Union in Holland, are all indications of anger and frustration of people. Unemployment

in Germany used to be nonexistent. But now it is very high. People live in dread of losing their jobs. Productions of most goods are now being shifted to the Far East or to East European countries. The welfare system of Germany, once the envy of the world, is tottering on the brinks of collapse. Add to this, the influx of “foreigners”, and the despair of the “native” Germans can be imagined. Health care is in jeopardy, pension is in peril. People such as Avarachen feel that underneath the veneer of civility, there lurks racism and hatred of foreigners. When times are bad, people tend to look at neighbours with suspicion and rancor. The 7 million immigrants here hail from 180 nationalities. But their main components are: 2.6 million people of Turkish heritage; 1.5 million ethnic Germans invited in from the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe; 6000,000 Italians; 320,000 Poles; 170,000 Bosnians; 75,000 German Jews, and 65,000 Afghans. The jobless rate of the immigrants is twice as high as the national rate of 11%. Many live in ghettos with high rates of crime and juvenile delinquency, especially the Russian and East European communities.

But the Turkish population is the big dilemma. Brought here as guest workers, they were denied citizenship for a long time. They do not integrate with the main stream. Most Turkish kids are channeled in to the non-academic streams after Grade 4. Only half finish the apprentice program ending at Grade 10. Only 10 per cent graduate after Grade 13 and go on to university. Nearly 80 per cent of the Turkish 16-21 age group is German born. They are thus a German problem, not a Turkish one. Bring into this mix, the political decision of the European Union to invite Turkey to join the Union, you have the potential for volatility.

June 4 : After a late breakfast we went for a long walk, more to talk than to exercise. In the afternoon, in addition to Molly’s sister Kunjumol and her husband Baby, a few others joined, including Pappachan, a High School teacher and his wife, and Chackochan and Annama, a niece of late Fr. Philip, who had visited us many years ago in Montreal, and who will be coming again to Montreal end of July for a wedding, and a young Malayalee priest. The priest is a Vincentian. He told me that there are dozens of priests from Kerala working in various dioceses in Germany, simply because there are not enough priests in the country. We talked of all kinds of topics: uncertainty about job security, children getting married, retirement and resettlement, European Union and the uncertain future of that enterprise, etc. etc. Avarachen grilled an excellent barbecue and all enjoyed the evening, and sat around till midnight, eating, drinking, and getting to know each other.

June 5 : Today is the feast of the local parish church. St. Boniface, according to legends came from England to spread Christianity to Germany in the 7th century. Isolated missionary groups had penetrated central Germany in earlier times, but not until the eighth century was there a systematic effort to Christianize the vast pagan wilderness. To the English monk Boniface belongs the honor of opening up this region and creating a hierarchy under

direct commission from the Holy See. Thirty-six years of missionary labor under difficult and dangerous conditions, ending at last in martyrdom, entitle this good and courageous man to the designation, "Apostle of Germany." Avarachen is a member of the parish council and was hoping we would enjoy the ceremonies and especially procession through the streets of the town as part of the festivities. Unfortunately the rain would not let up. After some time, the parish

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Avarachen's involvement in the parish activities gave us great happiness. He is the first "foreigner" on the parish council. He initiated the idea of helping the developing and poor countries, using the generosity of the parishioners. The parish council, with the leadership of Avarachen, has adopted Caritas hospital in Kottayam as a focus of their charity. They help 24 cancer patients, who are really deserving of help. The administrator of Caritas selects the patients, sending their details to Lippstatdt, and Avarachen's parish council releases funds for them. This is an ongoing parish project. When the tsunami disaster happened recently, the hospital staff where Avarachen is a nurse approached him to ask if they could help. He suggested building houses for those who lost their homes to the disaster. Money was collected and funneled through Avarachen to be sent to the Bishop of Kottayam, who would oversee the construction of the houses. Thus the money collected in the locality would be fully utilized, rather than wasted in administrative matters. Avarachen, with the full support of Molly, is involved in parish, hospital, and personal charities.

We had a late lunch in Baby's place, just the six of us, and talked some more. The influx of Keralites in Germany stopped in 1980 or so. They have

grown children who are more or less well educated. Many are in senior high schools, and colleges and universities. They do find employment in the European Union. However their problem is finding life's partners. The Knanya families – about 50 of them- would like their children to marry within the community. The children are not averse to the idea. However, the choices in Europe are very limited. Most have fluency in English, as well as Malayalam. They hope to meet young people in North America during conventions and visits. I suggested that German and Austrian families should participate in the Knanya conventions and activities of North America. They want to do so.

Germany has a peculiar schooling system. When a child enters elementary school, one teacher looks after her and takes her all the way to Grade 4. At that point, the teacher suggests to the parents which stream the girl should follow. There are three such streams: up to grade 10 with vocational training; up to Grade 10 purely academic studies, and up to grade 13 with the view to carrying on in universities. All education is free up to and including university. Studies in universities for engineering and medicine are only for those with the highest scores, though others too can apply. As I understand it, doctors do not make the kind of income that North American doctors do, and the years of training are just as long. Some of the German doctors are now going to Australia and New Zealand hoping to earn more.

Avarachen's arrival in Germany is a story in itself. He is the second son of my eldest surviving sister. After his high school education in 1971, he decided to join the military service. As he and his brother were going by train from Kottayam to Ernakulam, they met a ticket examiner in the train who started chatting with them. On finding out that Avarachen was going to meet the recruiting officer, the TTR (train ticket examiner) gave him his card, and told him to tell the recruiting officer that he (the TTR) had recommended Avarachen. It so happened that the officer was the brother of TTR. Major Pappali, the officer, was surprised to meet someone recommended by his brother. He immediately not only selected him, but also told him that there was one single vacancy in Lucknow for nurses training, if he wanted to join it. Avarachen, with the permission of his mother and his brother (whose wedding date was only a few days away), accepted to join the forces as a nurse trainee. He completed his education in Lucknow, and got commissioned in Rajasthan, where he worked as medical officer for a few years. Sr. Innocent, a cousin of his, who knew Molly, recommended that the two should get married. They did so in 1978. The following year Avarachen, with the tacit approval of his commanding officer, joined Molly in Lippstadt. After a few months of language studies, the local hospital employed him temporarily, and recommended that he be certified as a full-fledged nurse without any additional training or studies. He and Molly have been in Lippstadt ever since. No wonder as we were walking around the town, everyone seems to know them.

June 6 : We visited Bad Westernkotten, a health resort facility not too far from Avarachen's place, where patients recommended by insurance company are treated for various ailments, using nature's resources- thermal bath, sauna, walking around medicated plants, etc. etc. We too walked leisurely around the place, enjoying the atmosphere, and each other's company. In the evening Kunjumol and Baby joined us for dinner and we said goodbye to each other as we expect to go to the train station early in the morning to take our connecting train to Switzerland. This little town of about 70,000 inhabitants has a few major industries, 3 hospitals, farming communities all around, a fine clean downtown, with all necessary stores. Some of the structures date back to the 11th century. Most people go to work on bicycles, as everything seems to be close by. It was a pleasant few days we spent here. Both Avarachen and Molly were extremely happy to have us, and we were very happy here. Jenz is deciding where to go next year. He was helpful in finding us a hotel in Berlin and booking it in advance. We will bid them all farewell tomorrow.

June 7 : We were up at 7 a.m. Molly went to work a few minutes later, after bidding us goodbye. She was a kind and loving hostess. Avarachen took us to the Lippstadt railway station where we boarded the train to Dortmund. The gentleman sitting next to us was Dr. Wilbrand Korone, an agronomist. He spoke about the huge expense that Germany incurs annually for environmental protection, whereas the rest of the European Union and USA are not in the least bit interested in such matters. He feels that EU has been going at break-neck speed at integration and globalization that essentially benefits multinational companies. The backlash against EU is real. He himself feels that Germany is losing out by being part of the Union.

We are on our way to Fribourg in Switzerland to meet an old friend and companion of mine whom I have not seen in forty years. Mani Mezhukanal was one year my junior in school, and we were together from 1948 to 1956 in school, during religious studies, in Loyola College, Madras, and we had met rather irregularly till about 1965. Mani is a polyglot, knowing more than a dozen languages; brilliant at understanding and analysis; a rebel in his ideas, and a free spirit. He has been in Switzerland for over thirty years, teaching, lecturing, organizing film festivals, writing and so on. I had always been curious about what he is up to, and how the young man I knew has evolved. This is an opportunity to find out.

We changed trains in Basel, then one more time in Bern for a short ride to Fribourg. We got out with our luggage and looked for Mani who had promised to meet us at the station. In my eagerness at the expected reunion, I carried both the heavy suitcases down some stairs-not a wise thing for one who has had an angioplasty done not too long ago!. Josie spotted a bearded gentleman with a walking stick and I knew that must be Mani, as a mutual friend had told me that he needed a walking stick to move about. He greeted us warmly and took us to the parking lot where Danielle, his wife,

was waiting in the car.

She greeted us enthusiastically. Danielle is French, but speaks some English and understands it rather well. We went in her car to the town of Beronnes where they have a beautiful house. They had bought land in the town of less than 4000 inhabitants, built a house about 15 years ago and have been living there ever since. Danielle works in an institution for the handicapped not too far from their home. Mani's office used to be in Zurich, but did not have to go there too often. Mani was the founder of a small group of about ten internationally known interfaith experts on religion and philosophy that arranged lectures, seminars, and training all over Europe. The Christian churches of Switzerland partially subsidized the group. In addition, he organized an Indian film festival in Fribourg that became very popular. Now he is invited to be a judge at film festivals in several cities. He worked out of home, since he had to plan and prepare his lectures and seminars. Mani had met Danielle when he was convalescing in the institution where she was working, and they have been married for 30 years. Danielle works twice a week now that Mani is retired. Their only daughter, Kamala has a child –Naya- a beautiful 9-month-old girl, who is the center of everybody's attention.

Mani and I stayed up late in to the night and caught up on each other. The conversation was easy and intimate. The ladies, in spite of languages difficulties, got along well. We had a typical Swiss dinner with melted cheese, potatoes, vegetables, and various pickles. And, of course, wine which is part of every meal. Mani still smokes a pipe. The doctors had discovered a tumour underneath his spinal cord a few years ago, and did not want to tamper with it as it might affect his spinal cord. They gave him two years to live. That was close to 15 years ago. He went to India for ayurvedic treatment that has at least arrested the tumour. He has carried on with his work till he retired completely only recently. He has difficulty sleeping for more than a few hours; his movements are somewhat restricted; but he carries on cheerfully. In fact his main hobby is to work in his garden that he tends with great care and enthusiasm. The gardening enthusiasm surprised me, as the Mani I knew when young was not in the least interested in such manual activities. We talked and talked and when we discovered how late it was, we decided to call it a night and carry on tomorrow. Mani told us that Danielle will turn sixty tomorrow. I insisted that we go out to a good restaurant to celebrate. Bookings are made to go to Fribourg at 6 p.m. tomorrow to celebrate Danielle's "shashtyapurthy".

June 8 : We had breakfast together, and, of course, resumed the unending conversation. By now we had gauged each other, and felt extremely at ease with each other. Since we had grown up together and knew people, had read the same books, and studied in the same institutions, it was easy to recall incidents, persons, and events with great ease. We developed the former trust, and repartee, poking fun at each other, bantering, laughing,

singing, remembering and relaxing together.

At 11.30 Kamala came with Naya, and left the baby with the grand parents, as she worked a few hours a week. Danielle cooked a delicious chicken curry for lunch. In the late afternoon Kamala returned to get the baby. We went to Fribourg. On the way to the restaurant we stopped to visit the local cathedral that had some vibrant stained glass windows and a history dating back to the 12th century.

We drove around to see the medieval city, its fortress, the bridges that span the Sarine, quaint shops, stone paved square. Some 34km southwest of Bern, FRIBOURG (Freiburg in German) is one of Switzerland's best-kept secrets. It's winningly attractive, almost perfectly preserved, is set on a forested peninsula in a meander of the River Sarine. Steep, cobbled streets, bedecked with wrought-iron lamp standards and ornate inn signs, are picturesque and with its own character. Six bridges, from wooden fords to lofty modern valley spans, provide woodcut-pretty views back across the town of the old houses piled up together on the slopes. One of the country's most prestigious universities – and its sole Catholic one – attracts a massive student body to Fribourg from all over the country.

Restaurant de Trois Tours Bourguillon, Fribourg's finest eatery, housed in an old patrician mansion, serves up fresh and interesting gourmet menus in its formal restaurant where prices – and haute-cuisine quality – rise dramatically. The restaurant is the best in Fribourg. They offered to serve us their surprise of the day, rather than us fumbling as to what to order. The fare was exquisite, excellent wine, first class service. Never mind the bill!

June 9 : We decided to leave early in the morning to see as much of Switzerland and its beauty as we can in one day. Danielle is an excellent driver and guide. She took us to Thun Lake and from there to Brienz Lake the Interlaken region. From there we drove up to the glaciers of Grimsel (2160 meters above sea level) and two other passes. It turned cold up on the mountains and the wind was biting in to our faces. But the mountains are majestic; glaciers gleamed in the sun.

River Rhone starts from these mountains flowing to France. A few kilometers farther we saw the glaciers from which originate the mighty Rhine. On a clear day one can see the Mattahorn of Alps from Grimsel. We had lunch in one of the restaurants that open only for five months of the year. The mountains, the passes, the snow on the Alps, the crystal clear waters of the streams and rivers, the dead lakes, the glaciers, the picturesque villages and towns nestled among the mountains, breathtaking beauty – add to these the pleasant company and informed guide- and one has the ingredients for a perfect day.

Danielle drove from 7.45 in the morning to about 9 p.m. stopping only for lunch, or to show us some places of spectacular beauty. We stopped in a Chinese restaurant for dinner "The Tulip"- she had driven over 430 kilometers and shown us an enormous part of the country. The picture

postcards about Switzerland came alive. We are happy and grateful.

June 10 :

Danielle had to go to work at 8 a.m. We thanked her and invited both of them to Canada. At 11.30 a taxi arrived to take us to the station to resume our train journey to Frankfurt. The parting with Mani was heartfelt. I had, in the last couple of days, learned much about and from him. We wished him all the best in the treatment that he is going to have in India, and again invited him to Canada. It was indeed a pleasure to have had the chance to meet Mani again. We hope we will meet again. What did Mani and I talk about? About our mutual and separate past; about life in general and ours in particular; about philosophy and religions; about every topic above and under the sun. We asked each other questions and decided that there are more questions than answers. As Mani said, we should accept the fact that we do not have all the answers to all our questions. But one keeps on searching till the very end.

We arrived in Frankfurt at about 5 p.m. Alykutty was waiting for us at the station. She is an aesthetician who studied in Germany in the 70's. She married Unni (Thomas Tharayil) who is the son of a cousin of mine. He has a PhD in biochemistry, and is into private business related to medical and other supplies. Their only son, Robin, just completed his medical studies, and will be trained as an aesthetician in a nearby town. We drove to their home and Robin was waiting for us. It was nice meeting the three of them after several years. The last time we saw them was when they visited us in Canada in 1987 or so. Robin left for Switzerland in the evening, where he will spend the weekend with friends. A handsome young man, in addition to German and English, he speaks French and Malayalam. In fact we have been remarking that the children of Kerala families speak Malayalam in Germany and Austria (unlike those in Canada.). We went for a walk in the nearby park where mineral water of various types flow. There was also a group of iron statues that one could manipulate to any shape. There was much to catch up on, so we talked late into the night.



Figure 33.1: with Mani(sitting), Jossie, Danielle,Kamala,Naya(standing)-
June10,2005

June 11 : Unni's sister, Maggie and her husband Heniz are in Bad Kissingen. They are both doctors, but have both recently retired. They had met when Maggie was studying medicine in Worsburg University. I had met them in 1966 in Germany when they were still studying, and we were their guests 20 years ago in Bad Kissingen. Heinz is a history buff; he collects rare stones and minerals, as he is interested in geology. They travel a great deal, especially to rarely visited countries such as Cambodia, Mongolia, Vietnam etc. Both of them came in the morning to spend two days with us.

After breakfast we hit the road in two cars. Today's destination is the Middle Rhine Valley. Rudesheim is its gateway. We drove to Niederwald monument commemorating the victory of Prussia over France. On the edge of the forest, 250 m above the Rhine, a huge monument designed to symbolize the re-establishment of the German Empire and Germany's unity was erected between 1877 and 1883 (Indeed the unification of Germany under Bismarck, is celebrated in several places. It is noteworthy that, there is no mention at all of Chancellor Bismarck, but of the Kaiser. That too was a tactic used by Bismarck.)

From there we drove to see the statue of Lorelei, the legendary temptress of the Rhine. According to German legend, there was once a beautiful young maiden, named Lorelei, who threw herself, headlong into the river in despair over a faithless lover. Upon her death she was transformed into a siren and could from that time on be heard singing on a rock along the Rhine River, near St. Goar. Her hypnotic music lured sailors to their death. The legend is based on an echoing rock with that name near Sankt Goarshausen, Germany.

We drove by hundreds of acres of vineyards that make some of the best wines of the world-Riesling, Burgundy of Assmanshausen (one of the most celebrated German red wines). We had light refreshments in Rudesheimer where Alykutty and I had their special coffee with its own liqueur, while others had other things to eat and drink. We drove on to the Benedictine Abbey of St. Hildegard, founded by the saint of that name in the 11th century. It is still an active nunnery. The banks of the river Rhine are dotted with castles- large and larger-, along with fortresses and toll stations. Since the Rhine was the high way of Europe, tolls were charged and princes and nobles made enormous money from that source. I was eager to see the Kloster Eiberbach, founded by St. Bernard. This was a Cistercian Abbey started as a reform order of the Benedictines. Monastic life, characterized by stirring church services, long hours of work, unyielding asceticism, strict silence, renunciation of meat as well as heated rooms. This particular monastery thrived up to 1803. After Napoleon conquered this part of Europe, Prince Frederick August of Nassau-Usingen disbanded the monastery, annexed it, and founded a wine domain. Even now, during the course of our tour of the monastery, we saw huge casks of wine in the cellar. The basilica, the common dormitory, chapter hall and other cloistered portions reserved only to the monks, are extremely interesting.

We returned to Unni's place for a delectable dinner. Alykutty had made all arrangements for us. We went to the city of Frankfurt to attend the Flower show. But the line up was too long and we decided to visit some of the sights of Frankfurt.. A shopping concourse designed and built by Shneider, that allows one to walk through the three floors of the mall without having to use the elevator or the escalator. We also walked on the bridge spanning River Mosel. Late at night we returned for a good night's rest.

June 12 : Our original plan was to take a boat trip on the Rhine from Mainz to Cologne. However since we had seen the area several times during our train rides, and since Maggie and Unni were here, we decided to spend another day with them. Mary, a friend of theirs from Kerala, a widow, came in the morning to visit with them. Mary is in the process of building an ayurvedic resort in Kochi and told us about it. She was working in Germany for 35 years, and her children are married. She is hoping the new enterprise will keep her profitably busy.

We drove to Mainz to visit the Guttenberg museum. Johannes Guttenberg is to be considered one of the greatest inventors of note who turned human history around. His invention of the printing press in the 15th century revolutionized the dissemination of knowledge and information. The original printing presses, 2 copies of the 180 Bibles that were first printed, history of printing in the last 5 centuries etc. are illustrated in the museum. From there we went to the Cathedral of Mainz, famous for its stained glass windows designed by Chagall. The church was first built in 975. The bishop of Mainz was one of the seven electors to choose the German king (who was also the emperor of the Holy Roman empire.) We did not stay long as service was going on in the cathedral.

After a very late lunch, we returned to Unni's place. Rosamma, the sister of Alykutty, and Jose, her husband, came to visit. Maggie and Heinz returned late at night, promising to visit us in Canada soon. We retired after a long day, after having said our good bye to Alykutty who will be going to work early in the morning. She has been a great hostess. In fact she had planned on giving us gifts, that we had to politely refuse as we were overburdened with luggage. She gave us a c.d containing the pictures she took. A wonderful couple- Unni and Alykutty.

June 13 : Unni drove us at 9 a.m. to the station and we boarded the first available train to Cologne. Our train crested a small ridge and suddenly two spires protruded above the horizon. We were surrounded by pasture, yet there was no doubt we were approaching Cologne and its great cathedral – the Kölner Dom. The feature of the Dom that immediately – and continually – impresses the visitor is its sheer size. This is one massive church – its interior space is equal to 650 typical American homes. A ten-story building could stand on its floor and not touch the ceiling. The twin spires are each 515 feet tall – more than one-third the height of the Sears Tower. Cologne's main train station is right next to the Cathedral.

Incredibly, I didn't see the cathedral at first because it was so close – a 100-yard stroll and 50 stairs took us from the train station to the Domvorplatz – the paved, elevated plaza that surrounds the cathedral. To enter the church we passed under a labyrinth of scaffolding, part of the cathedral's perpetual restoration project. Inside the Cathedral, my eyes and spirit were immediately lifted up, up, up! Everything in this church seems to point to God.

Throughout our visit I was filled with reverence and awe, and sensed that this was, indeed, a Holy place. The other visitors – mostly tourists like us, but some petitioners, too – spoke only in hushed tones. Entering through the west doors (main entrance), you are immediately caught up in the cathedral's grandeur. Although this portion of the church is somewhat bare, the clerestory and vaulting give a feeling of the size of the edifice. The towering windows on the south aisles include the Bavarian windows, donated by King Ludwig I of Bavaria in 1848.

Like most windows in the nave, they are colored with pigments that have been burned on rather than stained. In the north aisles are the stained glass Renaissance windows (1507-09). In the center of the transept is an elegant bronze-and-marble altar that can be seen from all parts of the cathedral. Behind the high altar, in the chancel, is The Shrine of the Three Magi, the most important and valuable object in the cathedral. It's designed in gold and silver in the form of a triple-naved basilica and decorated with relief figures depicting the life of Christ, the Apostles, and various Old Testament prophets. Across the front of the chancel are two rows of choir stalls divided into choirs. We walked about the cathedral, keeping our eyes on our watch, as we had to catch a train to Brussels. With some reluctance, we finally left the Kölner Dom and boarded our train.

History books will tell you that the Kölner Dom was built to show off the city's wealth and to help solidify the city's importance within the Church hierarchy. No doubt these motives played a part. However, the unity and grace of this structure, which was built by thousands of individuals over the course of 600 years, is evidence to me that God was the Chief Architect.

The train to Brussels was on the platform, so we hopped on it. After a few minutes, the ticket examiner came to inspect our tickets. He told us that this was a "Thalis" train on which a Eurail pass holder can board only if he has a reservation. Since we did not have any, he kindly gave us one, for which we had to pay extra. Thalís, like the TGV, is a privately run train. On arriving in Brussels after a couple of hours on the train, we went to the information desk. The man called Hotel Scandinavia, and they sent their vehicle to fetch us. As we waited for the hotel shuttle, the man at the information desk told us that he plays for a Belgian band, which will be performing in July in Montreal during the Francophonie games and conference.

Hotel Scandinavia is only 1 km. from the station. But the neighbourhood

is one of the poorest and one of the most crime-ridden places in Brussels.

After having checked in, we decided to go for a walk and wended our way to the Grand Place. Brussels' city center known as the Grand Place is the most magnificent square that I have seen in the world. Dating back to the 12th century, the square is smaller than one might expect. The buildings were constructed in medieval fashion with decorative gables, gilded facades, and brilliant gold accents. The Grand Place is an astonishing accomplishment. Important statesmen owned these buildings. Each competed to outdo the others.

Other than gazing in awe at the astounding parametric views, there really is not much else to do while visiting the Grand Place. A few vendors set up small stands in the square's center. We saw shops for flowers, snacks, and some souvenirs. We strolled about till late in the evening, and decided to retrace our steps. Somehow we took wrong turns and found ourselves a bit bewildered. So we hailed a cab that took us to what he thought was our hotel. It was Scandinavia hotel, all right, but Grand Scandinavia. So we took another cab, gave him the address and he took us to our own hotel. On the way he, an Iranian, thought the earlier cab driver, being a Moroccan, was dishonest and careless with visitors. "They do not care about cleanliness or honesty or the city. They are lazy and they are thieves", he said.

The receptionist at the hotel desk told us to be careful, and not carry handbags. We looked for a restaurant, but all in the vicinity were closed. We bought some stuff from a bakery and went back to gulp it down with a Belgian beer.

June 14 : A substantial breakfast in the hotel was followed by a three-hour tour of the city. The guide was excellent. We also had headphones for some of the explanations. While the Flemish forms the majority in the country, Brussels has a majority of French. Tensions used to be high between the two groups when I visited here in 1966. They have now managed to find formulae to coexist peacefully.

All metro station names are in both languages, and some of the names are quite different in French from the German. (Flemish language is influenced greatly by German.) It seems there are two separate federal bureaucracies; one national parliament. There are about 27 per cent foreign nationals in the country.

The Moroccan and North Africans came to Belgium in the 50's to work for Expo '58, and more came to build the metro system and all stayed. The first and second generations have learned the languages; but I am not sure if they have integrated with the mainstream community. In fact the different populations seem to exist as mosaics; separate, and distinct.

On the whole the economy seems to be doing well, with Antwerp, the second biggest harbour after Rotterdam, many car companies with their assembly plants in Belgium, the balance of external trade being substantially strong. There is, however, high unemployment. All are obliged to vote. The

Flemish that holds 58 per cent of the population, and the Walloons constitute 33 per cent. This is the headquarters of NATO and the European Union, thus bringing in hundreds of international employees. We saw some of the most popular spots of Brussels and returned for a late afternoon lunch and rest.

I asked the hotel manager for directions to Waterloo. He kindly obliged by checking his Internet, and asked if I meant Waterloo in London. I said I was looking for the real and only Waterloo. I knew it is only a few minutes away by train from Brussels. We walked over to the station and took the train to Waterloo. We asked around at the station for directions and were told that there is a permanent exhibit of Wellington a few minutes away on foot. We walked and walked. The few minutes became a good half hour. We saw a tourist information bureau, which directed us to take a bus to a “carrefour” and the battlefield of Waterloo is not far.

We stopped at the Carrefour and someone told us the place is only 2 lights away. The two lights happened to be rather long. In any case by the time we reached the “Lion Mound”, the attendants there were ready to close. They said it was too late to see the famous movie that graphically describes the battle. But we did see the sight and the mound and the battlefield. And like Napoleon, we turned away from the place. Napoleon was one of my heroes of childhood. This battle was one of the turning points in the history of Europe, even of the world. Bonaparte was in correspondence with Tipu of India, planning to defeat the British in India. While being disappointed at not spending more time there, we were glad we came, we saw, and we left.

June 15 : We decided to visit the National Basilica at Kockelberg, a kilometers from the hotel. We took the metro, and a tram to reach the basilica. It is the fifth largest in the world. There was hardly anyone visiting this massive edifice. We roamed in it leisurely, stopping at various side chapels – 19 of them-, including one where the Blessed Sacrament is exposed. 3 people were praying in it. As we were marveling at the immensity of the cathedral, and wondering about its history, a gentleman kindly stopped to talk to us. Leopold II, the second king of Belgium- the country got its independence from Netherlands in 1834- wanted to build a cathedral to match the great ones of Europe. The king started the project in 1905 and due to various obstacles it was completed only in 1968. The interior decoration is in 1930’s Art Deco style with use of marble. Paul says his grandmother paid for it, and he is now paying for it. Attendance in the churches in Belgium is about 8 per cent. Since the state (as does in Germany), pays for the maintenance of churches depending on the number of registered believers, the government subsidy is dropping alarmingly. Contrast this to the Muslims; whose attendance in mosques is over 80 per cent, and the growth rate of families is soaring to frightfully high proportions. The Muslims now demand money from the state for their mosques and to have their own schools.

Dr. Paul Marie Hannon speaks fluent English, having taken degrees in

Massachusetts, Indiana, and Salt Lake City. He has nine degrees, including a PhD in immunology. He was working in USA, when his father was ill. So he returned to his native Belgium, and ever since he has not been able to find a job. He says there are 21 per cent unemployment in Brussels, and the older one gets, the less likely he is to find a job. His 800 euros as unemployment benefit barely is sufficient for himself; he applied to be a gardener with the city, but he was too qualified even for that. We reached the hotel by noon, and took a shuttle to the station.

Next stop:

Hamburg. We reached the station in the late afternoon, and Jimmichan and Hilda were waiting for us there. Jimmichan is the son of a cousin of mine. I had come to Germany in 1966, and Jimmichan, who was then a student of shipbuilding engineering here, and I traveled around in a borrowed car – a car that belonged to Hilda, whom he was dating at that time-, and had gone to visit people and places, including Maggie, and West Berlin. I had presented a sari to Hilda, who wore it for their wedding. In fact she has it still with her. Subsequently we have met several times, including when they came to Canada to visit us. They took us to an Indian restaurant called Dwaraka, run by a friend of theirs.

Of their two children, Alex is the Managing Director of British American Tobacco Company in Budapest. Their daughter, Elisabeth, has a law degree from USA; was married and had settled in USA for a few years; but now she is back in Hamburg, with her two daughters, taking courses to get a degree in Business. The grand mother helps with baby-sitting when Elisabeth goes to school. Jimmichan and Hilda live in a suburb called Rilling. They have a very pleasant home and garden. We talked late into the night. Hilda has planned our itinerary for the next 2 days.

June 16 : Jimmichan took us for a tour of the city. We boarded a bus to see some of the sights. A major fire in 1843 had gutted much of the city, and during WWII the Allies had systematically bombed the city, since this was the big harbour of Germany. Therefore most buildings here, unlike in other cities, are of recent origin, even though it has 12 hundred years of history. This is a city-state with 1.7 million people. We visited the most affluent areas of Hamburg, where mansions are built on the banks of lakes. Parks and green spaces are standard in many German cities. We could not return to where we started the tour as students were demonstrating against the government proposal to impose a fee of hundred euros per year on university students. This, the first fee ever to be contemplated, has brought students from colleges and schools out to demonstrate. In the afternoon, Hilda and Elisabeth took us to show us the famous harbour of Hamburg, leaving the grandfather to look after the children. We drove through the tunnels and the bridges that span the Elbe to stop at Willkommen Hoft, where every passing ship is greeted with its nation's anthem. Apparently all coffee and tea for Europe enter via Hamburg, is processed and blended and packaged here for

destinations. Miles and miles of containers, waiting to be sent to sea or to places inland, miles of canals and on both sides warehouses- are some of the attractions of Hamburg. Somehow I had thought that Hamburg was a seaport. The harbour is on the river Elbe, and The North Sea is a goodly distance away.

We returned late to see the children-India and Hayden- waiting for us. They are affectionate and outgoing. Opa (grandpa) had brought them back from the nursery, a break for Oma. We were served a North German dinner with asparagus, early season potatoes, melted butter, cold cuts, topping with strawberries and cream. We stayed up till midnight. As Jimmichan has to go to work in the morning, we said goodbye to him. He is due to retire in a few weeks. Avarachen called to inquire how we are doing. In fact, he has been calling regularly ever since we landed in Vienna, solicitous about us.

June 17 : We were up early and brought down our suitcases from the third floor. Elisabeth had let the children sleep with Oma (grandma); so she joined us for breakfast. Hilda was the kindest, most caring and affectionate hostess, looking after our tiniest need. She took us to the station, and insisted on seeing us off in the train that took us to Berlin. The short stay was very warm, and the parting was touching. Our heartfelt thanks to the family.

We reached Berlin Zoo station after a ride of about two hours. A taxi took us to Aldea hotel that we had booked earlier. Günter, the taxi driver, was full of conversation and information, and offered to show us the city of Berlin for 90 minutes, later that afternoon. On an impulse, I took him up on that. We checked into the hotel, had some rest and Günter came to collect us at 3 p.m. He was excited, nervous, and eager to cover as much as he could and more. He took us through all the important spots and tried to describe those to us. But his lack of proficiency stood in the way of his enthusiasm. He dashed around rather madly, and when words failed him, he resorted to swear words. (Thus, when East Germany asked the Soviet Union for money to build, The Soviet Union said, "Fuck, we have no money!"...) After two hours of rushing around, he dropped us off at the hotel.

We went looking for a good restaurant, and spotted a church not far from the hotel. Curious as to what denomination it could be, we walked over and met the pastor. He and a few volunteers had just finished feeding about 140 needy people. Dr. Ben H. Colvet is the pastor of The American Church in Berlin. This was a dilapidated church that had been abandoned, until Ben offered to restore it. Now it is in reasonably good shape, and his volunteers have also cleaned up the surroundings. Ben's congregation is very much transient; but he thinks it will grow. We wished him all the luck and returned to the hotel after a Chinese meal. We bought a phone card and called our sons and Eva and others to get the latest news. All is well.

June 18 : After a decent breakfast in the hotel, we decided to buy a whole-day pass that allowed us to travel anywhere on bus or metro in

Berlin. We took a 3-hour tour that took us to the more interesting parts of this fascinating city, which has a history of close to 9 centuries. A stone line runs for 150 k.m. to indicate where Berlin wall used to be. After unification, construction activity is going on at fever pitch, to make up for lost time. All of Berlin had been more than 75 per cent destroyed during the war; in some sectors more than 95 per cent. With a population of 3.4 million people, including 140,000 students in four or five universities, it is a big city. Companies such as Benz, Sony, ABB and others are building especially in the former East Berlin.

Not quite satisfied with the 3-hour tour, we decided to join a walking tour that lasted 4 hours. It was really instructive. Christina, the guide, is from New York, though her mother had lived in Berlin till 1968. She showed us the remains of the Berlin wall. If all the concrete that is being sold as souvenirs were to be put together, one could build a wall around Germany. We walked to Checkpoint Charlie, and other interesting spots, both ancient and modern. She showed us where Einstein, who had also taught in Bern, wrote his book that got him the Nobel Prize while in Berlin, a hundred years ago. Frederick Shingle was an architect who designed several of the 19th century structures in Berlin. A memorial to Jewish victims was inaugurated on May 12, 2005 designed by Peter Eisenman.

After several revisions The Holocaust Memorial is now in place a few yards from the Brandenburg Gate. The memorial features 2,752 concrete slabs arranged in a grid pattern. The slabs are 0.95 meters deep and 2.38 meters wide and vary only in height from 0.2 meters to 4.8 meters. The unevenly sloping ground, giving the impression of an undulating field, is paved with concrete stones. In the western part groups of trees are planted in informal groups. The "Field of Stelae" does not have a fixed entrance, center or exit; visitors are able to choose their own way in and out of the complex. Christina told us about how the wall went up in 1961, and how it came down on November 9, 1989. I remembered the day well, because I told my class on that day that the date would go down as very important in the western world, indeed the whole world, as it was the beginning of the end of communist regimes. I am not sure if unchecked capitalism that it has replaced, will be good for the world. But there it is now.

Christina showed us Hotel Aldon from where Michael Jackson dangled his baby. Not far from it, Himmler, Hitler's minister of propaganda burned books belonging to the university in 1935 because those books advocated pacifism. It is ironic that a Jewish writer had referred to the burning of the Quran in Spain in 1820, and said, "Those who start burning books will end up burning people." Prophetic words. We went over to what was once Hitler's bunker, where he, along with Eva Brun, committed suicide on April 29, a week before Germany surrendered. I remember reading about the last days of days by Trevor Roper. Christina told me that she was present here in Berlin on May 8, 2005 when about two thousand neo-Nazis planned to demonstrate

in support of Hitler from Gendarmenmarkt to Brandenburg gate. About ten thousand ordinary Berliners simply decided to block their route. After a long confrontation, the neo-Nazis called off their demonstration. Yes, they exist, and now are in control of Saxony. The famous linden (lime) trees of Berlin are in bloom and they wafted a gentle aroma as we ended the walking tour. We were tired, but satisfied. I called a few more people with the card that I had purchased last night.

June 19 : Prague is our last stop before returning to Vienna to fly back home. Vic, a friend at Delta Meadowvale health club, had kindly arranged accommodation, given us directions to get there, had even given us some local currency. When I looked at the notes and found that the accommodation is on the third floor, and that there is no elevator to get there, we decided to look for some other alternative lodging. At Prague station, a representative from one of the hotels greeted us and invited us to inspect his hotel before making a decision. He took us in his car to Expres hotel. We were quite satisfied with the hotel and the location as well as the tariff. We checked in, and promptly walked over to a tour company that took us on an hour's tour of Prague. Prague is a city to be seen by foot. We intend to take another longer tour tomorrow visiting the castle and surroundings and then we will walk around. When we returned we went over to Wladislaus Square and sat there for a long time. Late in the evening we returned to the hotel, had a good dinner in the nearby Chinese restaurant.

June 20 : Josie woke up with an upset stomach; definitely the Chinese food was tainted. So we cancelled our morning tour and rested till the afternoon. When she felt better, we walked over to the tour bus and took a 3-hour tour. Prague is the capital of Czech Republic, carved out of the former Czechoslovakia, which was formed in 1918 after WWI. Before that it was all part of Austro Hungarian empire. Czech language belongs to the family of Slavic languages like Polish, Russian, and Ukrainian etc. However during the communist regime, learning of Russian was compulsory. Prague is rightly called the city of a hundred spires. Churches rise one next to the other. Prague Castle is not one single castle, but a collection of several buildings constructed over 900 years. St. Vitus Cathedral that overlooks Prague along with the present President's palace, various residences for the nobility, torture chamber, Gold Lane where king Rudolph ordered alchemists to turn lead into gold, or die, St. George's Church the first gothic structure in Central Europe – all these are part of the Prague Castle. At present the population of Prague is about 1.2 million. In August 2002 the river celebrated by all of Prague – Vltava- flooded the city and billions of dollars worth of loss resulted. In May 2004 Czech Republic joined the European Union, but like Hungary, it still keeps its own currency until 2010. when a referendum will decide whether to accept the euro as its currency. Unemployment is less here than in Germany, though wages are far lower.

Therefore several German companies are setting up business here. We

met a man from Worsburg who manufactures pvc windows and is here looking for partners to start a factory. According to him he would pay 70 per cent less to the Czech workers than he does to their counterparts in Germany. We visited the Klementin where the Jesuits had set up a university. King Joseph II eventually banished the Jesuits from the country. We walked on the Charles bridge, a must while in Prague and saw the statue of John of Nepomuk, confessor to kings and queens, who refused to divulge the secret of confession of Queen Sophie, because of that the king cut off his tongue and tortured him, and threw him in the river. There are also the statues of Cyril and Methodius, two brothers who brought Christianity to this part of Europe. But it was an arduous day, and we were glad to get back to the hotel to rest.

June 21: Josie is almost back to her usual energetic level. We decided to visit the Jewish quarters in the morning. We joined a walking tour group for only this portion of the tour. We were told the legend of Golem, who protects Jews from harm. In 1938 there were over 80,000 Jews in the ghetto of Prague. Most of them were sent to death camps. Now there are about 1000 of them, about 500 are Orthodox, and the other 500 own valuable real estate in Prague. Kafka lived in the area. There is a modern statue of Kafka riding on a headless man erected in 2004, which won the award for the most modern sculpture in 2004. Close to the Jewish Quarters is St. James Church. An English thief tried to steal the Virgin's picture, was unable to move and the next day the police cut off his hand that still hangs in the church.

This is Bohemia – a region including Prague and vicinity, the other region being Moravia. In the 17th century 70,000 women were burned to death for being witches. We saw the place where Mozart lived when he wrote Don Giovanni. It was also first performed here. Close to our hotel is a restaurant called Wolfgang. In the afternoon we strolled around, shopped, saw The Tyn church and the statue of Jan Hus who spoke against the corruption of the church and was burned to death in front of that church.

Open-air cafes are everywhere. We decided to spend a few hours watching people go by. All over Europe there are plazas and piazzas and squares where locals and tourists come to sit and stroll. The Old Town Square is one of the most colourful squares of Prague. Its perimeter is lined with historical buildings, each one worth careful study. Originally, the Wenceslas Square was meant to be a market, with the main trade being horses. Because of its length (approximately 750 m) and car-traffic, the square divides up into two parts (the Old Town side and the Museum side). It remains a matter of opinion, but the Charles Bridge may be considered a square as well. It has the same order of proportions as the Wenceslas Square, and it is reserved strictly for pedestrians, and it has a lively crowd of stalls, artists, and tourists.

Today is the longest day of the year. So we decided to delay our return to the hotel for as long as we were able to. The walking tour had exhausted me. The spirit was willing, but the legs would not move. Some so-called modern

artist has been allowed to exhibit his iron art in the center of the square. These monstrosities seer the eye, as compared to the beautiful architecture around the Square. He calls each of the exhibits by some high sounding jargon. But it is repulsive garbage at its best. We bade goodbye to the square after 10 p.m. and returned to the hotel.

June 22 : We left the hotel in the afternoon. The railway station of Prague is one of the most ancient that we saw in Europe. But I guess, years of Communist regime did not spend much on beautification. The train to Vienna was on time. We sat in the restaurant car as it was more comfortable. Robby, our trustworthy driver was waiting for us on the platform. We reached our hotel, checked in and called Jaisy, our guardian angel. She came to take us to her aunt's place. Salome and Kunju, along with Ancy and Benny Malyekal were there to greet us. We chatted, had a few drinks, a late dinner, and Jaisy took us back to the hotel. We were very glad she was in Vienna. We bade her a fond farewell.

June 23 : Robby came in the morning to take us to the airport. Our flight to Toronto was uneventful. We reached Canada in the afternoon. Vince received us at the airport. Tomorrow we will join our friends in a resort in Kingston. Thus ended a few weeks in Europe. We were a bit tired, but very satisfied with all that we saw. We met a lot of people; we renewed acquaintances; we made new friends; we had new insights into old stories. It was an unforgettable experience.

Conclusion

As I transcribe these pages laboriously on to my computer, word comes that the underground system in London, England, has been bombed. Islamic terrorists became suicide bombers and have struck in Western Europe for the first time in modern history. All of the fears and anxieties we had heard in Austria, Germany, Switzerland and Belgium seem to be well founded.

History has much to teach us. Crusaders were recruited from among the rich and the powerful as well as the poor and the ignorant of Europe to fight, to conquer The Holy Land, to make it Christian. All over Europe tens of thousands were burned to death for heresy and for being witches. Turks were defeated and banished from the Holy Roman Empire. The Jacobean were banished from France, and Germany gave them refuge. Hitler and his ilk attempted to exterminate the Jews, and Israel was created. Most wars in Europe had some religious overtone to them.

Today the fastest growing religion in the world is Islam; the strongest believers are also Muslims. Christians have lost the zeal and fidelity to their religion. They depend on weapons to destroy the enemy. While fanaticism has to be deplored and condemned, I wonder if the doctrine of force will win the war on terror. We may be in for a period of uncertainty and chaos in the world. One hopes and prays that it will not end in conflagration and total destruction.

Plus ca change, plus c'est la meme chose. More things change, more they

remain the same.

Part VI

Kaipuzha to Canada - Miles Stones in Life

**A Journey from Kaipuzha to Coonoor to Kazipet to Canada -
A travelogue thru eight decades**

Chapter 34

Kaipuzha - My Birthplace

Kaipuzha is more than a mere place. It is a dreamland; it is the hidden jewel in the paradise that is Kerala. Kaipuzha is unique as its characteristics cannot be seen anywhere else in the world. The name is derived from the fact that there are canals and rivers in the greater Kaipuzha region. Kaipuzha is part of the Kuttanadu area in Kerala. Kuttanadu is closely linked to the “kayals” of Kerala. These are lagoons connected to the Arabian Sea, except that at certain times of the year, the water is inland. The shallower areas of the kayals form Kuttanadu fields, which are essentially the back-waters of the lakes. In recent past, the backwater regions have been virtually forded up with bunds and causeways from the kayals, so that salt water does not form part of the aquatic system. However, the Kuttanadu region is waterlogged. For the purposes of cultivation, water from the fields has to be pumped out into the canal systems. Once the crops are taken, fields are again inundated. Again in olden days - till not more than 30 years ago- farmers cultivated the fields only once in two years, leaving water filled areas fallow the rest of the time. With chemicals and fertilizers, crops are now being planted at least once a year, with disastrous consequence to the ecological system of Kuttanadu. The usual mode of transportation in the region has been by canoe. With meandering rivers and canals, and water-filled fields, one went everywhere by boat or canoe. Children learned to swim soon after they learned to walk. Water and water-related activities become part of the psyche. Kaipuzha is part of the northern reaches of Kuttanadu.

Kaipuzha however is not all fields and water. In fact, the landmass adjoining the fields is hills and valleys, undulation of brown and red earth. The church of Kaipuzha is on the highest of the hills, standing majestic and visible to the naked eye from miles out in the fields. While to the west of the church- steeple is seen the verdant fields and blue waters, to the South are flat lands, and to the East and North more hills and valleys. Kaipuzha is an exclamation point in the outer reaches of Kuttanadu. It is both water's-edge

and land's beginning. It is rice fields and rubber plantation. It is the meeting point of both earth and water.

Let us sit on the big boulder in front of the barn (Kalappura muttam) in Kalluvelil, on the edge of the water-filled fields. Look to the west. As far as the eye can see are miles of waterlogged fields, with bunds and causeways lined with coconut trees. The occasional canoes dart around - fishing for konju (scampi), or guiding hosts of ducks, or just going places. Then there are other boats laden with coconut, or clay vessels, or other merchandise moving majestically on the serpentine canals, going to markets all over Kuttandu. The water is calm, a gentle breeze wafts from the west. The sun is never unbearable even at noon. Fish frolic in the shallow waters of the fields. Cranes brood, and other water birds scoot around preying on the unsuspecting fish. The woodpecker is busy preparing its nest. The crows and the kuyils are going about their daily business of living. The water buffaloes and oxen lazily loll in the water. Peace fills this paradise.

Another day: Let us sit on the western verandah of the house and behold the dark clouds forming on the horizon. Nature is about to unleash its fury. The fields are inundated; the coconut trees in the distance seem hardly able to keep their heads above water. Some of the bunds are under water. Waves batter the land. The distant roar presages the impending downpour. Monsoon in all its fury is unleashed on the land. And suddenly the heavens open. Cascade runs down the roof. Children cannot be contained in the house. They rush out nearly naked, stand under the down-pour from the roof, and laugh heartily, as buckets of clear cool water tumble over them. They fight to get the best position to enjoy the most water. They run around, splashing water from the land, and then dare to jump into the flooding fields, to test the fury of the waves. They are children of the water and know how far they can go. They will play in the water, but close to shore. They will not take their canoes out into the deep, nor will they swim far from the shore. They will dive into the water from the stone boulder at the water's edge, and instantly swim back up on land. Having tested the might of the elements, they will get back home, to the relief of their mother. They will saunter out again at night to catch fish by torch light from the shallow water on land. They will bring still more fish, to the joyous exclamations of the men, and the consternation of the women-folks who must clean and cook.

They have learned to live in tune with nature, never to challenge it, and always to be cautious. They know of mishaps, drownings, capsized canoes, bloated corpses floating in the water, and disasters that befall those who are careless. But they also know that floods too can be fun.

Soon it is time for the boat races. Everyone with big and small canoes

prepare for the big boat races in Kottayam and Alappuzha. Occasionally races are also held as part of the festivities of the local churches and schools. People - young and old - argue about the vallam kali, and which boat will win, and where. And families prepare to go to Kottayam to watch the races. Children ply their canoes as if in preparation for the races, or in imitation of the best boats.

A few weeks later: The floods have receded. The land is dry. The bunds are visible. The ploughers are busy ploughing in the shallow water. Giant motors pump out the water from the fields into the canal systems. Young amateur fishermen are everywhere with their nets catching the abundant fish from the channels. Soon the sowers will cast the paddy seeds on to the wet fields. A few days hence, hundreds of workers are bent over the fields, transplanting the seedlings, and weeding. The farmers are busy, fertilizing, pumping excess water, strengthening the bunds, discussing the cost of cultivation and the perils to the crops, and always anxious, always vigilant. A flash flood, or unexpected rain could ruin the crops, or the bunds may burst and inundate the fields. That too happens every few years. But, undaunted, the farmers will pump the water out, reseed the fields, and cultivate again. Or write the year off. Destiny, fate, the inevitable, are forces that they will accept with equanimity.

Late one afternoon, if you sit on that boulder in the kalappura muttam, you will see the verdant fields bursting with golden crops. The workers have retired to rest from the travails of the day. The birds are flying back to their nests. The channels are silent except for the occasional fish jumping, or a water snake rippling the surface. The golden sun is about to embrace the green fields laden with the promise of a rich harvest. People are busy getting the children bathed, and readying for the evening prayers. Darkness falls suddenly after the glorious sunset. One can hear the chatter of prayers, loud reading of homework by the children, scolding of mothers to recalcitrant children from every household. The day is done, its hours have run, and people are taking count of all.

Soon will come the harvest season. Workers are milling around the premises, reaping, thrashing, drying and heaping of hay, storing the paddy, fighting for recognition, ...and all in a hurry to beat the rains. Stomping the harvested sheaves under feet, making sure every grain is accounted for, they work night and day. Indeed most stay back to work a few hours by lantern to speed up and store the harvest. Glorious time for the children to walk the newly harvested fields, gleaning what is left by the workers, flying kites, romping in the hay, and generally making a nuisance of themselves to the workers and their supervisors. The jackfruit and mangoes are ripe for picking. The cashew apples shine temptingly overhanging the fields. Not a

day goes by but the delicious mangoes are picked or gathered as they fall, and eaten at any time of the day or night. And the children gorge on jack fruit till they get sick.

Seasons determine the lives of the folks in Kaipuzha. Home and school and church revolve around these seasons. Marriages and festivals are in accordance with the seasons. Kaipuzha is quintessentially a place in tune with nature.

St. George's Roman Catholic Church is the focal point of religious and social activities of the Christians. It has been in existence since 1813. Though the church has been rebuilt twice, it has remained a beacon for all through the years. The Knanaya Christians of Kaipuzha have always been a devout community. Whenever the pastor needed the people, he only needed to ask. Indeed from the very inception of the Church, the Pathyils have played an integral part in the wellbeing of the parish.. The latest reconstruction of the Church in 1983 was undertaken under the tireless leadership of Thomas Kalluvelil.

The history of the Visitation Convent founded by Bishop Makil in 1892 is intertwined with our family history. The Convent ran a Malayalam Language School for girls as well as a primary school for boys and girls. The boarding that was attached to the school attracted students from all over central Travancore. Almost all our girls and many of our boys had their early education in the school. From the inception of the Convent, several of our women have dedicated themselves to the service of God and His people, taking the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience in the Congregation.

In 1928 Fr. Thomas Poothathil founded St. Joseph's Congregation originally for handicapped women. Subsequently the congregation flourished, and today it has branches all over Kottayam, several parts of India, and in Africa and Europe. The sisters run schools, orphanages, hospitals and other social service activities.

St. George's English Middle School (later to become a High School) was started in 1926 through the vision and endeavor of Abraham Pathyil. Ever since its inception all our children have had their education in that school. The story of that school is as much the story of our family. Close to the school is the hospital, which too has received much, loving care from our family and relatives even till today. The survival and growth of the hospital was due, in no small measure to the unstinting service of men such as Chamakala Chummaru Kutty and, in the recent past, Thomas Kalluvelil.

St. Therese of Avila Church in Palathuruth, next to our ancestral home, is

very much our church too. Indeed the original plot of land was given by one of our own. Ever since then, to the most recent rebuilding of the Church, our family members have participated without counting cost and time. Thomas Pathyil and Babychan Chamakala were in the forefront of the construction of the magnificent church that stands as a model of Kerala's unique ecclesial architecture.

Kaipuzha population consists of not only Knanaya Catholics, but also people of different religions. The Nairs have been the early settlers on the land. They are landholders, but generally continue to be civil servants. The Ezhava community, the traditional toddy tappers, constitutes an important minority. The Pulayas who have been for centuries the tenants and workers of the landlords are an important segment of the Kaipuzha community. The Mukavas (Valans) have been fishermen and boatmen for centuries. All these segments live in relative harmony and communal peace. To all of them St. George's school has been the alma mater, the fields and the water their common ground. At festivals, marriages, and funerals all these people show their mutual respect and regard, by sharing joy and grief.

Kaipuzha has always been associated with its neighboring village of Neendoor. In fact Neendoor is an extension of Kaipuzha. For very long time the school and the hospital in Kaipuzha were as much part of Neendoor. Apart from the fact that Neendoor has its own Church and community centre, Kaipuzha has been the mother church and spiritual centre. The civic government of the Panchayat is now in Neendoor, and new industries and progress have veered towards Neendoor. But Neendoor is integral to the soul of Kaipuzha. The Pathyils originated from Neendoor and the ancestors have had intimate involvement in the development of Neendoor, even to this day.

Another satellite village close to Kaipuzha is Kurumulloor (Onanthuruthu and Vedagiri are names for parts of the same place.) People of Kurumulloor have traditionally gone to Kaipuzha school, been treated in Kaipuzha hospital, and they too have been integral parts of Kaipuzha life. Places such as Manjoor and Kallara also looked to Kaipuzha as its mother church and St. George's school has educated all the youngsters of all these villages. In other words, the whole region, known as Kaipuzha-Neendoor Sekharam has been one entity. The history of the Pathyil family is not a story in isolation. The land, its people, its institutions, and the evolutions of time have marked the family. And the family has left its mark in the process of this evolution.

Chapter 35

Early Schooling - Happy Days

While most youngsters went to Kalari, where an ashan would teach the alphabets, I had the privilege of being tutored at home. Along with my sister Pennamma, we stayed at home and a resident teacher taught us the whole day. Mr. Sivaraman Nair, a young High School graduate was given a bed and a table at the corner of the granary next to the house, had his meals cooked by my mother, and concentrated on teaching us. I must have been four years old when Mr. Sivaraman Nair was hired to be the tutor. For the next two years Pennamma and I studied under him. In addition to the alphabets in Malayalam, we also studied the rudiments of English, a lot of arithmetic and geography. We were taught everything that would have been learned in an ordinary class of grade 1, 2, 3, and 4 and then some. By 1940 my father felt that we were ready to enter grade 4. However a problem arose. There was a government-conducted examination for all students at the end of grade 4, and therefore no one could be admitted directly to that class. Therefore my sister and I were admitted to grade 3. I was six years old and my sister was eight.

St. Margaret's school, run by the Visitation Sisters was chosen as our school. Indeed there was no hesitation as to the choice of schools. My mother, Naithy Pannivelil, had studied in St. Margaret's in the first decade of the 20th century. It was in the boarding of that school that my father had first seen his future bride. It was the good nuns that had lovingly prepared the young bride for her wedding in 1910. Except for my eldest brother who had studied in St. Mathew's, all my sisters and brothers had attended St. Margaret's for four years of their early education. The nuns took only limited number of boys, as that was essentially a girls' school.

But the convent school had to be my first Alma Mater by right and by tradition. While I was in St. Margaret's, the school celebrated its fiftieth anniversary. The whole school was decorated ; the celebrations and festiv-

ities continued for several days. Entertainments, speeches, plays and toffee distributions lasted for a week. I joined the fancy dress competition as a beggar boy, with festering scabs, and tattered rags, singing a lamentation of woe. I did not win a prize. But that was my first exposure on stage. The highlight for me was a play in which my sister acted. Achamma acted the part of a mendicant medicine-man. (She later joined the Visitation Congregation and assumed the name of Sr. Vincent. She lives in retirement in Kaipuzha convent.)

There was St. Mathew's Boys School next door. But that was for the tough and wild youngsters. Those boys seemed to have a lot more fun than those of us studying in the convent school. They played rough sports and games, went late to classes, threw sticks and stones at the mango trees, were noisy and boisterous. We in St. Margaret's had supervised recreation and games. The nuns made sure that we did not swear or hurt each other. I envied the free spirits of St. Mathew's. But I kept the feeling to myself. Grade 3 was one of the four classes on the top floor of the school building.

Nothing separated one class from another except the formation of benches and separate black boards for each class. Everything that went on in one class could be seen and heard in the other four classes. My class teacher in grade 3 was Sr. Cleopha Maliekal. She was the sister of an aunt of mine. Sr. Cleopha took on herself the task of shaping me. As I had never been in school before, the quiet discipline of sitting on benches for long periods was hard. Besides I had studied everything that she taught her class, and my boredom was obvious. On the first day Sr. Cleopha wanted to see how much we as a class knew.

She asked: "What is 4×3 ?"

I shouted, "12".

"What is 6×4 ?"

I screamed "24".

She stopped abruptly and said, "Do not answer unless you are specifically asked."

I said, "But..."

"No but" she ordered.

I still persisted.

"Stand up," she commanded.

I stood. "You are not to answer unless specifically asked", she said.

"Yes", I said.

"Yes what?" she frowned.

"Yes", I repeated.

"Yes?" she asked.

"Yes, Reverend Sister", I said.

She was mollified and I was allowed to sit down.

That was the start of a constant battle between Sr. Cleopha and me. She would try to restrain me and I would look for ways to thwart her attempts. Warnings, staring, occasional canings, and strict allocation of marks- all these curbed my childish enthusiasm somewhat; but not entirely. While reading, writing, and arithmetic were a breeze for me, art in the form of needlework, and pious practices were a chore. Add to these the problem that boys were a small minority in the class, and my frustrations were compounded. Pennamma, with her wavy hair, and beautiful smile, was the cynosure of attention, and while she had a bevy of girls always around her, and the nuns paid special attention to them, we, boys, were barely tolerated. Games and sports in St. Margaret's were geared to the taste of girls. The boys whiled away their time watching girls, or sneaking to St. Mathew's to seek fun with the boisterous boys there. When the mischievous boys of St. Mathew's felled ripe and green mangoes, we longed to do the same, or at least to pick the fallen fruits. But we were not allowed to participate in the "evil" deeds of the bad guys. Of course we learned all the prayers and ejaculations that nuns taught us and recited them to resist temptations of this kind. Occasionally we gave in to temptation and picked a fallen mango, or plucked a champagne berry, a pretty fruit, made all the more delicious because it was absolutely forbidden to climb the shrub to pick the fruit. The nuns tended an excellent flower garden in the courtyard; but we were not allowed in there, lest we would pluck the pretty roses, chrysanthemums, and other flowers. If the nuns caught us, or, worse, if one of the girls reported on us, there was trouble. I found the walk from home and back home from school more interesting, as I was with boys with whom I could play.

In the class I would furtively watch some of the pretty girls like Kunjunjamma Vadaathala. She was not only beautiful, but also a good singer and, along with her cousin Mary, a good dancer. The nuns lavished all their attention on these girls, and left the boys to their devices. Classes were rather boring for obvious reasons. And it was difficult to find ways of making mischief without getting caught. Sr. Claire Ella who was the headmistress ran the school efficiently and fairly. I hardly had occasion to go to her office, except to run errands for her from time to time. But the year went by rather quickly, and I was promoted to grade 4, where my class teacher was Sr. Metilda. She was young, attractive, efficient, and had a sense of humor. Her classes were interesting and challenging. I looked forward to her questions and quizzes. What I did not know, I found out from my father, and Sr. Metilda constantly challenged her students to do better. Most of my classmates received their first Holy Communion in grade 4. However I was not yet eight years old and since I had not yet reached "the age of reason", my first communion was postponed to the next year. In April of '42 I wrote the government examination that determined promotion from class 4. I passed with flying colours.

Abraham Pathyil, my father, was interested in education, not only for

his own children, but also for the community. It was his ambition to see an English medium school in Kaipuzha. St. Margaret School run by the Visitation sisters had an elementary school for boys and girls, and Malayalam Higher education for girls. Boys who wanted to pursue higher education had to go either to Mannanam or elsewhere. Starting a school needed the permission of the government and the blessing of Chevalier Tharayil, the most prominent person of Kaipuzha. He was not easy to persuade, as he himself was not well educated, and failed to be impressed with the need for higher learning for ordinary people. Besides any idea that did not originate from him was not worth pursuing. Abraham spent many hours in diplomacy convincing the Chevalier that a school would bring prestige to the scion of the Tharayil family. Having obtained his consent and approval, it was a Herculean task to get the permission of the government authorities to allow a church run school in Kaipuzha. Church authorities were not convinced that the school was a viable idea. Abraham undertook to prove that it was. He obtained the necessary permissions, appointed Mr. Chacko Manthuruthil as the first headmaster of the school, and he himself assumed the arduous task of Correspondent of the school in the first few years. The local parish priest was the manager, but Abraham and Chacko ran the school and proved to the skeptics that there would be a good steady flow of clients to the school. Thus started St. George's Middle School in 1926, which in later years became a high school.

The medium of instruction in the school from its inception was English. However, by the time I arrived in the school, the medium was changed to Malayalam. But English had a place of primary importance in education. The first year of the middle school was called "Preparatory" class. This was to indicate that before one went on to the six years of English education, one had to learn intense English grammar and the intricacies of the language for a year. Even when the medium of instruction reverted to Malayalam, Preparatory class continued to function.

There were students from Kaipuzha and outlying villages and towns. People came from as far away as Kallara, a good ten kilometers away. In the rainy season they had to cross canals by boats or by canoes. In summer it was hot. But St. George's was the only school in the vicinity. Even though the Catholic Church ran both these schools, the doors were wide open to other faiths. Children of Nairs, of Ezhavas, of Pulayas, of fishermen, and of all walks of life were enrolled in both schools. The fees charged were not excessive. If anyone who was economically disadvantaged could not remit their fees, the management made special concessions for them. Apart from the catechism classes and daily prayers to begin the school day, there was no imposition of Christianity on others. When I was enrolled in the Preparatory class in 1942, Fr. Cyriac Vellanal was the headmaster of the school. He was a man of action. He believed in extra-curricular activities, in sports and games, in literary societies, and staging plays and musicals. He personally

directed a major three- hour play towards the end of the school year, that attracted packed audiences.

The teachers in St. George's were the mainstay of the school. They were, every individual among them, legends in their own way. My class teacher and English teacher was Mr. Thomas Kavil, who also doubled as the accountant of the school. Mr. Kavil (Sr.) did not use the cane as other teachers freely did. However he too believed in the power of physical punishment to instill learning. He used his long, sharp finger nails to pinch the most sensitive parts of the anatomy to impress a point, to remind one of the right spelling, to establish discipline and, generally, to keep control of his class. He was an excellent teacher. He knew his subject and he made his classes extremely interesting. There never was any thought of fooling around in his class. Besides he was our closest neighbor, a family friend, and a confidant of my parents,. Therefore I behaved in his class as best as I could.

Mr. Chacko Kavil, his younger brother, joined the school as a teacher the same year. He was an excellent singer, an accomplished actor and a very sympathetic person. He too taught a subject in each class, as did most of the teachers. Mr. Chacko Kavil was the star actor in the annual play staged by the school. He also participated in many of the social and cultural activities of the school.

Mr. Chacko Manthuruthil, the first headmaster of the school was a respected member of the staff. But in 1943 or so, he decided to quit teaching and go on to other things. The paltry salary of the teachers was not sufficient for their sustenance. Fortunately, most of the teachers in the school did not depend on their salaries for their livelihood. All, or almost all, had some land and fields that brought much needed income. For these teachers teaching was very much a calling.

Mr. Mathew Tharayil was the arts teacher. Arts teachers doubled also as physical education instructors (as my father had done in other schools earlier). Mr. Tharayil was always pleasant; but he was also a strict disciplinarian. He hardly ever meted out physical punishment. He would pull up a student, dress him down verbally, threaten punishment, and would go through the motions till the student promised to correct his ways. He was very much revered by his students. Therefore when his wife passed away suddenly and prematurely as a result of a poisonous cobra bite, the whole school mourned with him. Mr. Jacob Vattakattil was another of the stalwarts of the school. He was also the postmaster in the local postal office after school hours. His constant smile was infectious. Even when he punished, he smiled ruefully. A no-nonsense teacher, he was always punctual and diligent.

Mr. Joseph Mukalel was the Malayalam pundit. He was a language scholar and a published poet. His knowledge of literature would have put him on a par with the very best. Unfortunately he had difficulty keeping discipline in his class. His entry into the classroom denoted time for fun and frolics by the restless and mischievous among us. He shouted, he cursed

using beautiful literary devices, he threatened punishment; but to no avail. Not too infrequently the headmaster had to come into the class to establish some semblance of order. A pity, as “The Munishi” had much to offer.

Mr. Joseph Kizhakekattil joined the school as teacher of Malayalam in 1944. He was fresh out of High School, but had studied Malayalam literature before joining High School. He was one of the most excellent teachers in the school; in fact he was on a par with the very best I have met in my years in schools. He did not teach for exams. He taught because he loved literature. His descriptions of epics, his explanations of metaphors, and his instructions about what to look for in writings –these left a lasting impression on me. In addition he was also a poet who composed timely poems for various occasions. His classes were gripping and we looked forward to listening to him and questioning him on aspects of Malayalam literature. He might not have had as much erudition as Mr. Mukalel; but he knew how to hold his students interested. Mr. Joseph spent only a few short years in St. George’s, as he joined the Forest Service and became a high official in the department. There were other teachers like Mr. Philip Thodukayil, a person who enjoyed the good things of life, and who made his colleagues and students glad to be alive. He was a bon vivant. Several other teachers came for short periods of time and left for other schools or in pursuit of other jobs.

Back to my Preparatory class days, I was one of thirty-two students in that class. There were a few girls sitting in the backbenches. I knew some of them as they had studied in the convent school. Others came from other schools. For a good many of the young boys having girls in the class was a novelty. We were not expected to turn around and look at the girls. However we found excuses to look at them, to make them smile, or when possible to make them laugh. But we needed to be careful, as the teachers were protective of the girls in the class. One of my newly acquired friends was a short sturdy guy from Athirampuzha, named Varkey. He was not particularly studious, but was a restless urchin. One lunchtime he confided to me that he had managed to place a letter in the book of Kunjunjamma. I asked him how he managed to achieve such an impossible task. But he only smiled enigmatically. We went for lunch to the veranda of the Pallikizhakethil household where it was the custom of a lot of us to sit and eat our packed lunches. We would drink water from the well; wash the Tiffin carrier and get back to school leisurely. I went back to my classroom. There stood Fr. Vellanal at the door waiting for me. He asked me to go to his office. I went wondering what the matter was. The headmaster pulled a piece of paper from his desk.

“Did you write this?” he asked.

I looked at it and said “No”. But there was the unmistakable name “Joseph” written at the end of the letter. There were three other Josephs in the class, and my teachers and my classmates knew me as Uppachan. However Joseph was my official name. Then it dawned on me. Varkey, as he

had averred, had written the “love” letter to Kunjunjamma, but had signed my name under it.

“Extend your palm”, he ordered. He took a long and severe looking cane and lifted it to the highest he could.

“Did you do it? he asked.

My eyes were brimming and I said, “No father”.

Down came the cane on my palm. Big blobs of tears stained the cement floor.

He looked at me again and asked, “Do you know who did it?”

I shook my head helplessly and the cane came down one more time. I cried out loud:

“Compare the handwriting, father”, I mumbled between sobs. The raised cane stopped in mid-air. He stared at me. His hand came down limply.

“ I will see you later. Go back to class”, he ordered.

I did not divulge the name of Varkey- whether out of loyalty or fear, I am not sure to this day- and crept back to my seat. The pain was bearable, but the injustice was unbearable and I wept. The headmaster also summoned the other Josephs for similar treatment. As I resumed my seat sobbing, I stared at Varkey and glanced at Kunjunjamma who knew that I would not be the culprit. She burst into tears, and put her down on the desk and whimpered. Varkey stood up and asked to be excused. Mr. Kavil who was in the class and who must have observed what was going on asked him to go to the headmaster to admit if he was guilty. Varkey went to the headmaster and owned up his guilt. He received six of the best that Fr. Vellanal could administer. It was one of the very few times that I was punished for no fault of mine.

The worry-indeed the nightmare- did not end there. What if my father got wind of this? In every class there was a sibling or a relative of mine. Pennamma was in the same class as I. My brother Thommychettan was in Form I. Theyamma pengal, another sister of mine, was in Form II. Avarachan Pathyil, a cousin, was also in Form II. There were others like Pennamma Malayil and Luka Placheril, Jose Tharayil, and assorted cousins who could conceivably take the tale home to exacerbate the situation. I soon learned of a family pact: that nothing that happens in school would go to our homes; that all of us would protect the secrets of each other; that no one would snitch on each other; and that in case of any such disasters we would stand together. In fact my brother visited the Preparatory class soon after the incident to take on Varkey. However seeing how puny he was, and on my personal intervention, the mischief- maker was spared his life and limbs. (It is my eternal regret that I was not able to joke about this and confess my deep affection for Kunjunjamma. She died untimely, leaving a devastated husband and children, and grieving family and friends.)

One of the lessons in our English text was called “Bazaar”. This comes towards the end of the book and so to the end of the school year. The

month of March is the time for fruits in Kerala. Mr. Thomas Kavil, as was the tradition, would ask every student to bring a fruit or two for the occasion. The fruits and edible vegetables would be exhibited in the class with the English name written on each. He divided the class into four teams of eight or so, and we competed to bring in the most, the best, and display in the most elegant manner. We brought in not only the fruits, but also the color papers to write the names of the fruits. Some brought pineapples, oranges, grapes, and lemons. Many brought bananas and plantains. Several jackfruits of various shapes and textures were exhibited. Pomegranates, pears, custard apples, wild berries, and other tropical fruits were on display for the whole school during the morning hours. But mangoes-luscious and round and delicious of every variety- were the mainstay of the display. The headmaster and all the teachers as well as several other classes visited our class to encourage and judge us in our exhibition. By lunch time the team that brought the most would be announced; another team got the award for best display; and others received consolation prizes. My team got the award for the most fruits. The fruits were then given to the teachers as their repast. The kids in the Preparatory class would consume the rest, and go home content that they did something worthwhile.

Detentions and promotions were announced only on the first day of the new school year. Every student is expected to return to his or her class. There the headmaster would come to read the names of those who passed and those who were detained. Several students, perhaps about 20%, were detained every year in every class. In 1943 I was promoted to Form I. Classes resumed after the long summer holidays. The year began with no fanfare. An incident is etched in my memory. The years I studied in Kaipuzha were pre-independence years. In fact a king ruled Travancore. He was virtually the ruler, aided by an advisor who was known as The Dewan. The dewan during those years was the famous administrator Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer. Indeed it was compulsory and customary to begin each school day with the singing of the State Hymn invoking God's blessings on the king and the country of Travancore. The king's birthday was celebrated with much hoopla and festivities. Since Kaipuzha is on the cusp of northern Kuttanadu, touching the backwaters of the state, the birthday of the Maharajah was celebrated with water sports. The whole school would witness the boat races and the canoe races. Big and small boats were commissioned for the day. The bigger boys, captained by the teachers, rowed the canoes in the wide and deep canal a short distance from the school. Those who were not rowing were in big boats, plied by hired hands. The biggest of the boats was that of my father. The V.I. P.s and judges were seated in that stately boat that plied majestically among the smaller boats. My father also owned another medium size race boat that was captained by Mr. Thomas Kavil and Mr. Mathew Tharayil. Several of my relatives and neighbors rowed the boat. There were several other boats brought by students from Manjoor, Kallara,

Neendoor etc. They vied with one another racing against each other and generally having fun. Many girls who came to witness the frolics were in one big boat, presided over by the Munishi with his famous umbrella. My sisters were in that boat. As the boat of Mr. Kavil was speeding by the girls' boat, one of the mischievous ones, a cousin of mine, Avarachan – if you really want to know-, splashed water on the girls. Some of the girls giggled and moved to the other side of the boat, causing the boat to capsize instantly. My sisters of course knew how to swim. Those who could, swam to the nearest bund a few yards away. But there were several girls from Athirampuzha and places who could not swim. As soon as they saw the boat capsize, the teachers dove in along with some of the senior students such as the Vanchippura cousins- Chackunny and Chackutty, and others, and rescued the girls. They searched the bottom of the canal – it was the deepest part of the waterway- to make sure that every one was saved. The Munishi used his open umbrella as a floating device and the rescuers reached him to pull him out of the water. What could have been a major tragedy, what could have invited unwanted attention of the whole state to St. George's and to Kaipuzha was averted due to the promptness of the teachers and the seniors. The celebrations were abruptly terminated. The headmaster made valiant attempts to find the perpetrator. But no one – neither teachers, nor students- revealed the identity of the mischief-maker. It was decided that the king's birthday in future would be celebrated on land, on terra firma, from the following year. We did indeed go on procession the next year all through the roads and byways of Kaipuzha singing songs in praise of the king, especially composed for the occasion by Mr. Joseph Kizhakekattil. But it was nothing like the celebrations of earlier years.

Avarachan got into trouble when he was alleged to have written graffiti on the windows of the school and the annex about the family of one of the teachers. The headmaster confronted him; he had no excuses to offer; therefore, since corporal punishment was not sufficient, Avarachan was suspended for three days. He would set out, as usual from home, nonchalantly swinging his lunch carrier; arrive near the school, where he would meet his friends until the bell rang to commence classes. He would while away his time somehow; join us for lunch, and again wait for the end of the school day to play games and meet his friends. Games of any and all kinds were his passion. He did this for three long days. And none of us informed his father, my uncle, about the punishment. Such was the family bond. He was in charge of ringing the bell that year. Occasionally I would ask him to let me bang on the gong. If he refused I would whisper a threat to reveal our secret. That was sufficient for him to let me ring the bell. But such blackmail aside, we were a solid family group.

Games were integral to St. George's in spite of limited space and resources. There was one fair size football ground and a volleyball court. The football field was more or less even. But instead of clay or turf, the ground

had sharp gravel-like pebbles, or rather, stones. And we played barefoot. Numerous students constantly got hurt when they fell. Life-long scars on elbows and shins are testaments to the roughness of that football ground. But nothing daunted, we endured and carried on. Every evening there were organized games. In addition to inter-squad games, lower classes would challenge upper classes to play football, and subsequently return matches were held. Several teachers took part in football. More of them participated in volleyball. There were heated volleyball matches between students and teachers. Some of the urbane students from Athirampuzha such as M.A. George and K. K. Mathew excelled in volleyball. The Vanchipura cousins were all-rounders. Most evenings I stayed around the school grounds to watch the big guys play. The annual sports day was another occasion that we looked forward to with eagerness. There were traditional rivals who competed in several events. The admirers of athletes exaggerated the rivalry. Though there were no physical fights, competitions were tough and the stories were the stuff of legends.

St. George's also emphasized literary activities. Once a week all students assembled in the school hall. (In fact the school was one big hall, partitioned off with screens to divide into classrooms. When the partitioning screens were removed, it became a large hall.) The student leader, elected annually as president, would convene the meeting. There was a report by the secretary. Usually one of the teachers presided over the meeting. Occasionally a prominent person from the vicinity or guest would be asked to speak to the assembly. A topic for discussion was usually announced a week in advance. Two or three would present prepared speeches, followed by a few others who would make short interventions. Sometimes debates were held. These debates showed off the mental gymnastics of the speakers. We learned the rules of engagements, and the art of public speaking. These weekly gatherings were not only well attended, but also much anticipated.

I remember the very first time I participated in a speech competition. The speech was in English, and the topic was "My Duty". I got my father to help me write a three-minute speech, learned it by heart. On the day I was to deliver the speech I was nervous; I could not eat or play or concentrate on my studies. Mr. Mathew Tharayil presided over the competition. The best speaker was going to go to Kottayam for interschool competition. There were three judges to assess the contestants. When my turn came I went up and addressed the gathering. " Mr. Chairman, respected teachers, and friends: The topic for today is "My duty". . . ." I delivered the speech with no mistakes, emphasizing certain points as coached by my father, modulating my voice in the appropriate spots. The judges however were looking at my spindly legs that were shaking like aspen leaves. I did not wet my shorts, but I almost did. When I had done delivering the speech, I ran to my seat. That was my first experience with public speaking. Mercifully I was not selected to represent the school.

The annual School Day celebrations, the crowning culmination of the

civilities of the entire school year, took place towards the end of March. Parents and the general public were not only invited, the whole of Kaipuzha and villages around, looked forward to the School Day. At a specially erected open-air stage sat invited guests and the school Manager along with the headmaster. The headmaster read his annual report detailing the civilities of the year. Prizes were distributed to those who excelled in academics, and to the winners of the games and sports competitions. This was followed by a three-hour play presented by the teachers and students. Thommychettan acted in a couple of plays. Theyamma pengal played the harmonium and sang during intermissions. M.A. Mathai from Athirampuzha acted the lead female character as long as he was in St. George's. It was a fun evening. The next day was usually a holiday.

In 1944 on my promotion to Form II, I felt I was becoming almost a senior. Several new students from Class Seven of Malayalam medium joined the school. A couple of new teachers were added to the roster, including the aforementioned Mr. Joseph Kizhakekattil. He was my Malayalam teacher. And what a treat it was to attend his classes! Fr. Vellanal was transferred and in his place came Fr. Peter Vattappampil. Fr. Peter was a famous homilist, and a strict disciplinarian. He insisted on punctuality and devotion to studies. He visited classes, supervised teachers, and tightened school structure. He had a wry sense of humour. Fr. Peter was also an old student of Kidangore, where he had studied under my father. He had great admiration for his old drawing and drillmaster, who in his time must have been a strict disciplinarian. The mutual admiration between the two was to have dire consequences for me. My father felt that I was moving up the classes rather too fast and wanted me to slow down. Besides, Thommychettan, four years my senior, was by now in Form III and was expected to fail in the public examination of 1945. It would not be good for him or me to be together in Form III. Unbeknown to me my father recommended, and Fr. Peter concurred, that I should be kept back in Form II for another year. After what I thought was an easy year, and after the final examinations, I told my father that I had done reasonably well, except, perhaps, in Arithmetic. As the day of the results drew close, my father, who usually got advance news of results, was uncharacteristically mum about me. I started worrying and told him so. He recommended that I should study by heart common prayers in English, go to Fr. Peter and recite them all to him, and ask about my results. I did so without much effort, as I had the facility to memorize. I went to the presbytery and met Fr. Peter. He must have been expecting me. He listened with apparent interest to my recitation, and congratulated me. When I asked him about my promotion, he told me to enjoy the holidays and that the results would be announced on opening day. I went home rather hoping for the best, though doubts persisted. Early in June 1945 when I returned to school, I was detained in Form II. No reason was given except to state that I was weak in Arithmetic. Ironically my brother passed Form

III and was admitted to St. Ephraim's High School, Mannanam. 45-46 was a dull year. Most of my friends went on to the next grade. I had to cultivate new friends, but they already had their own. I was studying everything one more time. However, my father set tasks for me that kept me busy studying a few hours every week.

Form III was the senior class of the Middle School. Promotion from Middle to High School was determined after a set of examinations administered by the department of education of the Government of Travancore. Only about 50% of the students usually passed these examinations. Therefore teaching in Form III was rigorous. Teachers made students work extra hard. Fr. Peter taught English. He was an excellent teacher. The grammar that he taught in Form III has served as the foundation for all my literary studies subsequently. He was a hard task-master. It was not uncommon to have extra classes on Saturdays. Our class was adjacent to the headmaster's office and Fr. Peter made certain that there was no indiscipline during other classes. One rainy day I was rather noisy during the Malayalam class of the Munishi. Fr. Peter's English class followed. He walked in and asked me the meaning of "akhosham" (celebration), a word that was the object of fun in the Malayalam class. I knew the game was up. Fr. Peter meted out a couple of caning, and advised me to behave. The king of Cochin died and the school had to declare a day of mourning to mark the occasion. When we went to the school, all classrooms were closed, and the janitor informed us that there would be no school that day. I wanted to impress my friends and asked him to open the classroom or I would kick it open. Of course he disregarded me and walked away. The next day when we did return to school, and Fr. Peter came to teach English, he pulled me up and asked if I had sufficient toe-strength to kick open the classroom. I was thunderstruck, as I did not realize that the headmaster was in his office, listening to the goings on in the front verandah. He spared me punishment, but instructed us to respect all human beings, including those doing menial tasks.

The departmental examination to complete Middle School was a much anticipated and feared event. I was worried that I had to study even harder, but did not quite know how. It was then that Poovappurathu Purushothaman Nair came to my rescue. Purushan was my neighbor and my classmate. Quiet, unassuming, diligent and serious, he was a model student. He suggested that we should study for the exams together. The idea particularly appealed to my mother who thought Purushan would be a good influence on me. I readily agreed. He came to our house every evening and we studied together at the table in the granary. We reviewed a different topic or subject each night. When I mentioned this to some of my friends, they evinced interest in joining us. With the permission of our parents we secured a classroom in St. Mathew's to be opened in the evening for the duration. After supper we would go to St. Mathew's with hurricane lantern in hand to study. Of course there was no electricity in Kaipuzha at that time. And being wartime,

or post-war time, kerosene was rationed. Therefore we had to conserve energy. We sat around the lantern and studied. These were serious sessions that sometimes lasted till very late into the nights. Occasionally we slept on the benches in the room and got up early to resume our review. It was, however, not all work. Occasionally we went for a walk. The temple festival in Neendoor was going on. One night we sneaked in there to watch Kathakali. We smoked the occasional beedi under the pretext of staying awake. All in all, these nights of study gave all of us some confidence. The dreaded exams were in the middle of March. We had to walk all the way to St. Ephraim's High School, Mannanam, a good 3 miles away. There would be hall-tickets to be picked up and arrangements made for lunch during the three days of the examination. Purushothaman and I walked to the examination center every day reviewing the subject of the day and hoping that questions would be on the topics that we had prepared. I was on my best behavior – more or less- during those days, so that the Lord would bless me during the ordeal. The exams were relatively easy. All of us who combined for studies passed. It is sixty years since I graduated from St. George's English Middle School. Most of my teachers have gone to their heavenly rewards. Several of my friends too have passed away. Both St. Margaret's and St. George's are going strong after all these years. The foundation laid in the two schools has withstood the test of time. The Kaipuzha community is grateful to the managements and the teachers for their devotion to education. With limited resources these pioneers in education acquitted themselves excellently. I have met hundreds of teachers in my lifetime. Those in St. Margaret's and St. George's were better than most. I hope the traditions of these institutions are being preserved and fostered even to this day.

Chapter 36

Coonoor - The Turning Pont

Written just before the Platinum Jubilee of the School

St. Antony's was and still remains my school. I was admitted to Form IV in 1947, passed the SSLC examination in 1950, and returned to St. Antony's as headmaster from 1957 to 1962. Thus the school has given me much and I have profound affection for the institution. I have returned several times for brief visits to Coonoor, to breathe the salubrious air of The Nilgiris and revive my spirits seeking my lost youth.

In 1947 Coonoor was a busy town, almost 2000 meters above sea level, important because of the sprawling market that catered to the hundreds of workers in the outlying tea plantations. Special spiked chain helped pull the funicular trains from the plains till Coonoor. Coonoor was the second biggest "hill station" in The Nilgiris. Unlike Ooty, that had summer residences for The Madras Presidency and the kings of India, Coonoor had a quiet charm of its own. Dozens of estate owners or their proxies lived in Coonoor and commuted to their estates. The Club was the hub for all the Europeans and the rich Indians. There were verdant hills, ravines, and grassy meadows with profusion of sunflowers, marigold and rhododendrons growing wild all over. Madras Regimental Centre, a hub of military activities in Wellington was very much part of Coonoor. Sim's Park, a beautiful jewel of a botanical garden with hundreds of varieties of trees and flowers and meticulously kept especially during the summer season, was the crowning glory of Upper Coonoor. Huge mansions, with acres of property surrounding them and gardeners tending the flowerbeds were on both sides of the circular road. Narrow lanes meant for cars and horses led to some of the most beautiful tea plantations. The numerous waterfalls that are only a few kilometers from Coonoor were treasures that the daring would explore. Dolphin's Nose, overlooking the vast expanse of the blue mountain and the plains, with a spectacular view of the Catherine Water Falls, Tiger Hill, Lamb's Rock, Law's Falls, The Droog and several other places of breathtaking beauty are only a few kilometers from the town.

The story of St. Antony's is integral to the story of The Nilgiris and, indeed, of India. The Paris Foreign Missionaries were in charge of the sprawling Mysore diocese. Coonnoor was an important parish in that diocese. There were English language schools for boys and for girls. The parish needed a "vernacular" school and the French priests invited the French Brothers of St. Gabriel to run a school. The Brothers had another reason to be in Coonnoor. They were looking for a place where young men could be trained to be Brothers. A juniorate was started for young boys who would study in St. Antony's for a few years, and would decide if they wanted to become Religious Brothers. A Novitiate was established for those who aspired to become Brothers. Subsequently a scholasticate, to train young Brothers was also begun adjacent to the school. An emergency teachers training certificate programme, encouraged and approved by the then Government of Madras Province existed briefly after W.W II. The scholasticate was shifted elsewhere in 1948. The Novitiate was relocated to Yercaud in 1952. As for the juniorate, it remained an integral part of St. Antony's till it was moved to Palakurichi in 1964. These institutions made St. Antony's a very unique place for the Brothers. It was not just a school, but also a home. Most Brothers in the early years studied and lived in St. Antony's, which they considered their motherhouse.

The primary school next to the parish church was inadequate to be a high school. Therefore the Brothers purchased part of the property of the European Club, situated on the summit of Upper Coonnoor. The dance hall was converted as classrooms for middle school. Six large rooms with hard wood floors and fireplaces were used as high school classrooms. The crescent shaped building became the Brothers' quarters. Additions were made as years went by, until Bro. Antony of Padua, in the 80's, built solid concrete structures replacing the old clubhouse.

But St. Antony's was not merely brick and mortar. It was a place of warmth and hope and fun. The year I joined the school, for instance, coincided with the independence of India. Air was filled with aspirations, hopes and dreams of a new nation. "Jana Gana Mana" replaced "God Bless our King"; we sang of the new age and of our political heroes who would change the face of the earth. There was electricity in the atmosphere. St. Antony's reverberated with the impending changes of the times. Bro. Amance, the headmaster took the lead in impressing on the school a sense of patriotism for the homeland. But let me, briefly go back to the early years.

Bro. Octavian, I think, was the first manager of the school after the Brothers took over. Mr. Peter Reddy, who later became a Professor in St. Xavier's College, Palayamkottah, and still later became the famous mendicant preacher, was the headmaster of St. Antony's for a brief period. Bro. Amance was the headmaster for several years. He was a disciplinarian; a law and order man. But he was also extremely learned. He did not hesitate to use the cane when necessary. His refrain was "Everybody must study hard".

Bro. John of God succeeded him and was headmaster during the crucial years of World War II. Bro. John set a tone for the school, which others have attempted to imitate. He believed in all-round development. Studies were only one part of school, though an important one. He garnered the support of the influential people of the town, and together with the teachers and the old boys, ran very popular football and hockey tournaments. Teams from as far away as the west coast came to compete for the ever-rolling trophy. The M.R.C., Ooty Blues, Silver Arrow, Cordite Factory, and a host of other teams competed for the trophy. Every Saturday and Sunday for several weeks, St. Antony's became the focal point of the town and surrounding areas. Thousands of avid fans trekked up the hill, and paid a nominal entrance fee to watch their favourite teams play. Bro. John had the unstinted assistance of the Pasteur Institute, The Coonoor Club and, indeed of the civic and municipal authorities in all his endeavours. He expanded the football ground, built "Hibboo's pavilion", constructed grass stadium around the field, and built several classrooms to accommodate the growing numbers in the school. Bro. John would become famous as an educator in Hyderabad in later years. But his talents were honed and developed in Coonoor. Various others were headmasters of the school for short and long periods of time until Bro. John of the Cross assumed the office in 1950. He set a steady course for St. Antony's. Studies and athletics were important; so was citizenship training. When he left in 1954, St. Antony's had become an enviable institution in the district. Twenty-five years after the founding of the school, when I assumed office in 1957, the school had a character all its own, and was poised to fly to greater heights of glory. I distinctly remember one of the first teachers meetings during which I was expounding on some plans. Mr. Agoram Iyer, not too subtly, pointed out that headmasters came with ideas; they played the tune and the teachers danced to it. However, ultimately, it was the teachers who had to carry the real load of the school. I have never forgotten that lesson. One had to respect the traditions of the school, stay the course, while implementing cosmetic and substantial changes. During the years that I was headmaster, the teachers of St. Antony's were the greatest assets. The month long All India tour, several shorter trips, the annual camping in the scout facility, annual events such as Parents Day, Sports Day, Children's Day, and the district athletic Meet as also the Regional Sports Meet, and many other functions that were held in the school were successful because of the unstinting cooperation of teachers and students. If there was an important match in Ooty, the whole school would go to encourage the team. Meanwhile classroom teaching and hard work continued unabated. Several others who succeeded me as headmasters were old students of St. Antony's and knew the school and its traditions.

However, St. Antony's is unique because of its teachers. Let me mention a few early pioneers. My Agoram Iyer, the bespeckled, turbaned short gentleman was one of the earliest of the teachers. Much later, when par-

ents would come clamouring for admissions for their children in the school, he would recount how he had to go from house to house in the beginning years to entice kids to attend St. Antony's. He remained the enthusiastic, ever willing collaborator till the late 50's when he reluctantly retired. Another pioneer was Mr. Yoghee, a member of the Badaga community, who was instrumental in bringing many students from the outlying Badaga villages. Mr. Dharmaraja Siva was probably the greatest asset the Brothers acquired in the early years. He was a teacher of science, or of anything in the senior high school. He was also the headmaster several times, when the management did not have Brothers to spare to administer the school. But he was loyal; he was faithful; he was meticulous; he was reliable. Another such was Mr. Ramakrishna Iyer. An excellent Mathematics teacher, he too was headmaster for several years and assistant headmaster for a very long period. Always punctual, reliable, hard working, and loyal, the management entrusted him with onerous tasks that he undertook with calm, firm, and steady hands. For example, Mr. Ramakrishna Iyer would spend his summer holidays tabulating marks to determine success or failure of students, and helped the management prepare for government auditors. Mr. Venketarama Sastry, the Tamil pundit was an institution unto himself. A Tamil and Sanskrit scholar, a poet, a loving person, with a tremendous earthy sense of humour, the Pundit was a pillar. Mr. James, the physical education teacher was a facilitator, who knew his way around the city and the district and could accomplish things. The Kamath brothers, who joined in the late forties, began with a smattering knowledge of Tamil, and remained for many years as solid collaborators, including especially managing the very successful National Cadet Corps programme for many years. The rigours of Coonor climate deterred many teachers from staying for long periods of time. However, for as long as they remained on the staff, school was their all; they spent days and evenings and weekends in the service of the students. I could write whole chapters about many other later additions such as Messers T. Ramaswamy, Nelson, Marimuthu, Samson, Joseph, Joachim, Palaniswamy, Mariappan, Prabhakaran, and a host of others. I must apologize for not mentioning other names due to limitations of memory, space and lapse of time. But let me just reiterate: the teachers were essential and dedicated collaborators of St. Antony's. While on the subject of apology, let me also apologize to all my students for the occasional excessive use of the rod, in the mistaken belief that punishment instilled discipline and education.

When the true story of the school is written these teachers and brothers who were on the staff should be considered as important as the headmasters. Bro. Claudien, for example, who was on the clerical staff, but also was manager and correspondent, was integral to the continuity of the school. He knew every student, and he knew the parents too. He had his sharp eyes on everything that went on in the school. He collaborated with the headmasters and ensured the smooth running of the school. Until 1956 or

so, Coonoor was his home. Bro. Charles succeeded Bro. Claudien as manager and correspondent. His greatest virtue was trusting those to whom duties were entrusted. Bro. Bernard, Bro. Denis and Bro. George as also Bro. Benedict were teachers of long standing. Bro. Cretensius and Bro. Donald who were my contemporaries did yeoman service for the school. Bro. Donald was a versatile person. He was an excellent teacher; a talented musician; he wrote his own plays and trained students in the fine arts. Whether it be Sports Day or Parents Day or Children's Day, Bro. Donald could be relied upon to organize the events. And he knew how to rope in the cooperation of teachers and students. I mention these names only to point out that St. Antony's thrived on collaboration. For as long as I can remember, the success of the school was due to the joint effort of all .

The school was started for the poor and the underprivileged. It attracted students from miles away. For many years St. Antony's was the only high school in the vicinity. Students came from estates, villages, and townships more than 15 kilometers from the school. In fact we had students from Kotagiri and Ketti – both easily 25 kilometers away. St. Antony's today is considered a premier institution, thanks largely to its grand traditions, and all the unknown and unsung persons who built it brick by brick, year after year, lovingly and with dedication and devotion.

Now that the school is celebrating its platinum jubilee, let me wish the staff and students, and especially the alumni and associates, all God's blessings. Lift up your hearts, and look to the future with hope.

Chapter 37

Loyola 1950s- Life that Leavens

I studied in Loyola College, Madras from 1952 to 1956. Whenever I am in Chennai I make it a point to drop in to Loyola for a few minutes, drive or walk around the campus and renew my memories of the great institution. Much has changed in the last fifty years; but much has also remained.

In 1952 Fr. Douglas Gordon was the principal. Tall, austere looking gentleman, he was the soul of kindness. As he was also a graduate of Loyola (1931) he knew the history and traditions of the alma mater. He steered the affairs of the college until he was appointed Provincial Superior of Madurai province of the Jesuits in 1953. Fr. Gordon had succeeded the most famous principal of Loyola till then, or ever, in the person of Fr. Jerome D'Souza.

Appointed in 1942, Fr. D'Souza was the first Indian Jesuit to direct the affairs of the college. The heady years that he was the principal saw agitations and strikes and movements among the youth for independence. Fr. D'Souza. Who was patriotic to the core, knew how to harness the energy of his students. Once during one of the student agitations, the police rushed to the gates of Loyola campus to clam the situation. Fr. Jerome asked the Commissioner of Police not to enter, that he would deal with the strike himself. He assembled the student body, and in an eloquent address exhorted them to prepare for the imminent independence of India by studying and becoming responsible citizens. The near riot turned into a love fest. After India achieved independence, Fr. Jerome was invited to be part of the Constituent Assembly that drafted and debated and in the end promulgated the constitution of India. It was said that when Fr. D'Souza stood up in the Assembly to speak, Nehru would stop reading his files and listen to the orator with deep admiration. Fr. Jerome spoke a dozen languages and could preach in most. When, a few years later he was appointed to the United Nations, and became the leader of the delegation to the opening of UNESCO in Paris, we were proud to read that Fr. Jerome delivered the homily in Notre Dame Cathedral, beginning in French, switching to Spanish and to English as the distinguished gathering listened in awe to the towering personality.

Fr. Theo Mathias, an alumnus of Montfort school, (where Fr. Gordon too had studied) became the principal in the place of Fr. Gordon. Young, dynamic, and full of energy, Fr. Theo became very popular in a short time. Within two years of his appointment, he was chosen to be the founding principal of Andhra Loyola College. Fr. Arulswamy succeeded him in 1954 with Fr. Kalathil, the cowshed dweller as the rector.

Principals came and went in Loyola. But the staff remained. It is the members of the staff that stick to one's memories, more than even the great principals. Fr. Basenach, for example, the German Jesuit, trained in London School of Economics, was one of the founding members of Loyola. He taught his students to think rather than to prepare for examinations. He was one of the few Germans in India who was not interned during World War II. Governments asked for Fr. Basenach's advice on budgets and planning. Another Jesuit giant in Madras was Fr. L.D. Murphy, an Oxford graduate. He was not only the head of the English department in the college, he was also a close collaborator with the Dr. Lakshmanaswamy Mudaliar, the Vice Chancellor of the university. In fact Fr. Murphy was acting Vice Chancellor several times. He taught our intermediate class *The Merchant of Venice*. He acted and explained Shakespeare so that the introduction to the bard of Avon was almost pleasant. Fr. C. Leigh was another stalwart. Not only was he famous all over India as an expert on snakes, he also had a python for a pet. He taught a few English classes, in addition to his responsibility of administering the college library. The ground level of Bertram Hall was his domain. Fr. Leigh micromanaged affairs. I remember how he invited me to his office one rainy day. I was not sure what it was that he wanted. But he had found out from the records that I was taking out an excessive number of books. He asked me about my reading habits. At first I was defensive as I did not know what his intentions were. But during the course of the conversation he offered to direct me in the selection of books. I have remained ever grateful for the number and kind of books that he suggested to read. As a teacher of English he was an elitist. He taught us how to write effectively, what styles to follow and when. Fr. Varin was not only a musician and composer, but he was also the person who planned the beautification of Loyola. The Ashoka trees that line the campus are a tribute to Fr. Varin's artistry. He was also an excellent teacher of logic. "Dictum de omni et nullo" still reverberates in my memory. Fr. Amesquois was a Spaniard who taught French. He was also the person who designed the beautiful chapel in Loyola. Fr. Racine was perhaps one of the best mathematicians in India in his time. Fr. Lourdu Yedenappally, a Ph. D in chemistry from USA, was a renowned researcher and scientist. Fr. Rapinat, the warden, was also a self-taught botanist. In summer his hobby was roaming the hills of South India in search of rare flora. Fr. Rayappar was a scrupulous priest, and hard working professor of economics. Fr. Mathew Thekekara, the professor

of Physics left soon after I arrived in Loyola for a Ph. D in USA, and later became a scientist advising NASA. Fr. Ceyrac, A French man who was also a Tamil scholar, led the Catholic students movement all over India. Thus Loyola had a group of priests who were giants in their fields. Rectors and principals came and went; but Loyola was famous because of these dedicated men.

The college also hired some of the best professors in various disciplines. Mr. A.L. Krishnan, perhaps best known as a Shakespeare scholar, kept the class in thrall when he taught. Mr. Divine and Mr. Gabriel were in the French department, teaching a foreign language to unwilling and reluctant students. Some of the Mathematics and Science teachers such as Sebastian and Varghese were nationally renowned. Mr. Rajendran and Mr. Williams were worthy professors of History.

Along with the regular classes taught by such eminent men, Loyola College invited educational and political personalities to address the students. Rajaji, the chief minister of Madras, was the key note speaker at a College Day function. "The wise man of India", as Nehru called him, sat in his chair and talked about the nation, about philosophy, about education, and about the duties of youth. He was not an orator; but he gripped the attention of the students by his homespun and original ideas. Dr. P. V. Cherian, the chairman of the Legislative assembly, was the next speaker. It was not easy to best Rajaji. But he stole the show by reminding the audience of a Malayalam proverb that says never to go in front of a tusker elephant, nor behind a great man. Then he entertained the audience by his humorous anecdotes of life and times. Cardinal Valerian Gracias, the first cardinal of India, flew from Bombay and addressed the students. Mrs. Vijayalakshmi Pundit presided over a function when the college conducted a mock United Nations General Assembly, and declared that it was almost as good as the original in New York. She would have known as she was the President of The United Nations for one term. Mr. V. K. Krishna Menon talked to a packed hall and kept us in awe with his grasp of world affairs. It was a few years later that he spoke at the UNO for eight hours, affirming that "The accession of Kashmir to India was full, final, complete, and irrevocable." In spite of his oratory, or as some would aver, because of it, a majority in the United Nations condemned "the occupation of Kashmir by India". Sardar K.M. Panicker, the then ambassador to China spoke about his experiences and crossed swords with Fr. Basenach. The latter asked Mr. Panicker about the regimentation in Communist China, and the Sardar remarked that it could be compared to the Jesuit governance. Fr. Basenach was not amused, and walked out. The famous Jesse Owens spoke about how he broke the ten-second barrier in Hundred Meters Dash in the Berlin Olympics of 1936. He had watched the starting officials who would say "On your mark! Get Set; GO!" and fire. He counted that it took exactly three counts – 1.. 2...3.. and the pistol would go off. So when it was time for him to run the finals

of the Hundred Meters Dash, in front of Hitler who wanted desperately for a German to win the event, Jesse Owens counted 1.. 2.. 3 and ran without waiting for the pistol to go off. That millisecond gave him the advantage to win the title. He also bagged gold in 200 metres, broad jump, and 4x100 relay race in the same Olympics. Group Captain Leonard Cheshire, Victoria Cross winner, hero of a hundred bombing sorties over Germany, and one of a few invited to be an observer as the Americans dropped atom bombs on Japan, came to talk to us about the atrocities of war. He founded "Cheshire Homes" all over the world to look after handicapped people. Mr. C.D. Deshmukh, the ICS turned finance minister explained how the five- year plans would work. Other ministers of central and state governments visited Loyola and addressed various associations and groups.

Loyola College always attracted the brightest and the best in India. There were indeed several students from abroad such as Sri Lanka, Thailand, Malaysia, and some from Africa. Christopher Mboijana, who became a famous barrister in Uganda, and who had to flee to Kenya for his life during Idi Amin's regime, was a classmate of mine. R. Krishnan, the greatest tennis star ever in India, studied in Loyola from 1952 to 1957. In spite of the tennis tournaments that took him all over the world for extended periods of time, Krishnan was a keen student, and did well in his exams.

The same could not be said about another friend of mine in the person of Humayun. (I will not mention his last name lest too many persons may recognize him.) Humayun's one interest in college was to join the cricket team. Cricket was his whole life, and the occasional tennis. When, after many entreaties and enticements to all and sundry, he was invited to be part of the college team, his happiness knew no bounds. Humayun did not study. He did not need to study. The family business reluctantly waited for his dabbling in college to end. When the periodic tests and examinations happened, he would visit me for a few minutes, get tid-bits of information, and regardless of what the questions were, would fire away anything and everything that he heard. During the senior intermediate examination conducted by the university Humayun was totally lost. The exams were conducted in the Arts College. Humayun drove in his sports car to the hostel to pick me up. In the examination hall Humayun sat right behind me. That day's exam was in Ancient History. At some point Humayun stood up for additional blank papers from the supervisor. As the supervisor passed after handing the blank sheets Humayun leaned over, took my neatly drawn map of the Persian Invasion of Xerxes, replaced it with the blank outline that he had, all in one neat move, and sat down. I did not blink as I had plenty of time to draw another map. The only subject in which Humayun passed in Intermediate was Ancient History! Needless to say we remained friends for several years. Whenever I visited Madras we would get together for lunch. I bought a lot of electronic goods at advantageous prices from him for the school where I was principal,.

Then there was Akbar Khalili. Akbar had completed his high school in one of the top schools in the city of Madras. It was only natural that he would join Loyola as his older brother was a student leader in college. He was also attracted to the college due to the games and athletic programme. Akbar would partner with R. Krishnan for the inter-college tennis championships. No one could defeat the duo. Akbar was also the best javelin thrower in the university. Tall, handsome, and prominent, Akbar attracted attention. He had a sponge like memory. He could remember lectures almost verbatim without effort, or notes. In fact he seldom carried any writing utensils and often borrowed pens and pencils and forgot to return them. He was my bench mate for intermediate in most classes and I kept a pencil just for him. He also had the habit of talking continuously as lecturers were holding forth. He could listen to every word of the professor, and at the same time comment about it and about anything that was on his mind. He did this steadily and relentlessly... except in the classes of Prof. Rajendran. Let me explain the reason: Prof. Rajendran taught us Modern History and could describe Henry VIII and Louis XIV as if he knew them personally, and places such as Versailles Palace and The Tower of London as if he had been a tour guide in those places. He made history alive. Several years later when I visited Europe, much of Mr. Rajendran's classes came back to mind. But I am getting ahead of myself. On the first day – the very first day- that Mr. Rajendran came to class, Akbar was sitting in the back row and kept on a monologue as usual. Mr. Rajendran stopped in mid-sentence and caught Akbar with his train of chatter.

“Stand Up!”, commanded the professor. Akbar ambled up.

“Stand Straight up!”, ordered Mr. Rajendran. “What is your name?”

“ Akbar, sir”.

“ Akbar what?”.

“Khalili” sir”.

“What?”

“Khalili”

“Are you sure you are a member of the distinguished Khalili family?”

“Yes”

“You sound more like a gutter snipe than a Khalili...” And on and on did professor Rajendran harangue Akbar for the next five minutes. In words too insulting to repeat here and in the scintillating syllables unique to Prof. Rajendran, he dressed Akbar down... verbally.

“Sit down” said he at the end.

Ever since then, for the next five years, Akbar never uttered a word in Rajendran's class.

But Akbar was his mischievous self in all other classes. For example in October 1953 during the days before Divali holidays, the class was sleeping through the lecture of an English professor. He had been the recipient of the gold medal in English the year before from the University in M.A. English

Literature. But his pronunciation left much to be desired. When he said “popoolar” (for popular) a score of voices would sing in unison “Popoolar”, to the consternation of the young lecturer. Suddenly the whole class and the lecturer jumped up as a fire-cracker burst in the back row. The consternation that followed the sound and smoke is best left to the imagination. He asked in a hoarse voice who the perpetrator was. Of course nobody owned up. In despair he ordered the last three benches to get out of the class. Akbar walked straight to Fr. Murphy’s room and told him that he, and he alone, was responsible for the fireworks. Akbar was a protégé of Fr. Murphy who was also in charge of games and sports. Fr. Murphy smiled in his own enigmatic way, took Akbar to Fr. Theo Mathias who was then the principal. The principal said that Akbar had to be punished. He received three days suspension and five rupees fine. As Akbar told me when he returned after the suspension: “My pocket money for one month disappeared with the fire cracker”. Incidentally Akbar Khalili completed his B.A. Hon’s in 1957, appeared for the IAS examination in 1959; was called for interview during which the panel casually asked him if he had heard of Sir Mirza Ismael. Akbar said that Mirza Ismael was an advisor to the Maharaja of Mysore, and had died a few weeks before. “Anything else that you know?”, asked the panelist. For the next ten minutes Akbar told the panel all about Mirza Ismael. Fascinated, they asked how he knew all that. He replied that Sir Mirza Ismael was the grandfather of the girl whom he was going to marry. Thus ended the interview that got him into foreign service. He was the ambassador to Iran when the Shah was toppled; and later was the High Commissioner to Australia. Akbar Khalili retired as the doyen of diplomats, and as he told me some time ago, is quietly puttering around his garden in Bangalore. Loyola graduates consistently did well in I.A. S and I. P. S examinations. The college has produced doctors, engineers, business men, lawyers and men in every walk.

Hostel life had its charms. The founders of Loyola were farsighted visionaries who made sure that there would be a lot of land for future expansion and leisurely activities. Therefore Loyola boasts of 50 acres of land with expansive green space. More than half the students lived in the hostels. For many it was home away from home. Therefore along with the primary purpose of studies, many found time for fun also. The various playgrounds—football, cricket, and hockey fields, volleyball courts, badminton and ring tennis courts, and a dozen tennis courts – were always occupied. Every Friday there was a movie in the Bertram Hall. The indoor games room was packed most evenings. The annual tournaments in all games conducted by Loyola, called Bertram tournaments attracted teams from all over South India. The competitions in Basketball, hockey, volleyball, badminton and football were intense. Hundreds of students crowded especially during the semifinals and finals of these tournaments.

And when all these did not suffice, for the more exuberant youngsters,

they resorted to prangs. Most of these were harmless and rather prosaic. For example shifting the potted plants from the gardens into the lavatories overnight must have taken considerable effort on the part of hostel residents. Occasionally they would look for diversion in the households of the stately houses that lined Sterling road. Some were caught; most were ignored. One needed distractions especially during the hectic days and nights heralding examinations.

The half a dozen mess halls catered to the varied needs of the cosmopolitan community. From "European" mess to Andhra, vegetarian and non-vegetarian meals, the students could choose which mess to subscribe to. In addition, a canteen that sold coffee, ice cream and snacks was always crowded. When one thinks back on all these undertakings by the management, one is full of admiration for the organizational prowess of the Jesuits of the time. When students returned after the summer holidays, the buildings were newly whitewashed and spotlessly clean. The students, in their turn, kept their surroundings relatively clean and tidy. Wash was never hung to dry outside rooms. A dedicated office staff patiently listened to the complaints of the residents and tried sincerely to make life comfortable for the youngsters.

Yes, much has changed in Loyola; but much has remained. *Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.*

Chapter 38

1 Nov 1956 - Birth Pangs of Kerala

An experiential nostalgia as a new State Kerala is born- written in 2012

Kerala celebrated its golden jubilee on November 1, 2006. The birth of the State was not without its share of sorrows and heartaches. I was present in Knayakumari fifty years ago when the reorganization of States in India took place.

When India became independent, there were some provinces that were ruled by the British viceroy and hundreds of kingdoms ruled by rajahs great and small. With the promulgation of the constitution on January 26, 1950 three types of states and territories were constituted: Schedule A, B, and C. Travancore and Cochin States were combined as T.C State. However there were agitations in several parts of India for linguistic reorganizations of states. Nehru was not in favour of such “parochial” redistributions. Potti Sriramulu, a Telugu leader, fasted unto death in 1953 demanding a separate Andhra State. Rajaji, who was then the chief minister of Madras State, was opposed to the imposition of anyone’s will by the use of sathyagraha. And he had chided even Gandhiji on such endeavours. But the agitation that followed the death of Potti Sriramulu forced the Congress Government in New Delhi to grant a state for Telugus. Subsequently a commission was constituted under the chairmanship of Sardar K.M. Panicker to study and recommend reorganization of the country. The commission recommended reorganization on linguistic lines. Thus was promulgated the States Reorganization Act that came into effect on November 1, 1956.

T.C. State became larger with the addition of the Malayalam speaking areas of Madras State, popularly known then as Malabar region, and Kasergod from Karnataka. It had to cede Kanyakumari to Madras State, which had a dominant Tamil speaking population. This was no easy separation. Kanyakumari had been an integral part of Travancore from time immemorial. Indeed legends spoke of Parasu Raman throwing his axe from

Gokarnam to Kanyakumari to raise the land from out of the sea. The district was known as the granary of Travancore. This is the only place in India where one can watch both the sunset and moonrise from the same spot on a full moon evening. Sands of different colours on the beach make the Land's End an object of tourist attraction. St. Thomas preached Christianity in Kanyakumari. Islam came to the south through Kanyakumari.

The Cholas, Pandyas, Cheras, and Nayaks ruled Kanyakumari at various times and left architectural marvels in and around Kanyakumari. The kings of Travancore had their palaces near Kanyakumari. Thousands of pilgrims thronged to the temples of Kanyakumari and Suchindram annually. Obviously the government of T.C. State was reluctant to give up its claim for the district. The Gandhi Memorial commemorating the Father of the Nation is the very last structure in the southern tip of India, built where the ashes of the Mahathma had been kept for public viewing before its immersion into the ocean. The Memorial, built one month before the reorganization of States was implemented, was designed in such a way that the first rays of the sun on October 2, the birthday of the Mahathma, would fall on the raised "peedam" where the ashes had been kept.

I was a student at St. Xavier's Teachers Training College, Palayamkottai in 1956. Along with a couple of friends we went to Kanyakumari to watch the handing over of the district. We spent almost the whole night on the beach, watching the proceedings. The ministers of T.C. State were there briefly in the evening of October 31, to meet Kamaraj Nadar the chief minister of Madras who had come there along with Subramaniam, Bhakthavalsalam and other ministers of Madras. In fact the chief minister of Madras and his entourage spent a couple of leisurely hours on the sandy beach of Kanyakumari, enjoying their new possession.

On November 1, 1956, there was hardly any sign in Kanyakumari that it had been part of Travancore for centuries. All signage was in Tamil. The Madras State police patrolled the streets. All references to Travancore and Malayalam were obliterated.

There had been riots in southern Travancore demanding that it be part of Madras State. The State police had put down these agitations rather ruthlessly. Therefore, the people of Kanyakumari, on the whole, were happy to be part of Madras State. (The name "Tamil Nadu" came several years later.) As for Malabar, the population there was not eager to be part of Kerala. They had special privileges under Madras. Schools and educational institutions were conducted in Malayalam. Good many Malabarians manned the civil service of Madras, and of the central government, It was said that the top soldiers came from Coorg and the best civil servants hailed from Malabar. Indeed the long, rather orderly British rule, as also the smooth transition to self government was due in no small measure to the quality of the civil service in India. Malabar region gave the most qualified civil servants to governments of all jurisdictions. They were not sure if their

privileged existence could continue in the new realities of reorganized India. In fact, it did not.

Fiftyone years have passed since Kerala came into existence. Doesn't Kerala remain very much what it was half a century ago, literally and figuratively?

A note: Padmanabhapuram is where the ancient palace, the seat of Travancore kings for long years, is situated. It is now in Tamil Nadu. The palace has an area of seven acres, located in Padmanabhapuram fort, amidst hills, dales, and rivers. Respecting the wishes of Kerala, the curator of the archeological department of the Government of Kerala has the privilege of maintaining the palace.

Chapter 39

Kuruvila Jacob - The Portal To Succeed

Musings on a rare Academic Influencer in Life

I was a B.Ed. student in St. Xavier's Teachers College, Palayamkottah, in 1956-57. B.Ed students had two examinations: theory and practical. Theory was administered by Madras University. The local college, under the supervision of the University, conducted practical examination. University sent a team of examiners to each B.Ed College to assess the students and the grading practice of the college. These examiners decided who should get first class in practical. The principal of the College had recommended me for first class. The examiners came to my practice-teaching class to observe and assess.

Mr. Kuruvila Jacob was one of the three distinguished gentlemen appointed to this onerous task in 1956-57. I was given a class of Form V, and was asked to teach a poem. The poem was about growing old. After the preliminaries of a classroom, I asked the students to turn around and look at the last bench. There seated were the three examiners accompanied by Fr. Utaidil, the principal. I asked the students to describe the four gentlemen. At first the students were reluctant. But I cajoled them to say a word or two about the persons sitting at the back. One boy said, "Grey hair"; another said, "bald"; a third said, "wrinkles". I wrote those words on the blackboard. Thus began my teaching about growing old. The examiners must have found the class interesting as they stayed for the full 45 minutes. At the end of the lesson, the principal instructed me to be prepared to teach Social Studies in the afternoon. The examiners were again duly present. The class was in Tamil and I taught some rudiments of economics. The gentlemen had to catch a train that afternoon and after a few minutes, excused themselves. I accompanied them to the door. Mr. Kuruvila Jacob stayed back for a few moments and whispered to me in Malayalam that my Tamil was a bit rusty. I agreed with him and thanked him. Then he left saying, "Congratulations!".

When the results of the B.Ed examinations appeared in newspapers, I had secured a first class. I wrote a personal letter to Mr. Kuruvila Jacob to thank him and inform him that I was appointed headmaster of St. Antony's High School, Coonoor. His reply surprised me. He congratulated me and added that I was doing better than him as he was made the headmaster of Madras Christian College High School at the age of 27, whereas I was only 23 when I became headmaster.

A few months into the year, Mr. Sundaravadivelu, The Director of Public Instruction of Madras, convened a meeting of all heads of schools in the State to expound his schemes including, and especially, his fascination with the concept of basic education. I went to Madras for the conference. Kuruvila Jacob, head and shoulders above most persons, spotted me in the crowd and invited me to sit with him. He introduced me to several of his friends. He knew everyone who was anyone in education in Madras and everybody knew him. From that time on, we became friends.

The central Government appointed a commission of educationists to study the physical education prevailing in the country and recommend changes. Mr. Kuruvila Jacob was one of the members of that commission. I was asked to appear before the commission with my thoughts. Instead I suggested that the commission travel to the Nilgiris to meet some of the headmasters and see for themselves the enthusiasm and public support for games and sports in the remote hill station. They did come to Coonoor and Ooty. Greg Memorial Sports, which was the early name for the Interschool athletic meet was a great crowd pleaser in the district. When the commission members arrived, the finals of the interschool football tournament took place in their presence. The traditional rivalry between St. Antony's High School, Coonoor, and Municipal High School, Ooty was famous. The game took place in the race course grounds in Ooty and thousands of people had gathered from both the towns to encourage their teams. St. Antony's won by one single, solitary goal. The commission, in its recommendations, suggested such sports and tournaments at the state level. Mr. Kuruvila Jacob and I were in the committee to promote State wide meets.

In 1962 I took up the principal ship of St. Gabriel's High School, Kazipet, Andhra. Coincidentally K. Jacob had retired from MCCHS after serving there for 31 years, and took over the stewardship of Hyderabad Public School. This elite institution had fallen on hard times and Kuruvila Jacob was asked to bring it back to its pristine glory. He had a free hand to do anything. I visited him in Hyderabad several times. One day I got a call from him. He asked for a personal favour. Apparently, Divakar, one of my teachers, had applied for a job in The Public School. Kuruvila Jacob needed new teachers and Divakar was an excellent physics teacher. Would I release him from the terms of his contract with St. Gabriel's. I was hesitant. I had other teachers who could replace Divakar. So our friendship trumped my reluctance. When the education department of Andhra and private schools

in the State had disputes, I persuaded the private managements to seek the advice of Kuruvila Jacob.

After I came to Canada in 1967, I knew that Kurivila Jacob had done yeoman service in Hyderabad, brought back the prestige of The Public School. From there he went to Bombay where he had been given the task of running Cathedral School. I was sure he would do equally well in Bombay too.

It was a chance remembrance about Kuruvila Jacob that prompted me to google his name, and, lo and behold, I saw all about him in a website. After a distinguished career in education, he retired to be with his grandchildren in Vellore. Kuruvila Jacob died in 1991. Mr. Kuruvila Jacob was a towering personality, literally and figuratively. He was affable, approachable, faithful in friendship, and imaginative. He was an educator without an equal.

I remain indebted to him for his personal friendship and example.

Chapter 40

First 21 Days in Canada 1967 - The Transition

“How long is the flight?”, I asked my seatmate to make conversation.

“They say 90 minutes, but it takes less than an hour from New York to Montreal”, said the gentleman. “Is it your first visit to Montreal?”, he asked.

“Yes, my first visit to Canada”, I said.

“Welcome to Canada”, he said enthusiastically. He went on to describe the ski slopes and how the winter had been good for skiing. I listened with a great deal of curiosity and some apprehension.

“You must get a car”, he said. “You absolutely need a car.”

“How much would a new car cost?”, I asked.

He assured me that I could get one for less than three thousand dollars. I quietly patted the breast pocket of my jacket where I had stashed away a hundred dollar bill. My wallet contained various currencies amounting to perhaps another hundred dollars that constituted my entire wealth on this continent. But let me retract a few days. I was in Rome for some courses, and was returning to India to be the principal of St. Luke’s High School, Solan, Himachal Pradesh. On a quiet chilly January day in 1967 I was walking through the streets of Rome, when I saw the Canadian embassy. On a hunch I walked into the embassy and asked if I could immigrate to Canada. The official who interviewed me said that normally I would have to apply from India. However he asked me to fill the application form, and after a few minutes of questioning, he said that he would let me know.

On the 26th of January, 1967, one week after my initial interview, I got a phone call inviting me to the embassy with a chest x-ray. I was granted immigration to Canada. I went to the Air India offices to change my ticket to Montreal. My Costello, the manager, asked if I knew anyone in Montreal. Not a soul, I told him. He had a friend in Montreal and asked if I would look him up and give him an Air India calendar. When he mentioned that his name was Dr. Cronin, I asked if he was any relation to A.J. Cronin,

the famous British novelist, whose every book I had read. Mr. Costello informed me that Pat Cronin was the second son of the novelist, practicing as a cardiologist and teaching medicine in Montreal. The hundred dollars that I had tucked away was lent to me by the Montfort Brothers in Rome. I flew from Rome to London and boarded an Air India flight to JFK, New York. Since I did not have a visa to USA, I was politely escorted by customs officials to La Guardia, to catch the Air Canada flight to Montreal. It was January 31, 1967, a Tuesday.

The plane landed around 3 p.m. and having collected my luggage, and changed the various currencies into Canadian dollars, I saw a help desk set up for immigrants and travelers. I asked the lady how I could get to the city. She pointed out a bus outside that would take me to the various hotels in downtown Montreal. The driver asked which hotel I was going to. I stared vacantly at him. Very helpfully he listed various hotels: The Ritz, Queen Elizabeth, Hilton, Holiday Inn. . . . I asked him to take me to the cheapest hotel. He promised to drop me off in front of the YMCA. The YMCA rented me a room for four dollars a night. I took the room for a couple of days. But before I would go to my room, I had a couple of phone calls to make. I had the phone number of the Montreal Catholic School Commission. I phoned MCSC from a phone booth in the YMCA. The personnel department connected me to Mr. James O'Brian. He was in a hurry as the offices were closing, but asked me to see him at 10 a.m. the next day. The next call was to Dr. Cronin. Sis, the wife of Dr. Cronin answered and recognized and inquired about Mr. Costello. She asked if I was comfortable in the YMCA or whether I would like to be their guest. I thanked her and said that I was already booked in YMCA and that I would keep her and Dr. Cronin informed of my whereabouts. By the time I went up to my room and unpacked the essentials, I was hungry. I came down to ask where I could eat. The receptionist showed me the cafeteria of the YMCA where I had a hearty meal for less than four dollars. My first night in Canada and I had an appointment for the next day. I went to bed with expectations and full of apprehensions. But I was thirty two and single, and rather foolhardy.

After my morning ablutions in a common area, I went down to get a light breakfast. The receptionist was very helpful and told me how to use the metro to get to The Montreal School Commission offices. I stepped out into the February cold of Montreal. I had a light overcoat and a thin pair of leather gloves, suitable for Rome, but far too inadequate for Canada. I saw people rush by, but I myself was in danger of slipping. There was a shoe store on the way to the metro station. I got in there and asked the salesman why I was sliding and slipping whereas others were rushing about. He looked at my shiny shoes and asked if I was new to Montreal. "Less than 24 hours", I said. He told me about icy pavements, the need for grip, winter boots, and suggested that I buy a pair of "rubbers". He gave me a pair for fifty cents, though the regular price was a dollar. He helped me slip those

over my shoes, and I was able to go on without fear of falling.

Mr. O'Brian, the personnel officer of MCSC grilled me for about thirty minutes, looked at all my documents and explained the intricacies of certification and requirements. He said MCSC needed teachers, and that I was hired. "However...", he said and paused. I looked at him anxiously. The teachers in the Province of Quebec were on strike since the Christmas holidays, and nobody knew when there would be a settlement. "When the strike is over we will post you to a school", he said. With mixed emotions I thanked him and gave the phone number of Dr. Cronin to contact me. So I had a job, but not yet.

I had to go to the Immigration department to process my papers. While there I described my plight to the official who looked after me. He suggested that I should search the newspapers for a temporary job, and pointed out the Montreal Star at one of the tables. I eagerly scanned the classified section and found an ad asking people to call. I did call and was told to go to the fourth floor of the Star building where I was shown a battery of phones. The job was to call people, find out if they were subscribing to the paper, and persuade them to do so if they were not. For every successful five calls I would be paid a dollar. I sat there and dialed for about 20 minutes. At the end of that frustrating endeavour, I decided to try something else.

I had brought the newspaper with me. I looked at the ads under schools. Montreal Prep School had advertised for students for special coaching. I called the school. The receptionist asked if I had any children to be admitted to the school. I said I was looking for a teaching job. She connected me to Mr. Brodsky, the principal. I described my dilemma. He asked me to come over for an interview, and gave me directions to the school. The weather had turned bitterly cold. The arctic wind funneling between high rise buildings seared my face and pierced through my cloths. By the time I reached his school, it was past 1 p.m. Mr. Brodsky had a couple of thick sandwiches in front of him. He asked if I had lunch. I lied that I had a heavy breakfast. So between healthy bites off the sandwiches and swigs of coke, he looked at my papers and talked about how his family had come from The Soviet Union, and how he had established the Prep School. He kept on talking for a good forty five minutes. I grunted, nodded, showed interest, all the time furtively eyeing the vanishing sandwiches.

At the end of his monologue, he said, "I am impressed. I will hire you". I could not help but smile as I thanked him. He asked me why I smiled. I told him that I had not spoken one sentence for him to be impressed. "Perhaps I am impressed because you are a good listener", he said. He promised to give me four dollars an hour to substitute for teachers who might be absent. Beggars cannot be choosers, so I readily accepted. As a matter of fact, he had a class for me that very afternoon. He showed me the class. Seated in front of me were a dozen teen agers, in various stages of ennui. There were girls and boys all about twelve years old. My task was to tutor them in any

subject that they wanted help in. I sat at the desk and tried to establish some order and discipline. They just ignored me. My no-nonsense nature was flaring up inside. But I knew that these were children of well to do parents who had sent them to the Prep School so they would be out of their hair for a few hours. So I gritted my teeth and sat there till the bell rang at 4 p.m. The principal told me that I was needed the next day too. I was happy. But I had to conserve my scant money.

So on the way back I stopped at the Central Station where there was a desk for immigrants and travelers just like at the airport. They made a few phone calls and found a rooming house where there was a vacant room for eight dollars. I went to check the place. It was on St. Denis Street. The concierge who looked after the building showed me the room: about ten feet by eight feet, with a single iron cot, a desk and a chair. There was a common washroom for three such rooms, and a common cooking range. She informed me that as of the following week, the weekly rent would be nine dollars. I decided to take it and told her I would occupy the room the next afternoon. My short stay in the YMCA would be over on Thursday.

As soon as school was over on Thursday I returned to the YMCA and took my luggage to the rooming house. I briefly met the three students who were occupying the adjacent rooms. That evening I went to a restaurant across the street for dinner. It was rather pricy at about seven dollars. Then I went to Eglise St. Denis, a Catholic church, down the street to thank The Lord and meditate on my next moves. But the only phone in the building belonged to the landlady and she would not let me use it. There was a public phone booth nearby. But how will I receive messages from MCSC or from Prep School? I went to chat with the lady in French, and between puffs of cigarettes and a few cups of coffee, she consented to receive messages for me. I returned to my room. The bed was comfortable enough.

On Friday morning I went out to have breakfast. On my return, the student tenants- Indians from Trinidad who were studying in a Polytechnic School nearby, asked me where I went. I told them that I had gone out for breakfast. "You live in a cheap rooming house and eat out?" they asked. I confessed to them that I did not know how to boil water, let alone cook. They promised to help. As I had no call from the Prep School, they took me to a hardware store down the road, bought a pan and a pot and a few essentials. I bought a few plates and cups and cutlery from a second hand store. They helped me buy rice, yogurt, bread and eggs. We returned with these to be told by the landlady that "The Professor" had a call from the Prep School to go there that afternoon. I went to the Prep School and baby-sat for a few hours more. At the end of the day Mr. Brodsky gave me a check for \$36/, my first emolument in the new world. He also promised to employ me for a few more days. I came back to my digs on St. Denis street happy and hopeful. My young friends showed me how to cook rice. They fried a couple of omelets and the rice, mixed with yogurt. went down very well. But they

had another news to tell me: Some gentleman had come looking for me. The three young men told him that I had gone out. He sat with them, chatted, asked about them and seemed to be in no hurry. It was only when they asked him who he was that he mentioned he was a cardiologist, teaching in McGill Medical School. They were impressed by his simplicity and keen interest in them. I went the next day to Upper Lansdowne, Westmount, and met Pat and Sis Cronin. Thus started a friendship that lasted for many years. I distinctly remember the very first dinner a few days later that I attended in Pat's home. There were several influential personalities of Montreal at the party. During the conversation, someone offered to call the principal of St. George's School in Westmount to ask that I be appointed there as a teacher. Pat intervened and pointed out that I already had a good teaching job. He saved my dignity for which I am ever grateful.

An essential requirement for employment in The Catholic School commission was a letter from the parish priest attesting to my character. Though I knew plenty of priests, I did not know anyone in Montreal. I remembered Frere Couture who had attended the courses in Rome with me. He was the director of College St. Arsene. I phoned him. He was pleasantly surprised to know that I was in his city. Frere Couture invited me to his institute and gave me directions. The metro took me to Jean Talon station, from where, according to Couture, his college was "pas loin" – not far. Ten inches of snow had fallen the night before. While downtown Montreal was ploughed clean, Avenue Christoph Colomb was untouched. No car moved. I waded into the snow knee- deep or more and walked and walked and walked. In places it was difficult to extricate my foot. My precious rubbers peeled off several times. But I retrieved them and plodded on. After about thirty minutes I saw the giant college. But the main entrance seemed a mile away. At last I found my way in. Frère Couture welcomed me with open arms and his guffaw of laughter when I cursed the weather. "Welcome to the wonderland of snow and ice", he said; "Get a pair of winter boots and you will enjoy the experience of walking in such fresh snow", he added. He was twenty years my senior. So I refrained from cursing him. He took me to the chaplain of the institute. The kind priest signed a certificate attesting to my character on the assurance of the director. Frere Couture invited me to stay for lunch. But I was in a hurry as I had to submit the certificate to MCSC. He got someone to drive me to the nearest metro. The School Commission was satisfied with the convoluted character certificate.

My daily routine: breakfast of two slices of bread, an egg boiled along with the water needed for coffee. Then I would pack a couple of slices of bread for sandwich for lunch, and catch three buses to the Prep School. There I would endure ignominy or insouciance from the youngsters, spend some time in the staff room and return to my room for dinner of rice and yogurt. I did not have to dig into my savings to survive. During one of the lonely and cold walks on Sherbrooke street I chanced upon the Montreal Language School.

Mr. Clarke, the director, was courteous and kind. He offered to give an occasional adult student to teach spoken English. At eight dollars an hour, I did coach for a few hours every week. Montreal Prep School needed me most days at least for a few hours. That suited me fine. One of my roommates had a radio and I listened to the news eagerly wondering when the general strike by the province's teachers would be over. The only T.V. belonged to the landlady. I would occasionally go down to chat with her and her family. They were avid hockey fans. The Montreal Canadiens hockey team was their life. I got to sit with them watching Henri Richard, J.C. Tremblay, Yvan Cournoyer, and the wonderful Jean Beliveau, play. The family vied with each other to praise their star players, to explain the intricacies of the game and curse the Toronto Maple Leafs. Access to my room was by an outside stairway, exposed to the weather and often snow-filled or slippery with black ice. However the weather did not seem to deter people in Montreal. All of Canada, especially the denizens of Montreal, was looking to the month of April when Expo 67 would be inaugurated to coincide with the centenary of the founding of Canada. Montreal, for a brief period, would be the cynosure of world's attention.

On February 20, I was in Montreal Prep School when Sis Cronin called me to say that I had to contact The Montreal Catholic School Commission immediately. When I called Mr. O'Brian he informed me that the teachers strike would be over the next day, and instructed me to go to St. Francis of Assisi School in Park Extension immediately where I was being posted in the vacancy of a regular teacher who had gone on maternity leave. I thanked and bade goodbye to Mr. Brodsky and found my way to the new assignment. Mr. Joe Sullivan, the principal, was waiting to receive me. He was very kind and accommodating. I was to take over the duties of class teacher of Grade Eight. Since I was not too keen on teaching Mathematics, he readily agreed to do that himself, and in turn I would teach French to a couple of classes. After a lengthy meeting with the principal and the office staff, I returned to my pad. I wrote a very detailed letter to my father breaking a long silence and describing my whereabouts and assuring the folks at home of my well being.

Chapter 41

Abraham Pathyil - My Father

Verses of the Heart as fingers strum strings of emotions and memories to sing canticles of filial love and bonding

My father was the greatest influence on my life in the early years. I was the eleventh of the twelve children to Abraham and Naithy Pathyil. He was a teacher, who became a successful businessman and a rather effective and innovative agriculturist. In the early years of his marriage, while he was setting himself in life, he did not have much time to spend with his children. However, in later years, having established his mini empire, he had surrogates to do the necessary chores and management of his affairs. That left him some time to devote to his youngest children. I was thus the recipient of much of his attention. As I absorbed information and instruction from a young age, my father engaged resident tutors who devoted much attention in my studies. My first years of studies were at home. When I was admitted into grade 3, I was hardly seven years old, and had studied much beyond the requirements of that class. I had a good memory for poems and ideas and my father enjoyed imparting both on a continuous basis. In addition to Malayalam literature, he introduced me to English language and western ideas. I had some excellent teachers in both the schools that I attended in Kaipuzha such as Sr. Cleopha, Sr. Scholastica, Thomas Kavil, Jacob Vattackattil, Mathew Tharayil, Pothan Thodukayil, Joseph Mukalayil, Joseph Kizhakekattil, Fr. Peter Vattappampil etc. etc. But my father overshadowed all of them in my juvenile judgment. He was the one who guided me through my studies, my thoughts, my religious training, my sports and games.

I would read aloud the daily newspapers and he would explain things that I did not understand. W.W. II was raging at the time. Names such as Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin, Roosevelt were in the papers almost daily. But the person whom my father admired in the war years was Churchill. He often quoted Churchill and spoke about his qualities as a leader. India was in the throes of the independence movement. Leaders of the struggle such as Nehru, Rajagopalachari, Kripalani, Subhash Bose, Patel and others were constantly

in the news. But the one person whom my father admired unconditionally was Gandhiji. (In fact in later years he visited Vardha, where Gandhi had lived for some time. My father also studied the writings of the Mahathma, especially on nature cure and became an ardent exponent of naturopathy.) Travancore State that was ruled by a Rajah also had its own agitation for democracy. My father did not subscribe to that with any enthusiasm. He had met the king and Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer, the adviser to the king, on several occasions and thought they were doing a good job of administering the state. In addition, he abhorred the thought of any of his people being imprisoned even for political reasons. When one of his sons marched with the State Congress to protest something, he was visibly upset.

The war years were hard on most people. Food, kerosene oil, clothing, and most necessities were rationed for the populace. However in my house there was abundance. The harvested grain was supposed to be sold to the government for redistribution at fair market value. However, most farmers knew how to cache their grain and sell it in the black market for top prices. Fish, meat and vegetables were available for those who could afford to buy them. His string of liqueur outlets brought enormous profit.

Thus I never knew hunger or want. Obviously the one person who was responsible for the good times was my father and my admiration grew undiminished.

My day started with my father waking us up for morning prayers. Washing up and breakfast followed. We were off to school before nine. If we came home for lunch, we would eat it with my father or by ourselves. When we returned in the late afternoon, he usually asked what we studied and what we did during the day. In the evening we would gather in the study room. My father would join us to read or help with our home work. Night prayers followed. Apart from the usual rote prayers, my father composed his own. The prayers ended with hymn signing. My father had a powerful voice and could hold a tune. We all joined the singing with gusto. Usually supper was a slow, leisurely affair. And we slept. It was not uncommon for me to be invited to share his comfortable bed. He would tell me stories from the bible and from classics such as Ramayana and Mahabharatha. But it was the Biblical stories that he narrated with graphic and imaginative details. I never tired of listening to him, snuggling up to him and enjoying the togetherness.

In 1947 my cousin came to visit from Coonoor where he had gone to study in the juniorate of the Brothers of St. Gabriel. When he invited me to join him, I was attracted. A far away place, salubrious climate, adventure, some freedom, the attraction for the unknown – all these were reasons enough for me. I consulted my father. He was not sure if I should leave home at the young age of twelve. However, he decided to accompany me to Coonoor to see the place and the set-up for himself. Thus in May 1947, we went to Coonoor. It was my first journey by train. We boarded the train in Alwaye. We had to change trains in Shoranur, Coimbatore, and again in Mettupalayam. A long

lay over in Shoranur to connect to the next train in the night enabled me to sleep on the station platform with my father. That would be the last time I got to sleep in his embrace. After almost a twenty- four hour journey we reached Coonoor, where we were greeted by Bro. Michael and others. My father was given V.I.P. treatment by the assemblage. He toured the famous sites of Coonoor and Ooty. As we were returning from Ooty, he asked if I would like to stay or return with him. Unhesitatingly I opted to stay back in Coonoor. He seemed pleased. And that was what I wanted more than anything else.

Through the next three years while I was in high school, my father and I kept up a steady stream of correspondence. His were full of news and advice. He wrote about the lives of great men and saints that he was constantly reading. He commented on the state of the world, always counseling, encouraging, and impressing on my obligations to the society. Without his constant supervision in my studies, I had some difficulties. But I overcame them, though I remained poor in mathematics throughout my high school years. I scored above average marks in all the other subjects, without much effort. In Coonoor I had a group of boys who studied, played, and prayed together all the time. Food was atrocious; climate could get extremely cold; facilities were minimal. But I endured it. There were numerous times when I yearned for the comforts of home, for the gourmet meals of my mother. But I felt that if I wrote about those, that would diminish me in the eyes of my father. I did get into scrapes – slight and serious. I was caught and reprimanded several times. But my one constant fear was to be dismissed from the juniorate, and bring ignominy to my father. I composed long letters describing the miseries of my life in Coonoor, and tore them and threw them in the trashcan, as I did not want to offend my father. When I visited home in December of 1948. I was given a royal welcome and every day there were parties in the homes of various relatives. But no one asked me if I was happy. I had a good time in Coonoor, with friends and fun. But all through that there was a deep malaise. But I did not reveal it to anyone. Games, and sports and mischief compensated for other essentials. My family (and by that I meant my father, more than anyone else.) expected that I would stay there, complete my high school, and go on to be a member of the society.

I completed my high school studies in 1950 and was admitted into two years of training before becoming a religious brother. My father visited me a few weeks after my high school graduation. After having spent a couple of days together, he asked if I would like to leave and go back home. He had come prepared to compensate the society for educating me for three years. I could go to a university of my choice. The offer intrigued me for a moment. But I rejected it and pretended to be shocked. This was my vocation, I declared. He was satisfied and gave his blessings before he left. Two years went by fast. We continued to correspond. When he came in 1951 for my “vestition”, he was joyful. A year later I was a professed brother and went

home for a short visit. My father personally accompanied me to most places. He was proud of his son. I felt fulfilled. When I returned, I was selected to go to Loyola College, a prestigious university college. When he heard about it, he was very pleased.

Loyola College was a place where I thrived. I did well in all subjects. I secured medals for studies every year. In 1953 my father, accompanied by my mother, had gone to Goa on a pilgrimage and on their way back, visited me. We spent a couple of days together, visiting the college and the city, including especially San Thome Cathedral, where tradition says St. Thomas the apostle was buried. As I successfully completed my college education, the thought of leaving the society was very much on my mind. But the unhappiness that it would cause my father was enough reason to stay the course. I did my teachers training in 1956-57 and was appointed headmaster of St. Antony's where I had studied five years earlier. Nothing could have pleased my father more than that honour.

As a young headmaster, I had ideas and enthusiasm. I was daring and in some instances foolhardy. But as luck would have it, I did well. My father came several times to visit me and was proud of his son's performances. In 1961 I took a group of students and teachers to visit various places of interest in South India and spent a couple of nights as a guest of my father. He accompanied us to Periyar dam. I knew he was very pleased to see me do so well.

In 1962 I was appointed to be the Rector of St. Gabriel's, Kazipet. It was a rare honor for young men of 28 to be asked to take on such onerous responsibility. I felt confident that I would acquit myself satisfactorily. The team that I had was excellent and the work of managing and running the affairs of the school, the hostels and other ventures were shared by all willingly. My father visited me in Kazipet. I could sense that he was glowing in the reflected glory.

In 1964 I visited home as my eldest brother was dying of cancer. I spent several hours at his death bed. I found out that my brother owed money to several people. One of them, a close friend of my brother, came to beg for the principal back. My brother of course did not have the means to repay. My younger brother and one of the sons of the dying brother were there. They undertook to pay back the money. I was relieved, and told my father about it. He was furious. He raged at me asking how anyone was going to repay the debts incurred by my brother. I was stunned. I pointed out that the dying man had to end his life in peace. What of the living? Were they to take on responsibilities that were not theirs? Did I have the money to pay back all the debts? I was thunderstruck at the vehemence of my father's fury. I comforted myself thinking that it was the sadness of a father who knew that his eldest was dying. I tried to forget the episode. But it did leave a bad taste in my mouth.

In 1965 I was asked to direct the most prestigious, most difficult, school

in Hyderabad. I hesitated. The task did not daunt me. But by this time I had serious doubts whether I should continue in the society. I felt that my becoming the rector of All Saints would complicate my decisions about my life. I went for a short holiday to Coonoor and invited my father to meet me there. He arrived with my brother and we spent a couple of days together. I explained my dilemma to him: Here was the society asking me to assume greater responsibilities. However, I am having serious doubts as to whether I should continue or not. He seemed puzzled. Who in his right mind would turn down such an honor? But he left me to make decisions. Perhaps I should ask for a postponement. In any case, pray for guidance. I did ask and was given a postponement from the heavier duties. In 1966 I was asked to go to Europe for a "second novitiate", where I could spend quiet days reflecting on life and making decisions. Before I was to fly out to Europe, I went to visit home. It was a short visit. My father walked me all the way to the plane and promised to pray for guidance.

The months in Europe were a mix of adventure and uncertainty. I explained to my superiors my deep seated doubts . They encouraged me to complete the course and at the end of it make my decisions. After agonizing for over six months, I concluded that I had to leave the society. The outside world was unfamiliar. The future was uncertain. The chance of gaining employment was daunting. But more than all of that, my one overwhelming thought was how much my decision to quit would affect my father. That thought kept me awake nights. But in the end I decided that it was necessary to make that decision. I would explain the situation to him gradually, and in the end he would understand.

I left Rome and flew to Montreal. Only very few people in the family were privy to my departure, and my father was not one of those. In fact I had given strict instructions to those whom I told about it, not to inform him, that I would do it at the appropriate psychological moment. I secured permanent employment with the Catholic School Board as a high school teacher. I thought I would write to my father that I was in Canada, that I had a job, and that everything was well with me. So in February of 1967, three weeks after my arrival in Canada, I wrote to him a long letter, detailing my reasons for leaving, assuring him of my future, reaffirming my love for him, and begging him for understanding. A few days later I received his reply. He said that his four other sons had been the nails that crucified him. As for me, I had pierced a lance through his side. It was a bitter, vehement letter, accusing me of hubris, of defiance, and bringing shame and infamy to the family. At the end of four pages of that letter, his brother, and my namesake, asked to write a couple of lines. He (my uncle) simply asked me to ignore the harangue of my father; that they all loved me; that he wished me well; and not to be unduly concerned about the fulminations of my father. Those four lines did balance somewhat the hurt in the four pages of castigation. When I informed my father as to whom I intended to marry,

he was very upset. Having brought shame to the family, I could redeem myself by marrying into a rich and famous family. After all my education, the status of my family, the circumstance of my being in Canada – all these ensured that I could have the pick of the very best girl. But I insisted. Josie went to visit him. Having no choice, he reluctantly went along with my decision. My father told her of his fears about me. The marriage took place in Montreal with no fanfare.

I continued a regular correspondence with him, and informed him of all the good things happening to me. Even when I had to buy my first car, I wrote to him justifying why I had to have a car. I wanted, above all else, to please him. When my sons were born, I named them after saints whom I thought he admired: Francis of Assisi and Vincent de Paul. In most of his letters, my father spoke of the expenses incurred in farming. When I asked what happened to the income from the harvests, there were no answers. I must mention here that he had the use of the portions that he had given as patrimony to me and my younger brother who is in Canada. I estimated that those two portions of fields and lands would be more than enough for our parents to live in comfort. However, every now and then we did send some money. Once when a friend of ours went to India and visited him, my father told him that he wanted me to send him three thousand dollars. “Three thousand... dollars or rupees?” he asked. My father promptly replied, “dollars!”. When the conversation was recounted to me, I did not think much of it.

After several years in Canada, I was eager to take the children to their grand parents. It was an expensive affair in 1972 for two adults and two children to fly to India. But we had worked and saved and I was eager for the children to meet their grandfather. I looked forward to the time when they would snuggle next to him and he would tell them stories. I was visiting home after a lapse of six years. I sensed deterioration everywhere. The house was not well kept. The surroundings were neglected. There were only two part time servants to help. It was hot and humid. Toilet facilities and washrooms were filthy. The children felt frightened at the sight of his saffron garb, and shrank back from his arms. We had taken suitcases filled with special food for the children. But those got spoiled without refrigeration. The children got sick. Their mother and I were irritable. My mother who was famous for her gourmet meals, had to improvise inefficiently. We had taken gifts and presents for everyone. I gave my mother cash for all her expenses. But that was not enough. I asked her what was happening and she confided that there was money owing for groceries and such necessities. I paid off all the outstanding debts. But I did not realize the extent of the penury until long after. The income from the lands and fields were slipping out of their fingers, stolen by those whom they trusted. There was nothing anyone would do to help the old people. Others too were in want and took away things from under their very noses. But I did not notice all that while

we were there. Since we were visiting India after a lapse of several years, we were spending money and shopping continuously. One evening, when we returned after another shopping spree, my father remarked that I was wasting a lot of money. I verbally tore into him and told him that it was my hard earned money and I could do anything I wanted with it. He immediately withdrew his remarks and fell silent.

My greatest disappointment was that he was not the man whom I had built up in my imagination. This was not the person whom I had elevated on a pedestal and worshipped. The giant of a person whom I had adored all through the years had been transformed into a mere man. Perhaps such a person had never existed. Perhaps it was not he who had changed, rather I had discovered that he was merely human. Here was a man with foibles, who was tightfisted, stubborn, somewhat mean spirited, self-centred, and gloried in exhibiting his eccentric simplicities. It was not he who had changed, but my understanding of the person. All these many years when I thought of him as superhuman, it was all in my imagination – an imagination and understanding that had not grown with age and experience. I had nurtured a childlike admiration in regard to my father, that shattered during that visit and fell on the floor in smithereens. My very judgment of people was not to be trusted. I felt like an orphan who did not know his parents. We returned to Canada four weeks later. I knew that I would not go again as long as he was alive. Our correspondence was reduced to a trickle. He still wrote asking for money to do farming in my fields. I ignored most such letters. I heard from other sources that my parents were living a difficult life. But I did not realize the extent of the suffering. My mother fell and broke her hip and was bedridden. Soon she started losing her memory. She needed constant care. I wrote infrequently to my father, though I kept up a diligent correspondence with my siblings.

I invited my two brothers in India to visit us in Canada during the Olympics. We took them to a lot of places and events in North America. In the middle of September 1976, we got urgent news that our father was sinking. My brothers cut short their stay in Canada and left for India. There simply was no question of my accompanying them to visit my dying father. They were able to spend the last few days with him, and on September 21 he died fully conscious up to the last breath. He went peacefully. The next day he was buried in the family tomb that he had built, and where his eldest son and that son's first wife were interred earlier.

We received a telegram announcing his passing. I said nothing and went for a long walk in the park. I could not weep for him. But I wept bitter tears for my neglect of him. For several years after his death, I refused to discuss him. But thoughts about him were uppermost in my mind. My mother died two years later. I would have gone, but my youngest brother, her darling, did not go and I did not want to go by myself. In 1979 we visited India, touring all the interesting places from Kashmere to Trivandrum. On reaching

Kaipuzha, we went straight to the church cemetery where my parents are buried, and only then did we go to meet others.

It is more than thirty years since my father died. As I grow older, people remark about the uncanny physical similarity that they see in me to my father. Some times when I look in the mirror I see my father. When family and friends remark on the spitting likeness, I pretend to be pleased. But I cannot make up my mind if it is a compliment. I abandoned my father in his time of need. He had never asked for help or sustenance. But it was my responsibility as a dutiful son to find out his needs and support him. My excuse that I did not know my real father, or rather that I did not really know my father, is unacceptable. I felt betrayed. But my father did not betray me. My judgment about him was flawed. That was not his fault. In the last years of his life, when my father needed me, I failed him. The thought sends a shudder through my whole being.

Chapter 42

Mathew My Kid Brother - A Role Model

A life spent in service of near and dear ones and, the community around

Mathew was the youngest of twelve children born to Abraham and Naithy Pathyil. We call him Mathaikunju, or sometimes more affectionately “Mathaanju”. Being the Benjamin of the family, Mathaikunju lived with our parents for the longest time. Except for four years in St. Philomena’s College, Mysore, he lived in Kerala until 1969 when he immigrated to Canada. In addition to taking care of our parents, all my sisters and brothers depended on him for a lot of services. Mathaanju had to take his nieces and nephews to be admitted in schools and colleges. He had to accompany those who had to go to hospitals and doctors. He had to be present for all birthday celebrations, deaths, and all events in the families. He could have found excuses to stay away from these chores. But Mathaikunju took up these tasks with enthusiasm and affection.

Mathaikunju taught in various High Schools of Kottayam. Unlike many teachers who do their minimum duties and hurry home, Mathaikunju participated in games and sports, and extra-curricular activities. Sports Day, School Anniversary, Entertainment Nights- he was the one teacher who could be depended upon to volunteer his time and talent. The Principals and colleagues appreciated his commitment to be of service to the schools.

Everyone in Kaipuzha knew Mathaikunju. Whether it be the parish priest, or Panchayath member, or agricultural officer, or cooperative banker, he was on good terms with them all. If any volunteers were needed for any event, the village tapped him to assume a responsible task.

Mathaikunju lived his first thirty odd years in the service of his extended family, his schools, and his village. They valued him and he gave of his best. Therefore when he decided to go to Canada, there was universal groaning, though they knew that they could not hold him down forever. It was with great reluctance that his family and friends bade goodbye to him and his

nuclear family.

Mathaikunju landed in Montreal on July 5, 1969, the same day a friend of ours was getting married. Nothing daunted, Mathaikunju plunged into the celebration and made many friends then and there. There were obstacles and difficulties as any new settler would encounter. But he secured a teaching position in the Montreal Catholic School Commission. In spite of language handicaps and cultural adjustments, Mathaikunju again proved his dedication to the school community. He volunteered to help teachers who were involved in co-curricular activities. He would help coach ice hockey, even though he himself could not skate and had to learn the rules on the fly. But his determination and sense of service endeared him to the authorities. Mathaikunju carried his experience in Kerala to Quebec and blazed a trail of service .

Montreal and vicinity had a tiny Malayalee community. But he befriended all and helped whenever he could. Be it moving apartments, seeking to buy a house, planning a picnic, arranging personal and religious celebrations –Mathaikunju could be depended upon to be of invaluable help. (Incidentally the name “Mathaikunju” migrated with him to Canada.) Until a Quebec Malayalee Association was started in 1977, all these events were organized by volunteers. Mathaikunju was always available. After the establishment of a structured association, he declined to assume any official position. However he was there for all events and helped with meetings, celebrations and dinners and entertainments. In the last thirty years, Mathaikunju took initiative to organize volunteering in the soup kitchen in Montreal run by the Sisters of Mother Theresa. He helped organize Malayalam Mass in St. Joseph’s Basilica.

Mathaikunju experimented with cooking and became a gourmet chef. His pork curry, and special duck roast became legendary. He invited all and sundry to his dinner table. He opened his house to the needy students; helped them find furniture; connected them with elected officials , and generally looked after the needy. Many contributed to The annual Santa Claus collection . The annual Saint Tropez street party that he helped to start has become a high point in Kirkland. Mathew is known to his neighbours and strangers. If anyone requires any help, Mathew would find the resources.

Due to health issues Mathaikunju had to leave Canada in a hurry. The excellent care and treatment he received in Kerala, put him back on the road to recovery. After much thought and consultation, Mathaikunju decided to relocate to Travancore Foundation.

In Karukachal Mathaikunju lives a full life. He is involved in several of the activities of The Foundation and is much appreciated for his services. He helped build houses for the staff. He organized weekly Catholic worship in the Foundation. He helps celebrate birthdays and events. People who visit Karukachal meet him to get an assessment of the place.

Jean Carlo, a dear friend of Mathaikunju has a saying: “ Do good and

forget about it". Our Lord has promised that at The Final Judgment, He will say to those who performed corporal and spiritual works of mercy: "Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." May Our Savior give my dear brother long life so that he can continue to do good on earth and inherit the reward promised in The Gospel.

(Joseph Pathyil-)

Chapter 43

Luigi Segatore - Eminent Educator

On an educator who influenced immensely

Montreal Catholic School Commission hired me as a teacher in February 1967. Until the following school year I taught in Grade 8 of St. Joseph School in Park Extension. In June 1967 I was asked to go to John F. Kennedy High School to be interviewed by the principal for a prospective position in that school. I met the principal, Luigi Segatore, for the first time. He was in his early fifties, a very pleasant, gentle, low keyed, and humorous person. He asked me my educational background and my experience in schools. He was surprised that I had more years of experience as principal of high schools than he. Without hesitation he asked me to join his school in September 1967. He suggested that for the first year of high school teaching in Canada, it may be preferable to start in the Annex where Classes 8 and 9 were held. Thus I started my career in JFK that was to last for over sixteen years. Mr. Lacombe was the vice principal in charge of the Annex. He was friendly and supportive. He frequently came to me to share his concerns about students and teachers. Teachers had come through a grueling few weeks of strike, gaining major breakthroughs with the Provincial Government and School Boards. The teachers Union was very strong, and did not hesitate to flex its muscle. This was a new phenomenon for me, as I was used to hiring and firing teachers with impunity. Here was a situation where the administrator had to give early notice to teachers before visiting their classes, and teachers could file grievances against the principal, and that could have grave consequences for the administration. I studied with great interest the new contract between the teachers and the school boards. Not only had the teachers obtained a major increase in pay, they also had secured rights and privileges that would set the standard for schools all over Canada, indeed, for North America. Mr. Lacombe, as also other administrators, had to steer the school through murky waters. But on the whole, the year was peaceful. I

cultivated several personal friendships that have lasted through many years. I also got involved in union activities, more to learn the ropes than with any other ulterior intention.

In June 1968 several senior teachers of JFK were promoted as vice principals in grade schools and high schools. Mr. Segatore sent for me one day and asked if I would be willing to teach English in Grade 11 in the main school. He promised to help in any way he could, but assured me that I would be able to do justice to the job without much difficulty. I was happy to be invited, and acceded to his request. We spent a couple of hours chatting about the school, about students, and his plans for the school. Mr. Segatore was the first lay man to head a high school in the MCSC. When JFK was built he was invited to take over the school and to choose a few teachers that he needed. The school was in St. Michel, a predominantly Italian neighbourhood. Luigi knew many of the parents. He had facility in French, English and Italian. Since most students were of Italian origin, he communicated with the parents in their native tongue. He could scold, encourage, and help the parents as well as the students.

Mr. Segatore was a good administrator. He knew his teachers. He encouraged them without overly directing them. He was confident enough to mix freely with the teachers. But the teachers knew where to draw the line. Mr. Segatore's staff meetings were short and to the point. He would consult widely before he would make decisions and students and teachers respected and liked him.

He judged the mettle of each teacher and allowed for their foibles. He knew that I had administrative experience – more than he himself had, he would hasten to add- and consulted me on several occasions. Teachers' Union was strong in Quebec. But some of the stalwarts of the union were in JFK and were Luigi's friends. He knew how far he could go with the teachers, and what rights and duties they had.

When I went to JFK, it was an all boys school. The girls had their own separate school, though attached to the same building. All teachers in the boys section were male, whereas the girls had ladies. That would continue till 1973 when both schools amalgamated. Mr. Segatore knew how to tackle his students. He had been a football coach and had played and coached games and sports. He also had very good teachers who could be relied on to do things beyond the call of duty for the students.

But school was not all serious work. Mr. Segatore loved fun and never let an opportunity go by without getting the maximum mileage out of the situation. Mr. Peter Bheemans had his Licentiate from Lausanne and had joined as teacher in 1967. He was an excellent teacher of history and Social Studies. Students loved his classes. He knew the name of every student he taught. We were in the senior staff room on the third floor. Most teachers in the room were senior, experienced teachers. Mr. Segatore used to join us occasionally to chat and make fun of each other. One such day, John

Gregalis, another history teacher and Mike Doyle decided that they would trap Peter. Every Monday the students had weekly test. On one such Monday, The Greek (as John was known) supervised Peter's class test, and surreptitiously inserted an extra test paper in the name of Rosario Nobile. Rosario did not exist. But all of us who were privy to the prank started casually mentioning the name of Rosario Nobile. Nobile was a poor student, or he was late for class, or did not do his assignment etc. etc. Peter corrected the test of Rosario but he was puzzled as to the identity of the student. He dared not tell anyone about this. The rest of us dropped the name of Rosario Nobile as casually as we could. Then one day, Mr. Segatore buzzed Peter Bheemens class and asked him to go and see him. When Peter arrived Luiji asked him about Rosario Nobile. Peter was embarrassed. He simply confessed that he had difficulty identifying the youngster. At that point Luiji tried to look severe, but he burst into fits of laughter. Peter was now absolutely floored. Luiji, when he recovered told Peter that it was an elaborate prank perpetrated by his staff room colleagues. We knew that Peter had gone to Luiji's office regarding the fictitious Nobile. Peter stomped back into the staff room and Luiji accompanied him to share a good laugh. Mr. Segatore was indeed a good sport. (Mr. Bheemens went on to Ottawa where he joined the Civil Service, spent 20 years in CIDA in Canada and overseas, leaving as a Director-General, and a further 9 years as a Vice-President at International Development Research Centre before retiring in 2000.)

In 1969 my brother who was a trained teacher in Kerala came to Montreal. Initially he had difficulty in English and did not have confidence he could teach effectively in English. After odd jobs that took him nowhere, I approached Mr. Segatore to find him a position in JFK. The principal was gracious enough to give him a full teaching schedule and informed the school board. (Incidentally when my brother in law was without a job in 1970, I approached the School Commission and was given a teaching job in an elementary school. The recruiting officer of MCSC teased me saying that I was bringing too many of my people into the school commission!)

Mr. Segatore was my confidante in personal matters. Several people encouraged me to apply for administrative positions. I had the experience and the ability. When I consulted Mr. Segatore, he was more practical. He said the emoluments were not attractive. I would earn about 15% more than I did as a teacher. But I would have to work 240 days instead of 180 days. Union was flexing its muscles and administrators would have to deal with teachers with great care. I had a young family and Josie my wife was working part-time after I returned from school. These would have to be terminated or reshuffled and the compensation was not worth the headaches. I am grateful to Mr. Segatore for his frank description of the job.

Mr. Segatore retired in 1972 after the school was integrated. He continued to visit the school occasionally. Other administrators have come after

him. But none of them had the flare, the self-confidence, and the pragmatism of Luiji. I have very fond memories of Mr. Segatore.

Chapter 44

Dr. R.F.P Cronin - A Giant Among Mortals

Tribute written in 2007 on an acquaintance of 4 decades in Canada who passed away

Dr. Pat Cronin died in Switzerland on January 13, 2007. Our condolences to Sis, his wife in Switzerland, his son David in Montreal, his daughters Di in Mississauga and Daphne in Orlando. Also grieving are his grandchildren, relatives and friends. My acquaintance with Pat Cronin goes back four decades.

I got my immigration papers to Canada from the Canadian embassy in Rome. As I was arranging my ticket to Montreal, the manager of Air India in Rome asked me to look up his friend Pat Cronin when I arrive in Montreal. He gave me his telephone number. I was more than delighted to do so, as I knew hardly anyone in Montreal. Besides I was a great admirer of A. J. Cronin, the famous English author of several novels. A. J. Cronin, the manager of Air India informed me, was Pat Cronin's father. Thus it was that I called Pat Cronin on January 31, 1967, the same day I arrived in Montreal. Three days later he came to the rooming house where I was staying, but missed me. The three students who also lived in the same rooming house told me about Pat's visit. It seems he came up to look for me. The three young men told him that I had gone out. Pat sat with them, chatted, asked about them and seemed to be in no hurry. It was only when they asked him who he was that he mentioned he was a cardiologist, teaching in McGill Medical School. They were impressed by his simplicity and keen interest in them. I went the next day to Upper Lansdowne, Westmount, and met Pat and Sis Cronin. Thus started a friendship that lasted for many years.

Dr. Robert Francis Patrick Cronin was always genuinely interested in people. He had numerous acquaintances from all walks of life. He made it a point to bring interns from all over the world to study under him. He helped people whenever he could. The manager of Air India in Rome had

a child with a heart condition. Pat Cronin found the right doctor to treat the baby and the family has remained grateful to him. A friend of mine had completed her medical studies in Germany and had come to Montreal. She did her required exams in Canada, but could not find a hospital that would accept her as a resident. I asked Dr. Cronin to help. One phone call that he made enabled Lily to get a position in St. Mary's Hospital, Montreal. He had friends in very high places, but he also cultivated friendships with ordinary folks. The then governor of Bombay, Dr. P. V. Cherian, was a personal friend. The industrialists of Canada were well known him and came to his parties. But he also invited others to the same parties.

I have been to several soirees in his house. Hosted by Pat and Sis. They were low-key affairs, with at most ten or twelve people. The conversation was scintillating, the drinks were flowing, the food was excellent, and the atmosphere was convivial. Sis, of course, was the consummate hostess. But what used to strike me was how Pat would go to the kitchen after dinner, wear an apron, and unobtrusively wash and put away the dishes and plates.

I distinctly remember the very first dinner that I attended in Pat's home. There were several influential personalities of Montreal at the party. During the conversation, someone offered to call the principal of St. George's School in Westmount to ask that I be appointed there as a teacher. Pat intervened and pointed out that I already had a good teaching job. He saved my dignity for which I am ever grateful. The Aga Khan sought him out and dined in his house to request him to be his advisor in the many medical projects that the Ismaeli community was involved in all over the world. Pat and Sis traveled to Nairobi, Karachi and several other places to help set up medical colleges and hospitals. Pat's versatility with languages was phenomenal. When Lily went to visit him, he talked to her in German. When a Soviet delegation visited McGill, Pat was asked to take them around, as he knew Russian. In the late 60's when Quebec Government was planning on starting CEGEP program, Pat was on the committee as his French was excellent. In 1971 a search committee requested him to be the dean of McGill Medical School. He was reluctant to accept the administrative position, as he preferred to be a practicing physician and a teacher. After he accepted the position of dean he did continue to teach and practice, though to a reduced degree. I have met several doctors who studied and worked under Pat Cronin. Everyone attests to the golden era of McGill Medical School under the stewardship of Dr. Cronin.

In the first few months of my arrival in Canada, all of my letters were directed to the Cronin's address, as I had no permanent address of my own. That was also an excuse for my weekly trip to Westmount for a good visit and an excellent meal with Sis and Pat and the children. On August 26, 1967, Josephine and I were married in St. Francis of Assisi Church in Park Extension. Of course Pat and Sis were witnesses at the wedding. They also joined a few friends for a modest lunch in Dr. Mathai's residence.

Josephine was expecting to deliver Frank on December 17, 1968. Sis Cronin invited us to a Christmas party on that day. Hearing that I was reluctant to go, Pat promised to personally assist in the delivery if it happened during the party. We did go for the party, and Frank decided to wait. Pat suggested, and I agreed, that if the baby arrived on Christmas day he would be called Noel. As it happened, Frank arrived on the 24th. But Pat and Sis thought the baby was to be named Noel. And brought a silver cup with Noel inscribed on it. We keep that cup to this day. It was only natural that we would request them to be the baby's godparents. They not only agreed, but they brought the children to St. Kevin's Church, where the christening and the reception took place. Sis insisted on the baby wearing the ancestral white cloth handed down in her family. The man who walked and dined with kings and governors and shakers and movers of society had no hesitation in breaking with ordinary folks. And he loved driving his VW Beetle.

I still have the route map that Sis had sent me to drive to their country estate in Eastern townships. We have been there several times, enjoying the open air, walking and roaming around the sprawling farm. The ranch had a warm fire, and hearty welcome to the guests. There would be neighbors and friends to meet and chat. Pat was the trigger for any topic. Sis was the ever patient, always organized, hostess. Daphne got her love of horses from the horses kept on the farm.

Pat's father, A. J. Cronin, was a Scottish novelist, an accomplished storyteller. who practiced as a doctor over a decade before devoting himself entirely to writing. Cronin gained his fame initially with *Hatter's Castle* (1931), the story of the megalomaniac James Brodie, a Scottish hat maker and his foolish dreams of social acceptance. Cronin produced several best-sellers drawing from his experiences as a doctor- his most famous character was Dr. Finlay Hyslop. Some of his works had religious themes, like *The Keys of The Kingdom* (1942), which was made into a film, starring Gregory Peck. A. J. Cronin moved to USA during the war years. Cronin continued to write until he was in his eightieth year. A. J. Cronin lived his last few years in Switzerland and Bermuda. His wife had been afflicted with Alzheimer's in her sixties, was in a nursing home in the suburbs of Montreal, and died at the age of 81 or so. Of the three sons of A. J. Cronin, it was Pat who volunteered to look after his mother. Vincent, Pat's older brother, is a renowned historian. His book on Napoleon is still considered the definitive work on the French Emperor. When we visited Waterloo a couple of years ago, I remembered Vincent Cronin's description of the battle.

When Pat Cronin's term as dean was over, he took a couple of years of sabbatical to go to Switzerland to consult for the Ago Khan and look after his father's estate. We had lost touch with the Cronins after they left Montreal. In 1999, when Frank was getting married I searched for the address of Pat and Sis, his godparents, in vain. Then a year ago I searched the Internet for any mention of Pat or Sis. Nothing. In desperation I tried David, Diane and

Daphne.

At last I had a hit about Daphne who had been selected to compete in Seoul Olympics in the equestrian events, and how she fell off the horse during trials in Florida etc. I managed to track her down and reconnect with the family. It was then I was told that Pat was afflicted with Alzheimer's. Diane, who lives in Mississauga filled up the gap of several years. Di and Michael have received us in their home, and we had them for dinner.

On the 2nd of January 2007, when we were in Montreal, we visited with David and Emily and the children. Over a three-hour lunch, we reconnected. We spoke of his parents, and I discovered much about the family. Pat Cronin studied in Portsmouth Abbey School, Rhode Island. Robert Kennedy was his classmate. Pat went to Yale University for his undergraduate studies. While there, USA joined World War II and the University encouraged the students to join the military. Pat, a British citizen, came to Canada to join the forces. After the war, he was admitted into the McGill Medical School from where he graduated cum laude. He went on to his FRCP and other degrees and honors. Yale awarded degrees to his classmates, when they returned after the war. Pat wrote to Yale demanding that he too should be awarded a degree by Yale. The university refused saying that he did not join the American military service. Pat persisted in his demand. In the end, the university relented and allowed him to obtain his undergraduate degree provided he would audit in Yale for a semester and write a thesis. By this time Pat was 73 years old. He left everything in Switzerland, came to Yale, attended classes, and wrote a scholarly thesis on hepatitis C (which had afflicted his daughter Daphne as result of her accident). He earned a place in the Guinness Book as a person who took the longest to obtain a degree (54 years) after joining the university. He was justifiably proud of this degree. That was typical Pat.

We talked to Sis while we were with David, and Sis said that Pat's condition was deteriorating, and he had pneumonia. That illness proved to be fatal. He passed away in Switzerland on 13th of January.

Those who knew him will remember a giant who walked among ordinary mortals, Pat Cronin with affection and admiration.

Our deepest condolences to the family.

Chapter 45

Cardinal S.Lourduswamy- How to Gospel

My Memories Of A Friend, according to whom "The Gospel cannot be proclaimed in a vacuum. Being the Word of Life, it addresses real life situations" such as poverty, disease, injustice, oppression of women and the abuse of the environment

The following excerpt is taken from the National Catholic Reporter dated June 2, 2014:-

Born in 1924 in Kalleri, India, the late cardinal was ordained a priest of Pondicherry in 1951. He was made auxiliary bishop of Bangalore in 1962 and archbishop four years later.

While in India, he served as editor of "Sarva Vyabi," the archdiocese's Tamil Catholic weekly; director of the Catholic Doctors' Guild, the Newman Association and the Catholic University Students' Union.

An expert in canon law and liturgy, he went to Rome in 1971 to work at the Vatican, becoming secretary of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples in 1975. He was made a cardinal in 1985, the same year he was appointed to the Congregation for Eastern Churches – the office responsible for the world's Eastern-rite Catholics. He retired in 1991 at age 67 for reasons of health.

He said in 1998 that for Christianity to take root in Asia, it must be inculturated and meaningful to local people.

"The Gospel cannot be proclaimed in a vacuum. Being the Word of Life, it addresses real life situations" such as poverty, disease, injustice, oppression of women and the abuse of the environment, he had said.

Fr. Lourduswamy joined Loyola College, Madras in June of 1952. His room was next to that of the Brothers. Bro. Nemesius (later to be known as Bro. Robert Bellarmin), Bro. Frederick and I were his classmates. He had decided to join the first group, viz. Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry. He

had been away from school for almost ten years and his knowledge of Maths was inadequate. Bro. Corentin, our director, gave Fr. Lourduswamy tuition in Maths and brought him up to speed. Bro. Frederick was his constant companion as they had the same classes. Fr. Lourduswamy would get up early in the morning, say Mass, recite his canonical prayers and sit down to study. In the evenings he would join us for games. His favorite was ring tennis in which he excelled. Most days one of the brothers played with him.

There were a few other priests studying in Loyola and living in the same building as the brothers and eating at the same table. Fr. Antony Kurialacherry, Fr. Augustine Kandathil, Fr. Cletus and others were prominent in their dioceses and expected to assume weighty responsibilities on their return from College. Fr. Lourduswamy was humble, unassuming and ever smiling. His priests-companions once decided to have some fun teasing the poor Fr. Lourduswamy. Fr. Kurialassery made a garland of fallen leaves; Fr. Kandathil composed a Papal "Bull" in Latin and during lunch read the papal letter announcing the appointment of Fr. Lourduswamy as bishop of Pondicherry. He was garlanded. Some spoke in faint praise of the qualities of Fr. Lourduswamy and spoke of his "lean and hungry look". The good Father was taken aback by the mock consecration; but he recovered his wits and played along. He stood up and thanked his friends for the honour. Fr. Lourduswamy's stay in College was brief as he was asked to go to Rome in 1953 for his doctorate in canon law. He obtained 100% in all of his exams in canon law studies, something which had never occurred in other Roman universities before or after.

He returned to Pondicherry after successfully defending his doctorate. The college Brothers vacationing in Tindivanam went to Pondicherry to visit Fr. Lourduswamy in 1956. He was effusive in his hospitality. (I kept in touch with him and his brother Fr. Amalorpavadas who was a scholar and mover and shaker in India in the sixties and beyond, until his accidental death in 1990.)

In 1962 exactly ten years after the mock consecration, Fr. Lourduswamy was appointed auxiliary bishop of Bangalore. The other priests, meanwhile, languished in comparative anonymity.

Bishop Lourduswamy kept in touch with Brothers throughout his life. I spent time with him while in Rome and had long conversations about the church in India. He was the one who ordained Bro. Philip and sent him to Paris and subsequently to Montreal for further studies. When Archbishop Lourduswamy first visited Canada he stayed with me a few days and we reminisced about our college days. He was always solicitous of our companions. Fr. Philip had some difficulties with Archbishop Arokiaswamy and it was Cardinal Lourduswamy who helped to sort things out.

The influence of his brother -Fr. Amalorpavadas- is evident in the quotation about *enculturation* that both thought essential if Catholicism has to take deep roots in India. Cardinal Lourduswamy had dementia in his final

years. He has gone to join his brother and friends to gain further honours in heaven.RIP.

Chapter 46

Theyamma George - Elegy of A Brother

Six months have passed since Theyamma, my sister, died as a result of a car accident. I have not been able to bring myself to view the video of her funeral, nor even to write about her in depth. A great vacuum has been created in my soul, and the chasm is nearly impossible to fill.

Theyamma, (and I shall simply call her that), though she was seven years senior to me, was very special in my life. In fact I have not known a day without her. My very first memory of anything is related to the death of Victoria, my sister older by two years, who was suffering from polio, and who died when I was less than four years old.

I have the picture in my mind of my mother weeping inconsolably seated on the floor beside Victoria's lifeless body. I must have been apprehensive of the unknown, and clung to my mother. She whispered to Theyamma, who must have been less than eleven years old, to take me out of the room. She carried me to the northern verandah and sat on the bench hugging me. Thressiamma Kombipparampil, a friend of hers, and of the same age, sat next to her.

I remember both of them in intense, whispered, conversation, all the while making sure that I would not run back to my mother. Very few days after the funeral of Victoria, my mother, who was nine months pregnant with her last child, was sent to Alappuzha to be with her youngest brother and her mother for her delivery. I remember standing on the western shore of the family property forlorn and heartbroken, watching the boat until it disappeared in the far horizon. Theyamma stood by me, with her arms reassuringly around my shoulders. Ever since those first memories our lives have been inextricably intertwined.

I have written elsewhere about my early schooling in Kaipuzha. Theyamma was very much present during the twelve years I lived at home in Kaipuzha. She was tutored in playing the harmonium, and in vocal singing. Alykutty

Machathil, her tutor, taught music in St. Anne's High School, Kottayam.

Therefore the tutoring was mostly on weekends, and during holidays. Alykutty teacher showed Theyamma the lessons for the week to be practiced on the musical instrument. She also taught her several songs. I hovered around the harmonium and the lessons. The result was that I knew by rote every song that Theyamma had to learn. In season and out of season I would belt out those songs for all to hear. Our father invited me to join in the singing when Theyamma was practicing. Father had an excellent voice and was keen on my sister's singing practice. In addition, almost every night after night prayers, the whole family sang hymns that were taught either by Alykutty or our father. Thus we had a repertoire of songs to choose from. It was the highlight of the evening – to sit around and sing. We began with hymns and branched on to others as the fancy and enthusiasm carried us. Of course Theyamma was the lead singer, and our father was the constant encourager, and I was ever willing to join in.

To fast forward... about ten years ago when I was in India, researching for the family history, Theyamma and I wrote down all the songs that we could remember. (She had lost her precious songbook that she had kept so lovingly all her life, during one of her constant peregrinations moving houses.) Between the two of us we reconstructed every one of those songs. It was interesting for the two of us; but would have made no sense to anyone else. She would remember a line from a song and rush to where I sat reading or talking or napping. We would dig into our memories and line by line, we would write the whole song. I would occasionally remember the beginning of a song and she would retrieve the rest. It was a lot of fun. Theyamma, helped by Memmy and others, taped all those songs in time for our first family gathering in New Jersey in 1997. It was my fond hope to get some professional group to record those songs. But now that Theyamma is gone, my enthusiasm for such a project has disappeared.

As we grew up in Kaipuzha, with each sibling only two years apart, we had a lot of fun. From Theyamma through Thommychettan, Pennamma to me, we did a lot together. We played "kutty and kol", "pacha pacha", "acku", hide-and seek, badminton, and such games. But the water in the lagoon was our main source of frolic. Whether rain or shine, whether during floods or in the heat of summer, we found ourselves swimming and raising and splashing each other. When we were bored, we would bring our fishing rod to catch fish. Of course, all these games and sports, and physical contacts sometimes ended in fights big and small. There were also accidents galore. I remember all the four of us with major gashes on our legs that needed nightly cleaning and dressing that our father personally administered. There was no penicillin available yet in India, and therefore the wounds had to be carefully attended to. We walked around with bandages that were badges of our exploits. And when we fought, which was not infrequent, we took sides. Theyamma always sided with me and did whatever she could to protect me.

I reciprocated whenever the need arose.

We sat together in the study room to do our homework. Usually father supervised us and helped with our difficulties in mathematics, and languages. He particularly liked to drill us in mental arithmetic. He also insisted on our learning by heart every poem, whether in English or in Malayalam. As I had an uncanny ability to learn stuff by heart, in addition to my own assigned poems, I learned those of my elders too. It was irritating for Theyamma and Thommychettan. And this often resulted in taunts and fights. But no fight lasted beyond the next game or swim. Father was the founder and treasurer of Knanya Catholic Congress and we went to the annual conventions by boat. We stayed in the big houseboat and our parents entertained the worthy luminaries of the community. Theyamma had an item on one of those evenings to play harmonium and sing. Therefore she got the best skirt and blouse specially stitched for the occasion. We also went for the annual boat race regatta in Kottayam and usually took in a movie following the races.

After she completed her Form III, Theyamma went to St. Mary's high school in Athirampuzha. Even though our eldest brother who managed the toddy shop in Athirampuzha lived there, Theyamma preferred to walk three miles every day to school. Of course she had friends from the neighborhood to accompany her on that daily routine. When she returned home after the long trek, she had to complete her school assignments, and participate in the family chores before retiring to sleep. Girls were expected to help mother in the kitchen. We all had assignments such as watering the flower garden, help irrigate the tapioca patch, weed the vegetable garden, gather ripe mangoes, scamper on the cashew trees, be with the servants doing their assignments etc.etc. Sometimes Theyamma neglected to practice her harmonium, and I would bug her about it, at the hearing of our father. She was often irritated by my spunkiness. However, she did practice her music, and most nights she enjoyed it. In addition to her studies, she was fully involved in her school activities. Thus she participated in plays, was involved in organizing school exhibitions, and literary events. We would be present for many of those events, and we could see that she was quite popular in school.

In 1947 mutual friends brought a proposal for marriage for Theyamma. M.P. George Madayanakavil was a handsome young man with thick wavy hair, and distinguished features. (I shall call him George instead of brother in law or alyan for the sake brevity.) But what interested our father was that he had just completed his Master's Degree in Economics and was preparing for the most competitive examination in the country. He was to sit for the grueling examination in Indian Administrative Service (IAS for short). Besides George's father was an old friend and classmate of my father. Therefore it was decided that the marriage would take lace a year before she could complete her matriculation. The marriage took place on May 19, 1947.

My father was at the height of his prosperity. Thus, though this was

the third wedding in three years, he spared no expenses to make it memorable. Far and near relatives, friends and strangers were invited to the grand wedding. It was decided that Theyamma would stay back home to complete her high school studies, while George would prepare for the arduous examination.

Avarachan Pathyil, my cousin, and contemporary of Theyamma, had come to Kaipuzha on home leave from Coonoor. His self-confidence and swagger and encouragement persuaded me to go to Coonoor. My mother was not keen on my going so far away, as I was just twelve years old then. But my father saw no reason to dissuade me. He decided to accompany me to Coonoor and assess the place for himself. On May 24, hardly a week after my sister's wedding, we went to Coonoor and I ended up joining the Juniorate and eventually the society of the Brothers of St. Gabriel. Thus 1947 was a turning point in the lives of both Theyamma and me.

Theyamma completed her school final examination. George did well in the written examination and was invited for the oral examination, where the final cuts would be made. To his great chagrin and life-long disappointment, he was not successful. He went on to seek employments of various kinds. George was versatile. Even though his main degree was in economics, he was excellent in Mathematics; he had an uncanny talent to pick up languages; he was a very good writer. Therefore getting jobs was not a concern. However, most positions did not please him for long. He went from job to job, from city to city, from state to state. Theyamma accompanied him with the children.

Theyamma and I corresponded regularly. (The last time I was with her, she showed me a bunch of my old letters. It was then I realized how we must have written to each other every week, and sometimes even more often.). She wrote to several of our siblings and relatives regularly. Therefore she was a fountain of news about everybody. In her letters to me she shared all the juicy stuff about our kith and kin and about her own travails and tribulations as also the successes of her husband and her children. On my part I hid very little from her.

One of the first jobs that George held for a few years was in a private English medium school in Coimbatore. And Coonoor was only about 150 kilo meters away, though at an ascent of over 6000 feet. They both came to see me in 1949 and again in 1950. In June of 1950 my father had gone to visit Theyamma in Coimbatore, and came unexpectedly to visit me. His real reason was to ask me to leave the brothers if I was not happy to stay there. He had brought a considerable amount of money to compensate the institute. However I was adamant that I would stay on. It was also from Coimbatore that both my parents traveled by plane for the first time to Cochin.

George, and later Theyamma, visited me in Madras while I was studying in Loyola College. Since Madras was a major junction in the Indian railway system, they needed to change trains there and made use of the stay-over to visit me. When in 1956 I was in Montfort School, Yercaud, helping out

during my long summer break, Theyamma and George along with Memmy came to spend a few days there with me. In 1957 I went on to be the headmaster of St. Antony's High School, Coonoor. By this time George had found employment in Rajahara, a steel mining plant in Madhya Pradesh. In 1958 I took a group of thirty-four students and teacher on an All India Tour by train. As we were going from Calcutta to Hyderabad I realized that we were passing through Bhilai. I told the teachers that I was going to visit my sister in Rajahara and would rejoin the group the next day or so. It was only when I got out of the train in Bhilai that I realized that Rajahara was a good 50 k.m. away. I took the bus to the places, had to wade through a swollen river, catch another bus to arrive at the steel mine. I enquired about the whereabouts of M.P. George and went to their quarters. Of course my sister was not at all expecting me. When she saw me she mistook me for a moment to be my younger brother. But the confusion soon turned to sheer joy. We spent the whole night talking and the next day she insisted on my staying for another day. She took me to the Russian engineers and other friends of theirs. After 36 hours with Theyamma I went back to catch the train to rejoin my group of from Coonoor.

I used to go to Kaipuzha for short visits as I had other assignments in Kerala. Whenever I could I would inform Theyamma. Unfortunately she lived quite far away and could not always be present when I visited home. However when she was there, I would find some excuse to join her for at least a couple of days. In 1960 Nimmy was born and she spent an extended period of time in Kaipuzha. Father was always pleased to have her with him. She was his secretary and personal assistant.

In 1962 I was posted as Principal of St. Gabriel's High School, Kazipet. And Kazipet was a major junction on her travels to Bhilai. Therefore Theyamma and George and children stopped in Kazipet for a day or two to be with me. In July 1963, a few weeks after her youngest daughter Sowmy was born, my father accompanied her and children to Bhilai. On the way they stopped in Kazipet. Sowmy took violently ill and had to be hospitalized. St. Anne's hospital where all the nuns and doctor and caregivers were my friends looked after the baby and nursed her back to good health. This forced stay over allowed me to spend time with my sister and my father. I visited Bhilai a couple of times for short periods of time. Of course our regular correspondence kept us informed of mutual news.

In 1966 I went to Europe for a few months of study and reflection. When I decided to leave the society, the only person I informed in complete secrecy was Theyamma. I had secured the principalship of a High School in Solon. I intended to go to Bhilai to be with my sister for a few days and then go to Solon to take up my assignment. But I secured immigrant visa to Canada and informed her that I was going to Montreal, and would inform her of my future after reaching Canada. I got a job teaching soon after I landed in Montreal. I sent her a very small amount of money as gift from my very first

paycheck. When I decided to marry Josey, I asked my future wife to go to Bhilai to meet my sister, which she did. Later Josey went to Kaipuzha to meet my parents and family members.

In 1968 my wife and I went to the Immigration department of the government of Canada with the intention of sponsoring my youngest brother and family, my wife's brother, and Theyamma and family. On examining our petition the immigration authorities advised us that our income and apartment would not allow us to sponsor so many persons, and that the whole petition may be rejected. We had frantic letters from my brothers, and especially from my eldest sister, asking to bring Mathaikunju and family to Canada as the atmosphere was getting rather heated at home. Therefore we dropped the request for Theyamma and family.

In 1972 we went to India for our first home visit after coming to Canada. The early 70's were perhaps the worst years of our families in Kerala. Grown up children and their higher education, dearth of jobs, scant income, poor agriculture, and general malaise tortured our people. Unfortunately I did not discern the problems while there, or refused to accept the changed circumstances. Theyamma y joined us in Kaipuzha. It was while we were at home that Memmy's marriage to Thommachen took place. Suffice it to state here, as I have said elsewhere, that though several raised objections to that alliance, Thommachen proved to be the savior of our families.

Theyamma was present and assisted at the last days and hours of father in 1976 and our mother in 1978. She sent me detailed descriptions of those events with heartfelt sorrow and legitimate gratification. Eventually she and George and the children moved to the newly acquired flat in Bombay. Life in Bombay was hectic as they had dozens of guests every month. Those who were going abroad or returning from anywhere by plane, if they even remotely knew her, would visit her. She invariably welcomed them all as if they all were dear and near to her. Our next visit to India was with our sons in 1979. We visited Delhi, Agra, Cashmere, and Jaipur before arriving for a short stop in Bombay. She welcomed us with a great deal of affection. We stopped again in Bombay on our return from India.

In 1981 I invited her to visit us in Canada. She spent a few weeks with us and was able to visit with all our relatives and some of our friends in Canada and USA. On her return she visited Europe and saw some of our people in Germany and visited some places of interest.

When I visited Kerala again in 1984 for the sixtieth birthday of Sr. Vincent Theyamma joined us briefly. She added to the celebrations and took a leadership role in planning activities. I remember the furor and reluctance on her part when Nimmy desired to marry her childhood sweetheart. I wrote to her insisting that she and George relent and let the marriage take place. She and I had only the good of our own in mind when we wrote to each other. Subsequently some silly misunderstanding on our part led to a short period of strained relationship. I was torn, and she was heart-broken during

that short period. In 1992 when we again visited India, I found out that she was searching for land to construct a home in Kerala. I phoned her to come over to Kaipuzha and offered a piece of property that I had inherited as a possible venue for her home. I was pleased when she enthusiastically accepted my offer. She built Little Flower in Kalluvililpparampil with great love, diligence, and at top speed. I knew then that I would be returning “home” for frequent visits. Once George and Theyamma settled in their new home, I found excuses to visit India. After all I had a comfortable and luxurious home to go to, and loving welcome awaiting us. Theyamma spared no effort to accommodate me and care for my every need and whim.

It was in 1996, during the first visit after the house was built, that I worked on the family history that was published a year later. She was of invaluable help in researching each chapter. She and George were the only two persons who saw my book in draft form. Many corrections and changes were incorporated as a result of her input. Those were happy leisurely days when, in the comfort of Little Flower we would spend arguing, discussing, laughing, and singing old tunes. We would roam the grounds made sacred by our parents. We would stop to remember an incident, a game, a fight, and a snippet from our past. The ancestral property evoked memories of the paradise that it was in our childhood.

I knew that the death of George left her bereft of companionship. However she plunged into community and church activities in Kaipuzha. By this time our communication was more over the phone than through letters. We chatted regularly about anything and everything. She always prefaced her remarks by asking when I was coming to Kaipuzha next. Those insistent invitations enticed me to make more visits. She had an air-conditioned room reserved for me with all modern amenities for my use. Sincere love and eagerness to please was her hallmark. Her husband and her children had ensured that she would live in comfort. All of that was at my disposal... and more. She was there as my companion, my protector and friend.

I have come face to face with mortality more than once in the recent past. But those did not deter me from going to Kaipuzha to be with Theyamma. When she told me that she was trying to get the visa to visit Canada, I was overjoyed. But I was also rather apprehensive. I wondered if her asthmatic condition and such ailments would hamper her enjoyment of being with Nimmy and Babu, the grandchildren, and her brothers. But I thought if she could not travel as extensively as she did twenty-five years ago, she could at least stay with me and quietly enjoy each other's company. But fate snatched her away. Instead of making a happy journey to North America, she went to her eternal reward.

Theyamma's passing has set a permanent gloom in my life.

There is darkness everywhere. No one beckons me home.

None wait for my arrival.

All those songs remain unsung; all that gossip remains unspoken.

All those goodies remain untouched; all that laughter is muffled forever.

My sister, my friend, my confidante, my soul mate is no more.

No. I must not end this piece in sorrow and despair and hopelessness.

The faith of our ancestors teaches us that there is an eternal life after this transient one. We are taught that all the joys of this world are but precursors of the heavenly bliss that awaits those who serve the Lord.

Theyamma's was a life of service. It surely has been abundantly rewarded. She who prepared so many of our near and dear ones to die in peace and hope must find eternal rest in the bosom of the Lord, among those whom she loved and have gone before her. Yes. Death has snatched Theyamma from us. But our memory of her will live for ever. Let me end this elegy quoting a hymn of hope that we loved to sing in our childhood.

Henry F. Lyte, 1793-1847

1. Abide with me; fast falls the eventide;
the darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide.
When other helpers fail and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me.

2. Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day;
earth's joys grow dim; its glories pass away;
change and decay in all around I see;
O thou who changest not, abide with me.

3. I need thy presence every passing hour.
What but thy grace can foil the tempter's power?
Who, like thyself, my guide and stay can be?
Through cloud and sunshine, Lord, abide with me.

4. I fear no foe, with thee at hand to bless;
ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness.
Where is death's sting? Where, grave, thy victory?
I triumph still, if thou abide with me.

5. Hold thou thy cross before my closing eyes;
shine through the gloom and point me to the skies.
Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee;
in life, in death, O Lord, abide with me.

Chapter 47

75th Birthday October 4, 2009- A Talk

It is nice to be here; at my age, it is nice to be anywhere.

There are three signs old age: one is loss of memory; I forgot the other two. I must say that when Josie and the children wanted to celebrate my 75th, I was not in favour of it.

To me, 75 is just a number. In fact I do not feel that I am an old man. I am not sure what constitutes old age. (I have been telling others that Mathai Chettan is an old man. In referring to him in conversation with others, I use the term Vayassan. I have done that for more than 25 years.

Incidentally he will turn 85 in a few days time. Congratulations.) But if someone were to call me old, I would be genuinely surprised. I think of old to mean: a person done for, out of touch, over the hill, used up, of no value to society, out to pasture, weak in mind and body, fragile, one foot in the grave, mentally incompetent. As for me, I am Young at heart; slightly older in other places.

Over half a century ago I studied in Loyola College, Madras, where Fr. C. Leigh S.J., then in his seventies, taught us poetry. There was one poem that stuck in my memory because Fr. Leigh taught it with vehemence and conviction. I was puzzled then as to why he was so enthusiastic about that poem. But now I think I know. But I am getting ahead of myself. The poem was called Rabbi Ben Ezra, written by the English poet, Robert Browning.

The first stanza says:

" GROW old along with me!

The best is yet to be,

The last of life, for which the first was made:

Our times are in his hand

Who saith, "A whole I planned,

Youth shows but half; trust God: see all, nor be afraid!"

So far, it is rather straight forward. Then the Rabbi, Ben Ezra, uses

an unusual metaphor. He says man is the clay and God is the potter. The potter gives shape to the pot or vessel that he makes. He uses his ingenuity to fashion the pot on his wheel. It is he who decides the shape, the contours, the color, the beauty of the pot. When people see the pot, the potter is praised for the excellence of the vessel. If there are deficiencies and shortcomings, again it is the potter who is responsible. The clay is just a thing to make the vessel. No one admires the clay, nor condemns it. It is the potter who examines the vessel to change, to mend, to modify, until he is completely satisfied.

Then the poem concludes:

" So, take, and use thy work:
Amend what flaws may lurk,
What strain o' the stuff, what warpings past the aim!
My times be in thy hand!
Perfect the cup as planned!
Let age approve of youth, and death complete the same!"

-Robert Browning

In the twilight of my life, I see my life as Rabbi Ben Ezra, Robert Browning, and Fr. Leigh saw it. It is God who is ultimately responsible for the qualities that people spoke of. He is also responsible for the deficiencies and shortcomings. Hence my equanimity in the evening of my life.

My friends, of whom there are several here, have been my support and sustenance. All my life I have been a public person. Therefore I am beholden to every one of you. When Josie invited you, our friends, to join us in this celebration, all of you eagerly acceded to the invitation. Some had other commitments, and yet made time to be here. That is a magnanimous gesture on your part and I am grateful.

It has been a good life. From the fortunate birth, to this very day, I have had more ups than downs. Whether in job satisfaction, steady though modest income, choice of country, yes, even health, I have been blessed. But it is in the choice of my life partner in which I have been most fortunate. Converse may not be true; she may not think the same about me. But I have been lucky in having found her.

And Frank and Vince, flesh of my flesh, blood of my blood, have given me much comfort and joy – and some angst. And with Mary Ann, who has become part of our lives, I have been blessed with affection, consideration and solicitude. I have a host of relatives all over the continent and elsewhere. There are some here to represent those who could not be present. But none more precious than my brother.

Do not worry about your health; it will go away. I do not think about dying; that is the last thing I want to do.

Chapter 48

My Father By Vince Pathyil - The Heart Beats

(Vince Pathyil on the occasion of his father's 75th birthday)

Good evening. I want to welcome all of you here today for the celebration of my father Joseph Pathyil's 75th birthday. Before I begin I just wanted to mention a few things about what we have planned tonight. Throughout the course of the evening we will have various people coming up to the stage to say a few words about my Dad. For your entertainment, we also have some special performances by some very talented young people. The bar is open so please feel free to make your way over there and order a drink. We will have a wonderful buffet dinner and it should start around 8:30.

Before I begin, there is famous quote which states '*behind every great man there is a great woman*'. My mother has taken care of my Father for over 42 years. The fact that he is here today and is in good health and can be attributed in large part to her. In addition, she has done quite a bit of planning and organizing for this event tonight and I want to acknowledge her for her efforts. Let's give her a round of applause. Mom, please stand up.

As I started to prepare my speech, I realized that it is difficult to put into words just how much my Father means to me. It is difficult to put into words what he means to all of us and how he has enriched our lives. Words don't seem to be enough to honour him in the way that he deserves to be honoured. I can spend a few hours talking about all the qualities and attributes that he possesses and all of the things that he has accomplished.

To fully understand my Father, it should be pointed out that he represents many different things to many different people. To some he is a pioneer. He is considered to be one of the pioneers of the malayalee community in Canada. He arrived in this country, more specifically, Montreal, on January

31st 1967.

Since settling in Canada, he has been a personal welcome wagon to family and friends in the Malayalee community. To others he is a community leader. He founded the first Malayalee association in Montreal. He is an active member in the KNA community and key contributor to the KNA association.

Some know him as an organizer. If someone wants something organized they will call my Dad. He has organized more events than I can even recall. Most recently he was responsible for organizing the KNA convention in Toronto in 2004. He was the chairman of the organizing committee for FOKANA convention held in Toronto in 1994.

There are some people in this room that know him as a political activist. He is an active member of the Liberal Party both provincially and federally. He enjoys a good debate for than anyone that I know. He has actively campaigned for federal MPs and provincial MPPs in the Mississauga riding for the last 20 years.

To some people he is a writer. Among other things, he has written historical documents about the origins of the KNA community. He is the genealogist or family historian for the Pathyil family. He has written documents about our family that go back several generations. He updates a family website called Pathyil.com with current events and announcements within the family.

My Father is very proud of his family and his heritage. There is no disputing this. He has also written several letters to the editors of various periodicals and publications that have been published. Many people in this room know him to be a very eloquent public speaker.

He has been invited to speak at various events and has been an emcee at many functions over the years. For many my Dad is an advisor, a facilitator or a mediator. He is always willing to lend a hand or an ear to those seeking help or advice. I think that the reason that people ask him to for his opinion is he is well respected by everyone.

The truth is he represents all or many of those things to anyone who knows him. To everyone in this room today he represents either a close friend or colleague, an uncle, a brother, a godfather or a loving husband. What he represents to my brother and I is a loving Father.

Growing up a son couldn't have asked for a better Dad. We did not lack anything. He took us on many trips. We went all over the world. We took a trip to Europe and visited Italy, France, Switzerland, Germany, Spain, England and Austria. We went all over India in 1979. Bombay, Agra, New Dehli, Jaipoor, Kashmir, Travandrum, Kerala. I was very young at the time so I remember missing home quite a bit and being a little unsettled as we pursued a very aggressive itinerary. One thing that I do remember is that my Dad made us keep a journal of all of our experiences during the trip.

Recently I had the opportunity to read the journal and some of the very

fond memories quickly come back to me. We've also been to Mexico. One summer he took us all over the United States. As a child, he used to take my brother and I to many sporting events. I am a huge sports enthusiast. I have fond memories of eating peanuts and drinking Fanta soda in the Olympic Stadium.

One year he even took us to Florida and we saw the Expos during spring training. It was a huge thrill for me. He took me to my first hockey game and my first football game in Buffalo. He even took me to see my first Pro Wrestling card in Paul Sauve Arena. Looking back now, it was a significant sacrifice as I'm pretty sure he had no idea what was going on or who these wrestlers were but he knew how much it meant to me so he took me to the event.

My brother, my Mom and I have sometimes been critical of my Dad in recent years. Maybe critical is too strong of a word, we have tempered our enthusiasm when my Dad has agreed to take on various responsibilities or pursue certain endeavours. At times it was because we were concerned about his health. At times it was because we felt that we needed to protect him. Dad we only do this because we love you. Having said that, at times we have been perhaps a little too tough on him. I am glad to have the opportunity on a night like this to publicly honour and pay tribute to my Father because he deserves it and we are all incredibly proud of him.

I am proud of my Father for all of his accomplishments. My Dad knows that I don't share all of the same passions that he does and he accepts it. When I was younger, there were times that I felt that if I was expected that I was to carry on the legacy of my Father that I would never be able to measure up. Those are huge shoes to fill. But my Dad has always been proud of any of my accomplishments. He is proud of any talent or ability that I possess even if I choose not to put it on public display.

I remember when my Dad introduced me to the great stand up comedian Russel Peters at the KNA convention. I will paraphrase a little but my Dad told Russell Peters that I do very good impersonations and that I could become a great stand up comedian if I chose to pursue that direction. I'll admit that I was a little embarrassed for such high praise, but I would not want it any other way. It is a great feeling to have someone so proud of you. My Dad has that way about him. This is one of the things that I admire most about him.

Another thing that I admire most about my Father is that whatever he does he executes with passion and full commitment. If I share a problem with him it becomes his problem and he will focus on trying to resolve the issue. He takes a keen interest in everything that I do. He is like this with everyone that he knows. This is the essence of my Father. This is his greatest attribute. He makes people feel good about themselves. It doesn't matter if you are in a crowded area, he can make you feel like you are the most important person in the room.

While I haven't always seen eye to eye with my father he is always very supportive of me. When I was lost and I was lacking direction, he put me on the right path. When I lacked in self-confidence and I needed a boost he was my biggest fan. Dad, you have no idea how much this means to me.

Samuel Johnson once wrote '*The true measure of a man is how he treats someone who can do him absolutely no good*'

My interpretation of this quote is that the true measure of a man is his generosity and kindness towards others when there is no reward or benefit to himself. By this definition my Dad is one of the greatest men that I have ever known. He gives without regard for what he will receive in return. Sure my Father will receive praise from many for all of the things that he has done but it is not even close to what he deserves. The thing about my Father is that he does not seek anything in return. It is more important for him to build friendships than seek personal gain. I maintain that although my Dad may not be rich in the traditional sense he is extremely wealthy in friends.

Not only does he have many friends but he maintains those friendships. It never ceases to amaze me how many friends he actually has. Everywhere I go, people seem to know me because I am Joseph Pathyil's son or Uppachan's son. He has contacts in almost every continent. If you know my father it is not surprising that we have over 100 people attending this celebration tonight. He has touched many lives.

In closing I just want to say. Dad, this evening is for you. We love you. We honour you today. Over 75 years you indeed have touched many lives. Happy 75th birthday and may there be many more to come. Enjoy the evening.

Chapter 49

A Blessing in my old age - 3 January 2017

Macbeth ,in one of the monologues that are sprinkled in the play, says:

"I have lived long enough: my way of life
Is fall'n into the sear, the yellow leaf;
And that which should accompany old age,
As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends,
I must not look to have; but, in their stead,
Curses, not loud but deep, mouth-honour, breath,
Which the poor heart would fain deny, and dare not. (5.3.22)
Unlike Macbeth, I am blessed by troops of friends in my "yellow leaf".

As for "*honour and love*", I had an experience on January 3, 2017 that I wish to narrate. A student of mine from the early 60's had contacted me a few months ago and we had been corresponding on a regular basis. When he heard that we would be going to Kerala to be with my sister for a few weeks, M.G. Jacob decided to visit me and Josie in Paravanthuruthu. He contacted a few of his batch mates from fifty years ago. The little firebrand of a youngster that M.G. was fifty years ago, he turned out to be an excellent organizer.

On January 3, 2017 he got seven of his friends to join him to meet me in the home of Simon Philip, my nephew, where I was staying. On 3 Jan 2017, PP Joseph Puthiyadam with his spouse from Parippu Kottayam, MM Joseph Munidyankal from Trivandrum , MG Jacob Mathecken and spouse Leela Jacob from Hyderabad were fortunate to meet their beloved Princy Teacher and Mentor Joseph Pathyil in Puranthuruthu, Kallara. They could also meet Br.Cyriac SG from Thailand - one of the three architects of St.Gabriels Kazipet Late Br Vincent and Br.Stanislaus being the other two. This is an experiential gratitude to him. They came at around ten in the

morning and spent a few delightful hours. We had so much to talk about, so much to enquire of each other, so many memories of the school years, that the hours flew by all too quickly. They met my sister and my nephews and their families. They had a sumptuous lunch with all of them. As the afternoon waned, we knew that we had to part company and bid farewell. We did so promising to keep in touch with each other.

The honour and love that Shakespeare speaks about was in abundance at this meeting. Their visit (and those of others who had come individually on other days at the urging of M.G.) warmed the cockles of my heart. The enthusiasm and the sincerity of purpose that brought my erstwhile students who became my new found friends, can only be praised and appreciated. The evening of my life is enriched by such tokens of affection and gratitude. The gift of love is both given and received.

No, Macbeth: Life is not full of sound and fury, signifying nothing. Rather it is the spark of the Divine in us that makes us bond with each other. Love, honour, respect – demonstrated and reciprocated- make life worthwhile.

Part VII

Pictures of Memories and Moments

PICTURES OF MEMORIES AND MOMENTS



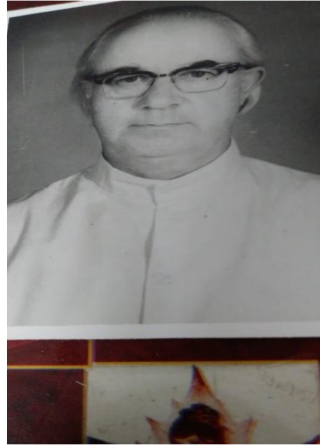
Family Photograph taken in 1952



Family Photograph taken in 2002

Figure 49.1: Pathyil Family Photo 1952 and 2002

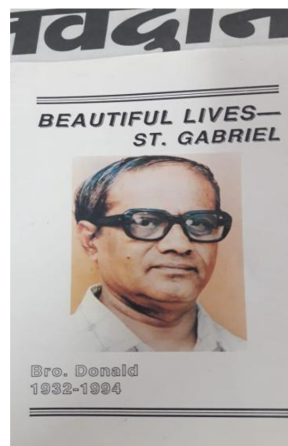
PICTURES OF MEMORIES AND MOMENTS



With Br Charlie Darling

Figure 49.2: With Br Charles Garnier - Charlie Darling 1980

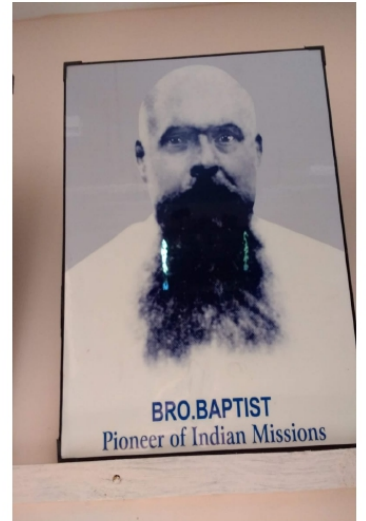
PICTURES OF MEMORIES AND MOMENTS



Memories of Bros; Felix, VK Stephen, Donald, Amnoy, Philip, John of Sacred Heart

Figure 49.3: With Bros Felix, VK Stephen, Donald, Philip etc..

PICTURES OF MEMORIES AND MOMENTS



Early Pioneers – The Pathmakers

Figure 49.4: The Pioneer Brothers

PICTURES OF MEMORIES AND MOMENTS



With Dr. Heinz and Dr. Maggy in Frankfurt – Visit to Europe 2005



A Crash Course in German – Visit to Europe 2005

PICTURES OF MEMORIES AND MOMENTS



With Mani, Danielle, Kamala and child -Visit to Europe 10 June 2005



Figure 49.6: Visit to Europe 2006

PICTURES OF MEMORIES AND MOMENTS



Overlooking Rhine river – Visit to Europe 11 June 2005



Dinner with Family of Dr thomas unni and Dr Aleykutty -Visit to Europe 11 June 2005

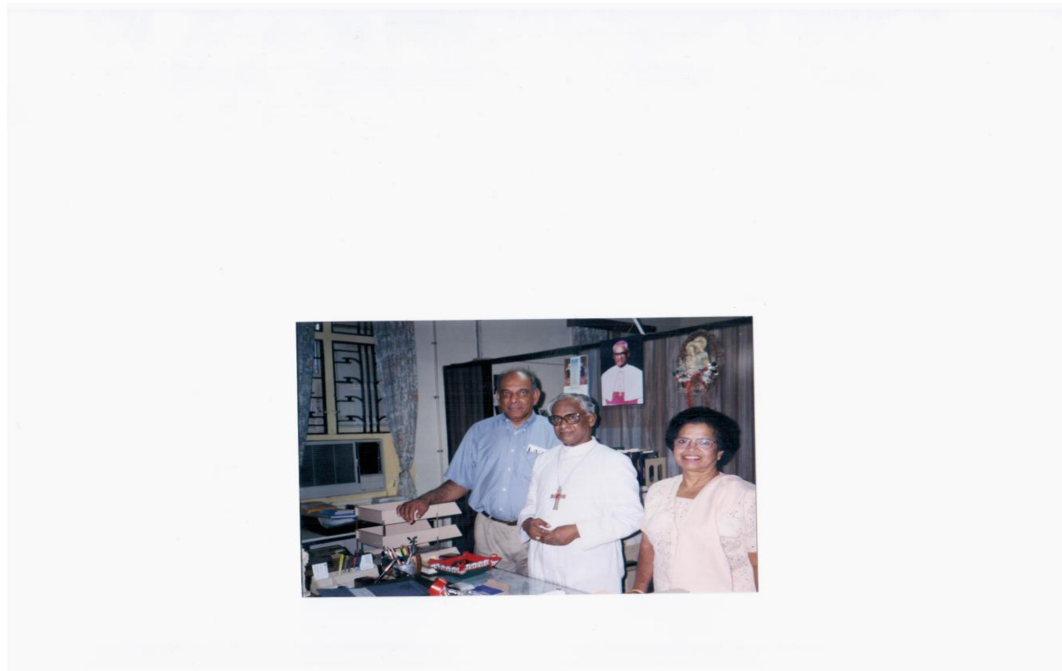
PICTURES OF MEMORIES AND MOMENTS



Dr Suren Menon and Vidya – Malaysia 11 Sept 2001



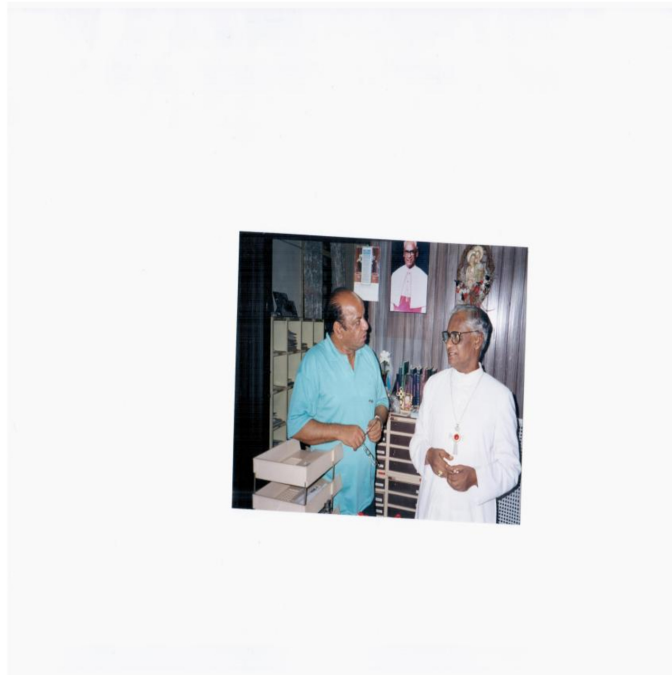
Walter Thevaram IG Police – TN 18 Sept 2001



With Archbishop Aruldas James – Chennai 18 Sept 2001

Figure 49.8: Journey to Asia 2001

PICTURES OF MEMORIES AND MOMENTS



Bro Patrick with Archbishop

With Bro.Thomas Tolantino



PICTURES OF MEMORIES AND MOMENTS



On the occasion of 60th Birthday of Br Patrick – Chennai 18 Sept 2001



Figure 49.10: Journey to Asia 2001

PICTURES OF MEMORIES AND MOMENTS



Br.Patrick, sister Sr Innocent ; Br Patrick with Jo Pathyil , brother
Thomas : Chennai Sept 2001

PICTURES OF MEMORIES AND MOMENTS



With My Family - Canada



With my Sisters – Kerala 2001

PICTURES OF MEMORIES AND MOMENTS



The two of us – Josie and Jo Pathyil



Josie with Theyyamma

PICTURES OF MEMORIES AND MOMENTS



Josie and Jo Pathyil 1967 Canada



Josie with brother Mathew 1964

PICTURES OF MEMORIES AND MOMENTS



Babychayan
Chamakalayil, youngest son of my sister Mariamma
Chamakalayil – one who took care of all around him – a life
of Care and Service RIP



My Brother Mathew with nephews in Travancore Club – Kottayam – a life of Care and Service

PICTURES OF MEMORIES AND MOMENTS



Jo Pathyil with Br Cyriac SG Thailand, brother Mathew, students and MGAs PP Joseph, MM Joseph, MG Jacob and families-January 2017 in

Recalling the meet with Princy Jo Pathyil on 3 Jan 2017...How time flies past...On 3 Jan 2017, P. Joseph Puthiyadam, MM Joseph Munidyankal, MG Jacob Mathecken, students of Jo Pathyil from 1963 in Kazipet were fortunate to meet their beloved Princy Teacher and Mentor Joseph Pathyil in Puranthuruthu, Kallara. They could also meet Br.Cyriac SG from Thailand - one of the three architects of St.Gabriel's Kazipet, other two being Late Br Vincent and Br.Stanislaus .

PICTURES OF MEMORIES AND MOMENTS



Pathyil Family Photo – 1952

The

The Family that gave the Roots to Grow and Wings to Fly along with eminent Guides and Fellow Travellers . Thank You Life – Jo Pathyil



Figure 49.17: Journey to Asia 2001

Epilogue

It is a blessing to meet one's dear teacher and mentor in life after 50 years. He can re-energize you, re-fuel you and re-ignite you.

He is one who can accept you as you are irrespective of what you did during the last five decades. He can make you feel and experience that you belong to with love in life.

A reunion of old colleagues with their beloved childhood principal and mentor Principal- Joe Pathyil, meeting after 50 years happened on a pleasant Tuesday, 3 January 2017.

82 years old then, yet alert, elegant, dignified, all encompassive, attentive - the veteran mentor listened to the tales of his students and their spouses during the past 50 years.

He came all the way from Canada and spared a day for his students. For these colleagues, it was a refuelling of dreams and energy from their dear and cherished Princy.

It was wonderful to listen to their Princy who with words of affectionate memories of 50 years which brought tears of joy and belonging to each of them.

It was a moment of blessing from their Teacher of Life once again after 50 years....He had blessed them with values, example, discipline, confidence and education to venture out to explore life, live and grow.

And these students of his went to meet him to enquire his well being and seek his blessing.

Though in their sixties and seventies, beset with various physical, emotional and personal ailments or bags of regrets, the reassuring company with their Principal once again gave them all the courage and hope to be joyful and to move on with a head lifted high. It was once again this dear Principal Jo Pathyil who gave them this after 50 years...

They - like their thousands of counterparts- know their teacher and mentor is there when they need him most.

Thanking , Jo and Josie with tears of joy for those wonderful five hours and half of bliss and ecstasy on 3rd January,2017 on the banks of the Paravanthuruthu in Kaipuzha, Kerala (in the company of his brother, dynamic elder sister who is no more now, nephews, neices and grand nephews and grand nieces), these students of Joe - Joseph Mundiyanal, PP Joseph Puthiyadam, MG Jacob Mathecken with their spouses - returned to their homes with their heads held high and spirits soaring with the elan of an ethereal joy.

Life is Beautiful as always. A Fortunate Life indeed.

-END-

