

MISSIONARY DAY COMMEMORATION

JUNE 11, 2013

ENTRANCE HYMN: In His time... (Pray sing – Hymn No. 376)

OPENING PRAYER:

God of all, help us to recognize all of our sisters and brothers in the global community. Open our hearts to them that we may live in solidarity with this extended family. Empower us to be Christians not only in word but also in compassionate action in the apostolate. Give us the courage to speak out for truth and justice and to prayerfully and patiently call for transformation. May global solidarity and peace be achieved through the power of compassion, understanding and love in the Missions. Amen

INTRODUCTION:

Walking into the chapel of the Sacred Heart College, Tirupattur, one can find the following phrase “*Caritas Christi urget nos*” that means ‘the love of Christ urges us on’ (2 Cor 5:14). These words of St. Paul have a significant meaning in the missionary life. It is the sole motive of the apostolate in the mission land. For the work is given by the Lord Himself who has called us to love and serve Him and His people; no matter how great or small the work is. May our prayers for the religious men and women in the foreign lands strengthen them in the service of the Lord.

PENITENTIAL RITE:

God of oneness, we ask your mercy for the times when we have found ourselves asking Cain’s question, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” – **Lord Have Mercy.**

Divine master, we ask pardon for the moments when we were fishing for compliments for our petty achievements. – **Christ Have Mercy.**

God of infinite love, we ask your forgiveness for the times when we have loved ourselves more than we have loved our neighbors. – **Lord Have Mercy.**

GOSPEL READING: John 2: 1-11 (the miracle at Cana)

SOUVENIR OF ST. JOHN BOSCO TO THE FIRST MISSIONARIES:

This month we are going to meditate upon the first recommendation of Don Bosco to the missionaries.

“SEEK SOULS AND NOT MONEY, HONOURS OR DIGNITIES.”

SHORT REFLECTION:

Salvation of souls was always uppermost always in the mind of Don Bosco; it was the goal of all his activities, especially in sending missionaries. During the sermon at the farewell mass for the first missionaries Don Bosco quoted a letter from Argentina written by one of his friends. This letter enumerated the avidity of the Catholics of the region to receive the sacraments. On the contrary they had few priests to administer for them. He exhorted his first missionary sons, “search out these brothers... teach them how great is the mercy of God who, for the good of their souls, is sending you to help them find and follow the road that surely

will lead them to eternal salvation.” Moreover, he humbled himself by stating that this act of sending missionaries was just like a tiny grain or a mustard seed. He did not deem it to be an achievement of his new congregation. And thus it is evident that he never intended to look for honour and dignity. We can find similar situation in the miracle at Cana too. Jesus gives importance to the mission given to him by his mother, “they don’t have wine”. Although he had a chance to prove the world that he is the son of God he performed this miracle without the knowledge of the steward who was in charge. This is the lesson that we can take home from our Divine savior – to serve and not to be served. The same message is interpreted in the words of Don Bosco for the missionaries – seek souls and not money, honours or dignities. “Whatever your task, put yourselves into it, as done for the Lord and not for your masters, since you know that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward.” Col 3: 23-24.

Questions for reflection:

- 1) Do I commit myself completely in the mission without waiting for compliments?
- 2) What have I done so far for the salvation of souls in my apostolate?

HYMN: Make me a servant... (Pray sing – 403)

MISSIONARIES FOR IMITATION

Rev. Fr. Egidio Sola

Egidius sola was born on 14 October 1906 to Francesco Sola and Maria Croci, as their eldest son, at Legnano, near Milan. He worked in a factory for some years and joined the Salesian Missionary Aspirantate at Ivrea where he had personal contacts with Bl. Philip Rinaldi. He made his first profession on 14 September 1933. In November of the same year, he landed in India, his beloved mission field. After the philosophical studies at shilling he did his practical training at Tirupattur as assistant of the novices. He went back to shilling for theology and was ordained there on October 26, 1940 by Archbishop Louis Mathias.

As a priest for nearly five decades he spent only in formation houses both of the congregation and the diocese. He worked at Sacred Heart Seminary, Poonamallee as a professor and confessor until the World War II. In 1952 Fr. Egidius began the second phase of his priestly ministry, as director of novices, first in Kotagiri and then at Yercaud. Undoubtedly, Fr. Sola is best remembered for the 18 years of dedicated service as the Novice Master of the province of Madras. His thorough knowledge of Don Bosco and the Salesian way life, his sure grasp of the Catholics doctrine, his staunch attachment to the Church, his unfailing trust in providence, his tender devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary and his deep respect for the human person – all combined to make him an ideal novice master. Fr. Pianazzi, the then provincial of madras said of him “the best novice master in the congregation!” ‘Father Master’ is the affectionate way he has been known ever since, all over Salesian India.

On the feast of Don Bosco 1989, Fr. Sola suffered a severe stroke and was paralyzed. On 7 February he received the last Sacrament at St. Isabel’s hospital and on the following day he breathed his last quietly. His mortal remains were laid to rest at the Salem view, at the Retreat, Yercaud on 9th February.

Fr. Sola was known for his deep spiritual union with the lord in prayer. It is evident in brief but fervent ejaculatory prayers which he kept saying almost continuously. During his journey his worn out breviary with well thumbed prayer cards for his personal devotions

formed an indispensable part of his baggage. Another remarkable devotion is his filial devotion to the Blessed Mother. He would often repeat, “One can never say enough about Mary” and never conclude a sermon or good-night talk without mentioning Our Lady.

Fr. Egidius was known for his tireless work too. Even in his old age, he was not in the habit of taking rest in the afternoon. If he did it at all, it was for a few minutes only. He would start his work before breakfast. As the in charge for ‘propaganda’ he used to keep the letters ready for the typist before he could come. He kept on working at an incredible pace even after laying down office.

The ideal novice master lived his religious life in a very committed way. He showed the ways of observance of constitutions by his own living. He was even obedient scrupulously to his own novices who later became his superiors. Fr. Joseph Puthenkalam, his rector, once remarked, “Father Sola was the most obedient subject I ever had. On the 1st of every month, he was in the rector’s office punctually, with a piece of paper on which the points for manifestation were carefully written.” Being a committed Salesian he always found the religious life with cheerfulness and optimism. He always had a word of encouragement for everyone. We may say that Fr.Sola’s life, even at his old age, in spite of inevitable occasional irritants, was a life of joy, hard work and optimism. Thus he captured the hearts of many Salesians.

Moreover, he is still remembered fondly by many people in Yercaud for his dedicated service for the people of the hill. Even today many people come and pray in front of his tomb and some of the lay staff attend mass on his death anniversary on 8th Feb. May his zeal inspire many souls to work in missions.

INTERCESSIONS:

RESPONSE: Lord, Hear Your People Praying.

- ✓ Lord of hosts, we pray for more labourers for the harvest of souls for the eternal kingdom. May many young people find their vocation to work as missionaries.
- ✓ Heavenly Father, we implore you that we may seek only salvation of the souls in our apostolate following the motto of Don Bosco ‘*Da Mihi Animas Caetera Tolle*’.
- ✓ Revive in us Lord in the same spirit with which we entered the society to work for the poor and abandoned youth that we may not seek honour and dignity in our apostolate and follow Christ radically.
- ✓ We thank you O Lord for giving Fr. Egidius Sola, an ideal salesian to be looked up in our consecrated life. May we too be inspired by his holy example to save our souls by saving the others especially who are entrusted to us.

OUR FATHER...

CONCLUDING PRAYER:

O God, the source of everything that is good, by giving the ardent missionaries you direct us in the path to salvation. As we begin this new academic year let our hearts and minds are focused towards the salvation of souls in our mission. Let us not seek glory and honour by doing little in your vineyard as labourers. Give us the spirit to commit ourselves for salvation of souls and the greater glory of God. We make this prayer through Christ, your son and our Lord, who lives and reigns with your and the Holy Spirit. Amen.