



Dear Confreres,

On this day, a year ago, 13th June 1986

REV. FR. BENEDICT FURTADO sdb

breathed his last around 9.50 in the morning. He was surrounded by the confreres of Provincial House, Matunga, who assisted him in his last moments by inviting him to pray with them. Fr. Chrys Saldanha, the Provincial, gave him the Final Absolution just before his death. He was 55 years old, 33 years a salesian, 24 years a Priest.

EARLY LIFE

Benedict was born in Bombay on 2nd December 1930. Eldest of three children, he was the son of Mr. Menino Santana Furtado and Mrs. Ana Paula Po. He was christened on 13th December 1930 in the parish church of St. Francis Xavier, Dabul. Archbishop Thomas Roberts of Bombay confirmed him at St. Paul's Church, Dadar on 15th February 1942.

On completing his elementary schooling at Bombay English School, Parel, Benedict was admitted as a dayscholar to Don Bosco High School, Matunga in June 1944. After passing his Matriculation examination, he immediately asked to be enrolled as an aspirant. He was permitted to pursue his college studies at the neighbouring Khalsa College where he successfully graduated in Science (B.Sc.). On 29th March 1952 he forwarded his application to join the Salesian Novitiate. Fr. Aurelius Maschio, his Rector all these eight years, found him a very cheerful lad, gifted to work with boys.

SALESIAN FORMATION

Twenty-two year old Benedict entered the Novitiate at Mount Don Bosco, Kotagiri (Nilgiris district) on 15th May 1952. Under the guidance of his Novice Master, Fr. Egidio Sola, he prepared himself conscientiously to embrace the salesian life. On 22nd August 1952 he received the cassock, the sign of his detachment from the world, — the sign of his putting on the new man. So great was his attachment to the cassock that it was only in his last years that he was seen to go about without a cassock, and that too only in the house and when on long journeys.

Br. Benedict made his first religious profession on 24th May 1953. He then commenced his three-year Philosophy course. In June 1955, he was sent for his practical Training to Sacred Heart Aspirantate, Tirupattur (South India). Here for three years he spent himself for the benefit of the aspirants. He showed keen interest in organising the Sodalities for the boys and also in train-

ing them in the liturgical ceremonies. As a young cleric he distinguished himself by his good religious spirit and exact observance of the Rules. These traits he carried with him to the grave. He was also on the teaching staff of Sacred Heart College in the Chemistry Department.

At that time, Sacred Heart Theologate, Mawlai — Shillong was the only Salesian studentate of Theology in India. In June 1958, Br. Benedict proceeded to Mawlai for his theological studies. There he made his Perpetual Profession in the hands of Fr. Antonio Alessi, the Provincial of North India. His theology companions recall his zeal, especially in the Oratories. He loved to trudge the long distances over the Khasi Hills. In a very short time he picked up the Khasi language and thus endeared himself to the Khasi people, especially the youngsters. On 24th June 1961, he was ordained a sub-deacon and on 6th December of the same year he was ordained a deacon, both ordinations being performed by Archbishop Stephen Ferrando of Shillong.

While in Mawlai, he received the sad news of the death of his dad far away in Bombay. Distance prevented him from being present at his dad's funeral. It was a very painful experience for him. But he bore it with perfect resignation, taking it as God's Holy Will. A letter from his mother greatly consoled him. She repeatedly urged him to go ahead in the pursuit of his goal, and assured him that she would shoulder the responsibility of the family. Later in life, Fr. Benedict would often tell his boys that it was the prayers and sacrifices of his mother that helped him to be faithful to his God-given vocation.

A PRIEST FOREVER

On 29th June 1962, Deacon Benedict Furtado was ordained a priest of God by His Eminence, Valerian Cardinal Gracias, Archbishop of Bombay. The solemn impressive ceremony took place in the Shrine of Don Bosco's Madonna, Matunga. It was a red letter-day in the annals of the institution. All the boys of the school participated in the celebrations. There was even a representative group of aspirants from the recently opened Don Bosco Apostolic

School of Lonavla. Mrs. Furtado, his mother, still recalls this great day with gratitude to God and the Salesian Congregation, especially Fr. Aurelius Maschio who directed her son towards the Altar.

Fr. Benedict's first priestly assignment was to his Alma Mater. The boys of Matunga found him to be a very good Catechist, seeing to their spiritual formation and nursing them when they were sick or had some minor ailments. His past-pupils remember how while cleaning and bandaging their wounds, he would enquire about their conduct, ask about their families and even encourage them to be better boys.

In June 1963, he was transferred to St. Bede's High School and Orphanage, Madras. Here he cared for the poor Anglo-Indian boys who got to love him very much. During the scholastic year commencing in June 1965, he did his studies at St. Xavier's Institute of Education, Bombay to obtain the Bachelor's degree in Education (B.Ed.). The following year he continued at Matunga as Catechist. It was at this time that Fr. Benedict suffered a stroke of facial paralysis on the left side of his face. He was treated at Bombay Hospital. For quite some time later he had difficulty in chewing and speaking. Traces of this paralysis were noticeable even in his later years. In June 1968, he was once again transferred to St. Bede's Madras, this time as Prefect of Studies.

With the formation of the Bombay Province in 1969, confreres of this region working in South India were given an opportunity of returning to work here in the region of the new province. Fr. Benedict was appointed Headmaster at Don Bosco High School, Panjim (Goa). He took charge of the school in June 1970. His coming to Goa opened a new chapter in his life. His love for poor boys was evident in the school.

In June 1975, he was sent to the Salesian Pontifical University, Rome for an updating and renewal course in Spiritual Theology. Back in India in June 1976, he was appointed Rector of Don Bosco Youth Centre, Koregaon Park, Poona. Here he was entrusted with the formation of the young salesians doing their University studies

in the various colleges of Poona. Being very much attached to working in a school, he lent his services to the nearby Fatima High School, Yeravada (now called Don Bosco High School) which was taken over by the Salesians in 1974.

In June 1978, Fr. Benedict was back in Panjim as Rector and Principal of Don Bosco High School, Panjim. He was Provincial Councillor of the Bombay Province for a three-year term from June 1979 to May 1982. During his long tenure in Panjim, he was indeed Don Bosco's ambassador in Goa, making the Salesians known, loved and esteemed.

APOSTOLATE OF SUFFERING

In mid-1983, Fr. Benedict was suddenly hospitalised due to some complications. Complaining of cold and cough, he had earlier been treated at the Goa Medical College Hospital as a case of common cold. Now, the X-Ray photograph showed accumulation of pleural liquid in the lung cavity. After going through two sets of different antibiotics, the doctor treating him came to the conclusion that the probable form of infection could be Tuberculosis. His condition was still bad, inspite of rest and treatment, and so he came to Bombay for a further medical check-up. At the Tata Memorial Cancer Hospital, he was declared fit.

On completing two terms of Rectorship (1978-84) at Panjim. Fr. Benedict was asked to go to the hills of Lonavla. It was hoped that the pure air of the hills would do some good to his lungs. While at Lonavla, he gave himself to the teaching of Catechism to the boys of the Apostolic School. He also served as Chaplain to the Salesian Sisters, catering to the spiritual needs of the Sisters and the girls.

But his condition was only deteriorating. He was advised another medical check-up at the Cardio-Vascular Centre of the K. E. M. Hospital at Parel. Here investigations revealed that he had Cancer of the left lung. It was decided to operate on him immediately. But where ? Some felt that it would be better if he was operated in some other hospital of renown in Bombay. But, Fr. Benedict insisted on being operated at the K. E. M. Hospital itself, as he had great confidence in the doctor who had diagnosed his case.

Every effort was made to give him the best room possible, but still he had to put up with a lot of inconveniences, which he bore very patiently. The affected lung was removed and great care was taken by the doctors to prevent the cancer cells from spreading further to other organs of the body. The operation was successful, thanks to the prayers of many, especially the boys of Lonavla who constantly kept vigil before the Eucharistic Lord. In spite of severe pains, it was consoling to see Fr. Benedict smile and joke as though he had undergone a minor operation. Once out of hospital, Fr. Benedict took rest at the Provincial House, Matunga. Within a few weeks, he was already joining the confreres at table in the refectory.

Great was his delight when in March 1985, Fr. Provincial communicated to him the news that the Salesians were taking up Pope John XXIII Boys' Town, Quepem from Fr. Edwin D'Souza, a diocesan priest of Goa. He immediately volunteered to go to Quepem and even insisted with Fr. Provincial saying that he would consider it a privilege to spend the few years of life that God might give him, working there for the poor boys. His request was granted. As a member of the pioneer community, he served as Confessor and Catechism teacher, as long as his health allowed him. Soon he began to complain of back pains and was treated for "slipped disc". As his condition was becoming worse, he was asked to return to Bombay. At the Tata Memorial Hospital, it was noticed that the cancer was spreading to the left lower ribs, the spine and hips. He was immediately put on chemotherapy to prevent further spread of the cancer cells. This treatment caused him a lot of uneasiness and nausea. Poor Father tried to hide his pain from the confreres, but to no avail. It was a sad sight to see him feebly walking around and even making an effort to talk. On the occasion of his last birthday (2nd December 1985), he was jokingly saying to all who came to wish him that he was now an enrolled member of the sick confreres' association, that was entrusted with the apostolate of suffering. He used to admit that, in addition to his physical suffering, his enforced inactivity was a real torment to him.

In the last few months of his life, Fr. Tony D'Souza (who was

himself convalescing after a major surgery) was a good companion to Fr. Benedict. The sick understand each other better. Fr. Benedict was so concerned about Fr. Tony's health that he would often forget that he himself was sick. His calm at this stage of his sickness was proverbial. It was his constant anxiety that he should in no way be a nuisance to his confreres because of his health. He depended very much on an attendant and got all his help through him. If anyone else came forward to help he would just say: "It's all right; we'll manage it". Br. Barnabe D'Souza who assisted him a great deal bears witness to the enormous sufferings of good Fr. Benedict. Often brother had to keep awake at night to attend on Father; but in the morning, he would be sent off to get some sleep. In the earlier stages of his illness, when he was attached to the house of Lonavla, Fr. Amarildes Sigmaringa and Fr. Godfrey D'sa took a lot of pains to make the necessary arrangements for Father's check-ups and finally the operation. While he was grateful to them for taking all this trouble, he would always lament that they were losing so much of their precious time and that their work in Lonavla was suffering on account of him.

Fr. Benedict considered his sufferings as a blessing granted to him by the Crucified Lord. He once remarked to a confrere that we religious were forgetting that we have accepted to witness to, and preach, a Crucified God. How else could one explain certain tendencies in the Province and in the world at large ?

All through his illness, he daily celebrated Holy Mass. Even during his last days he always concelebrated with another priest, carefully reciting the prayers and following the actions of the main celebrant. Even on the day he died, he had arranged for Mass to be celebrated before midday.

He never omitted the recitation of the Breviary; he scrupulously recited every psalm and prayer of the Divine Office. As his health deteriorated and concentration became almost impossible, this prayer of the Church developed into an agonising ordeal. He even began to scrupulously write down on the back of old envelopes what psalms and prayers he had already recited. At his request, he was granted exemption from the recitation of the breviary. But

inspite of this during the last week, on account of his poor memory, he repeatedly kept on asking for exemption from the breviary saying that he would recite as many Roaries as possible. Surely in these tormented moments, he was sharing in the Divine Agony : "Father, if it is possible, let this chalice pass from me; nevertheless not my will, but thine be done."

LAST DAYS

In June 1986, Fr. Benedict was officially put on the rolls of Provincial House. On 8th June, he requested Fr. Provincial for the Anointing of the Sick. The entire Provincial House community assembled in his room at midday to pray for him, while he was anointed with the oil of the sick. He sat up in bed for the entire duration of the Sacred Rite. At its conclusion, with a smile on his face, he thanked all those present.

He must have felt his end was near. He constantly kept telling all those who came to see him that he was preparing for death which was not far off. He soon found it difficult to sit up in bed and even kept lying down in one position. He needed someone constantly to help him change position. He himself requested the Rector to allow Miss Daisy Mendes, a nurse who had volunteered to help him, to be around to assist him. Br. George Quadros too did a lot to alleviate the pains of father at this juncture. Nursing the worn-out body of good Fr. Benedict was very beneficial in nursing one's own soul.

On 9th and 10th June, there was held at the Provincial House a meeting of Rectors of the Bombay-Poona region together with all the members of their House Councils. It was a splendid opportunity for several confreres to keep Father company and even chat with him during the intervals. He received them all with a smile, not wanting to show the seriousness of his case.

On 12th June, the doctor examining him noticed that his condition was worsening. He requested the superiors to do all in their power to alleviate Father's sufferings, as he would not last more

than a few weeks. But, God in his mercy did not want to prolong the agony of a good and virtuous man.

The following morning, 13th June, the school quadrangle was bustling with activity. The boys were preparing to re-enter their classes after a two-month long summer vacation. Fr. Benedict was made to sit up in his wheel-chair, and was being given something to eat. He had earlier requested to be taken along the corridors of the house and finally to the balcony that overlooks the school quadrangle. Suddenly, he began to show signs of gasping for breath. The confreres around were immediately called for. Prayers were suggested to him first by the nurse, and the confreres too soon joined in the supplications. It was difficult to believe that the dreaded moment had finally arrived. Slowly his breathing began to slow down and he quietly passed away.

LAST RITES

The news of Fr. Benedict's death was immediately communicated to his sister in Parel, and then to all the relatives and the salesians. A Mass was celebrated at midday in the conference hall of the Provincial House where the body was laid. Many salesians from the neighbouring houses, the salesian sisters, relatives of the deceased and some teachers from the school participated in the Holy Sacrifice. Fr. Benedict's ailing mother, who was to arrive that very evening from Goa to see her son, was shocked to see him already dead. His brother Umberto also arrived in the early hours of the morning of 14th June from the U.S.A. He too had come to see his sick brother and receive his blessing for himself and his family. But this consolation was denied him. He reached just in time for his brother's funeral.

In the morning of 14th June, Fr. Benedict, laid out in a white coffin, was carried into the Shrine of Don Bosco's Madonna. The devotees of Mary Help of Christians, who every Saturday throng to the Shrine in large numbers for the Novena Masses, paid their homage to this departed son of Don Bosco.

The Funeral Mass at 9.00 a.m. was well attended. The Shrine was full to capacity with Salesians, sisters and boys from the various salesian institutions of the city. Fr. Chrys Saldanha, the Provincial, officiated at the Funeral Mass at which several Salesian priests concelebrated. At the cemetery in Sewri, Fr. Joseph Casti, the Novice-Master and one-time Rector of Fr. Benedict in Panjim, gave a tear-filled farewell to a "loving salesian who had endeared himself to all salesians, boys and friends". Fr. Benedict lies buried in the Salesian Mausoleum at the Sewri Cemetery.

When the news of Fr. Benedict's death was announced in Goa, many mourned his loss and were sorely grieved that the funeral rites were conducted in Bombay. Many there were hoping that his body would be brought to Goa for burial. Nevertheless, large crowds attended the Mass celebrated at the Shrine of Our Lady of Fatima, Panjim.

There is much to admire in this wonderful salesian who has left a lasting impression on the many who knew him. He is remembered as a good salesian educator dedicated to the cause of poor boys, and a priest who loved his vocation and got many young boys and girls to follow the call of the Lord to the priesthood and religious life.

SALESIAN EDUCATOR

As Headmaster of Don Bosco High School, Panjim, Fr. Benedict had earned for himself the praise and esteem of several Headmasters of the Territory of Goa. He was President of the All Goa Headmasters' Association for many years. He made use of this forum to instil into his colleagues certain priorities and values in the field of education. It was as an educator that he was able to establish a great rapport with civil and religious authorities and his influence was considerable.

Teaching was his passion. Beside his regular classes and work as Headmaster, he took upon himself to assist the senior boarders in the studyhall for not less than an hour every day. He made use of this opportunity to follow up the weaker boys in Mathe-

matics and Science. Later, as Rector, it was not possible for him to continue this practice. Nevertheless, he always kept himself informed about how his boys were faring in studies, and even arranging some one to take tuitions for the deserving cases. He also showed keen interest in the Night School that was run on the premises under the aegis of the Don Bosco Past Pupils' Association.

Sport plays an important role in the education of a child. Fr. Benedict showed a keen interest in this aspect of the formation of the boys. The Goan boy by nature is either a footballer or a football fan. He encouraged this game very much, receiving much support and collaboration from the late Mr. Wilson Paes, the dedicated football coach of the school for many years. It was also mainly due to his efforts that the game of basketball was introduced in Goa. He was the founder-member and President of the All Goa Basketball Association. In the early years, he took great pride in coaching the school and Oratory teams.

Those who knew Fr. Benedict will remember him as a genial and very friendly person. Yet he could be firm and even uncompromising when solutions to problems had to be found. But, to an individual in trouble, especially if he happened to be his pupil or fellow-teacher, he was always a true friend and guide.

LOVE FOR POOR BOYS

"A Salesian School should be for poor people". (SDB Regulations no. 14)

As Headmaster at Panjim, Fr. Benedict admitted poor and deserving boys in the school. He was the target of much criticism because it was alleged that he was lowering the standard of the school. Stubbornly he adhered to his policy saying that if we salesians do not cater to the poor, we are failing in our God-given mission. He would repeat the words of Don Bosco to his missionaries leaving for Patagonia : "Take special care of the poor and you will win the blessing of God and the good will of men". He encouraged the weekly contributions of the school boys

towards the Poor Boys' Fund. He got many donations from friends to help deserving cases. He even asked his own pastpupils, now working abroad, to come to the assistance of some poor boy in the school.

Above all, he himself lived a poor life. He spent very little on himself. All that was beyond food and clothing was superfluous for him. At his death there was very little in his room. He could truly say with Don Bosco that he died poor. Whatever money came to him was used for the education of his boys.

ZEALOUS VOCATION PROMOTER

"Every salesian is called to pay special attention to apostolic vocations". (SDB Constitutions no. 6)

Don Bosco used to say : "Let us remember that we give a great treasure to the Church when we procure a vocation. It does not matter whether it is for the diocese, or for the missions, or for a religious congregation."

Many young salesians, and not a few candidates of the Salesian Sisters, can boast that they have been guided and encouraged by Fr. Benedict. He often used to say, "so many young people have a vocation but there is no one to help them to bring it to light, to encourage them and guide them."

He never considered it time lost if a young boy or girl came to him for advice. Many of those he guided have attested that they were struck by his personal example as well as by his practical advice. Even from his sick bed, he kept corresponding with his vocation boys and girls, encouraging them to go ahead and assuring them of his prayers and sacrifices.

He would lament the fact that many priests and religious fail

God by their superficial way of life; and this, he said, was one of the principal reasons for a decrease in vocations.

How did Fr. Benedict proceed in his vocation work? He was convinced that a vocation begins in our own institutions. He maintained a register in which he wrote down the names of boys and girls who had expressed the desire to be priests or religious. Already in the first weeks of class, he would distribute to his pupils cyclostyled sheets in which they had to give their bio-data. He would also ask them to underline the profession they felt an inclination towards. Those who mentioned an interest in being a priest, brother or religious, were the ones he would follow carefully. He would even call them for private interviews without attracting the attention of their companions.

Personal contact, he maintained, was the most effective way to procure vocations. At Quepem, he took upon himself to call for reading practice those who were appointed to read in Church. Those who had to deliver sermonettes during the Marian Month were also helped by Father. These were opportunities for him to talk to the boys at a deeper level. A friendly chat often paved the way for the boy who was considering the priesthood. Financial help was never lacking to help a boy reach the priesthood. His many friends and benefactors from abroad and even from Gca itself, contributed generously towards his Vocation Fund. He believed in the words of Don Bosco : "Admit a boy who gives good hope of an ecclesiastical vocation, even though he may lack the means. Spend all you have, seek alms, and if even after that you are in need, do not worry. The Blessed Virgin will come to your assistance in a miraculous way."

On the last evening of his life, he called the Rector to his room and repeatedly told him : "I am offering all my pain and suffering for the sanctification of my confreres and for more vocations". The few moments before his death the confreres around him made him join them in praying for his mother, his dear ones, his confreres and vocations. At the mention of vocations, he nodded his head in approval, and a few moments later, he was no more.

Surely, he will continue praying to the Lord of the harvest to send more labourers. And now his prayer will be more effective.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus plays an important role in the Furtado family. In fact, at his mother's place in Diwar, Piedade, Goa a large size picture of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is venerated. Every Friday noon, the people of the neighbourhood assemble at the house for a Holy Hour. Fr. Benedict also fostered this devotion, and had it propagated wherever he went. He would encourage his vocation boys and girls to have this devotion in their hearts, if they wanted to persevere in their vocation. Like Fr. Joseph Carreno, one of the early pioneers of salesian work in Goa, he too would pray to the Sacred Heart to send many and good labourers to the Salesian Congregation, and to help those already in it to persevere. Was his dying on a Friday a mere coincidence

The Province of Bombay owes Fr. Benedict an enormous debt of gratitude — not so much for what he did, outstanding though his achievements may be — but for what he was, for the lessons he taught us by his style of religious and salesian life. He was a great community man; he made everyone welcome; all felt at ease with him, young and old, priests, religious and lay people. He was simple and straightforward in his dealings; there was no guile or pretence in him. His sufferings borne with patience united him to the Lord and thus by sanctifying himself he sanctified the Province.

Fr. Benedict thanks all those who have helped him during his sojourn on earth, especially those who in his last illness played the role of the good Samaritan. He now plays the role of intercessor.

While we derive inspiration and encouragement from this account of his life, let us not forget to pray for the repose of his soul.

The goodness of God may have rewarded him already, yet we still have the duty in charity to offer our prayers in suffrage for his soul. Through his intercession may the province be blessed with zealous young salesians desirous of working for the poor youth of our land in the Don Bosco way.

Yours affectionately in Don Bosco,

Fr. Loddy Pires s.d.b.

Rector

PROVINCIAL HOUSE,

Matunga, Bombay-400 019.

FOR NECROLOGY

FR. BENEDICT FURTADO

Born : at Bombay, on 2 December 1930

Professed : at Kotagiri, on 24 May 1953

Ordained : at Bombay, on 29 June 1962

Died : at Bombay, on 13 June 1986

The government of India has requested that a number of
will have the duty to carry out their duties in college for
this year. Through the intervention of the province he placed
with a view to the selection of a person for the post
of a member of the Council of the Government.

He has been working in the Government of India
for the last 10 years. He has been working in the
Government of India for the last 10 years.

He has been working in the Government of India
for the last 10 years. He has been working in the
Government of India for the last 10 years.

PROVINCIAL HOUSE
MADRAS, CHENNAI-600 002

He has been working in the Government of India
for the last 10 years. He has been working in the
Government of India for the last 10 years.

FOR RECOGNITION
FOR RECOGNITION

Born : at Chennai on 1 October 1930
Profession : as known on 24 May 1982

Ordained : at Chennai on 20 June 1982
Died : at Chennai on 19 June 1982