

## **Report of the Funeral programme (March 18, 19 2008) at Miraculous Shrine, Entebbe, Uganda.**

### **March 18, 2008:**

The remains of late Rev. Fr. Joseph K. Bill was taken to the Cathedral Church, Kampala from Miraculous Medal Shrine, Entebbe for public viewing. Thousands of faithful were there waiting for the same. The public were given chance to pay their respect until 2.p.m. The solemn mass presided over by His Grace, Most Rev. Cyprian Kizzito Lwanga, the Archbishop of Kampala started at 2.30 pm. He was assisted by Bishop emeritus of Koima Diocese and the Bishop Christopher Kakooza, the auxiliary Bishop of Kamapal together with many priests. There were hundreds of religious men and women besides thousands of faithful from all walks of life. During the sermons, Archbishop was all praise for his preaching ministry and thanked the superiors of the Vincentian Congregation for sending him to Uganda.

The mass came to an end at 5.30 and the body was brought back to the Miraculous Medal Shrine in a convoy many vehicles. The same carrying the remains of late Fr. Bill reached Entebbe Shrine at 7.30pm. The body was kept in the shrine for public viewing again. Hundreds of people were there throughout the night singing praises to Jesus, many of them were even crying. The relatives of Fr. Bill reached Entebbe by 10.30 in the morning. Even the retreat co-ordinators of Fr. Bill in Europe and other countries reached Entebbe in time.

### **March 19, 2008**

Everything was perfectly set for the funeral service that is scheduled for this day beginning from 2.p.m. The little space that is available in and around the shrine was filled to the maximum with the mourners. Archbishops of Kampala, Gulu, Mbarara and Bishops of Masaka, Bishop emeritus of Kabale Rt. Rev. Robert Gay, the Administrator of Kasana Luwera Diocese Msgr. Matheas and the auxiliary Bishop of Kampala reached in time for the funeral. There were about 35 priests and hundreds of religious men and women besides about three thousand faithful. On the government side, the second deputy prime minister, the finance minister, minister of environment and water, wife of the vice-president, and the Mayor of Entebbe Municipality were present throughout the service. Almost all Vincentians working in our East African Region managed to attend the funeral We gratefully recognize the representatives from Tanzania and Kenya. The whole service including condolence messages, laying of wreaths and the farewell prayers took about three and a half hours. Most Rev. Cyprian Kizzito Lwanga, the Archbishop of Kampala

presided over the Requiem Mass and Rt. Rev. Christopher Kakooza, the auxiliary bishop of Kampala preached on the occasion recognizing the service done by Fr. Bill in spreading the Word of God. The final prayers were led by Rt. Rev. John Battista Kaggwa of Masaka Diocese.

Rev.Fr.Joseph Erambil spoke on behalf of the congregation and Rev. Fr. Thomas Njarakal on behalf of the Province. After the lowering the body into the grave that was prepared inside the shrine, the Vincentians present for the funeral placed lighted candles around the grave of Fr. Bill and prayed for the repose of the soul of Fr. Bill.

Fr. Vincent Rathappillil VC  
(Regional Superior)

## **A TRIBUTE TO LATE REV. FR. JOSEPH K. BILL**

We are so familiar with his simple and down to earth teachings of catholic faith. He often says, " Jesus suffered for us and died on the cross for us. So this love must be repaid. That is why we have decided to follow Jesus Christ." He was so convinced of this in his life that he was working day and night to fulfill the same in his own life. He used to say that God repaired his heart about 45 years back when he had his first heart attack, just to spread the love and forgiveness of Jesus every nook and corner of this world. The Almighty called him back to take rest in His presence after 50 years of sincere and faithful service as a Priest.

Fr. Joseph Kuruppamparambil, Fr. J.K. Bill for short, was born on Feb 23, 1928 as the forth son of Xavier-Anna couples at Thottakam, Vaikom, Kerala, India. He joined the Vincentian Congregation, a Catholic Religious Organization founded in Kerala, South India, made his first profession on 22.05.52, final profession on 05.01.56 and was ordained a priest on October 12, 1958 by His Eminence, late Joseph Cardinal Parekkattil, the then archbishop of Ernakulam Archdiocese.

Fr. Joseph Kuruppamparambil VC joined St. Vincent's minor seminary in 1948. He was one of the 10 seminarians of the first batch. Even before he was admitted in the seminary, while he was in the high school classes, he started a project of spreading anti-Communist literature called INTEC, which indeed was very effective in the long run. In the seminary, a

group of Brothers joined together under the leadership of Bro. Joseph with

the idea of spreading certain devotional practices so as to foster genuine piety among the seminarians especially devotion to Bl. Virgin Mary.

Soon after his Ordination, he involved himself head-long in multifarious activities both spiritual and temporal, such as parish works, and procuratorship of our Generalate. He initiated so many social activities wherever he worked. Total involvement was his characteristic note. Throughout his life he was very optimistic, always cheerful, never depressed, even in very trying circumstances.

He never showed a grim face even in very tough situations he had to encounter several times in life. He was responsible for starting schools under the auspices of our congregation especially English Medium Schools, the type of which was very rare in the state at that time He was never discouraged or lost hope. Fr. Joseph was very adventurous and such a spirit was visible wherever he was appointed and whatever he did. His initiative, imagination, originality, his capacity to captivate hearts and minds, his ever smiling face and every diplomatic step he took, reveal his colorful personality and unique leadership qualities. There are many orphanages and schools for the poor to his credit and initiative. It was not his nature to do things half way. He used to be totally immersed as whatever he did. Dynamism in its most intense form had been always noted in him.

Even when he had been attached to very many offices in each house, he was overly preoccupied and engrossed in preaching Popular Mission retreats and later Charismatic Retreats.

He was in the Novitiate when the first ever popular mission retreat of our congregation was conducted. It was in 1951. He was an active participant in it and settled some adventurous cases that disrupted the unity of families. Soon after his Ordination, he jumped headlong in organizing Popular Missions and conducting effectively various items of the Mission, which were all novel to the generality of the faithful. It was his originality and hard work that added new items and nuances to the customary practices that projected the great new Renewal Programme, which was the Popular Mission. So we can say that he is one of the pioneers of the Popular Mission and to a great extent the one who paved way to its growth and spread of it throughout the length and breadth of the country.

Clarity, effectiveness and practicality marked his preaching always. His commanding personality, his musical trend always arrested the attention of the audience in great numbers. He was always a crowd-puller, not only in India, but all over the world. So many reports of total cure of the personality were ever coming to us every now and then.

Fr. J. K. Bill was one of the flag bearers of the Charismatic Movement back in India. "Go into the entire world and proclaim the Good News to the entire creation" (Mt. 16/15). This is the final mandate to the

disciples of Jesus. He has been straining his every nerve to be very faithful to the same. He has taken this divine command to the core of his being. Needless to say, it is this that moved Fr. J.K. Bill to take the Word of God to every nook and corner of the world sharing the same with millions.

He was effectively diplomatic in his relationship with others. He was always generous to others. He practiced the principle of St. Paul that charity covers a multitude of sins. There are occasions when persons duped him in view of his generosity. He never kept any grudge against anybody. Whenever he met even his bitterest enemies, he welcomed them as close friends smiling and in considerate mood. That is why he used to say, "Unless we forgive from our hearts our heavenly father will not forgive the multitude of our sins. We will have to remain in purgatory until the last bit of our sins is removed. This is the importance of forgiveness in our lives. Do not forget it." We cannot forget his sterling qualities and what he did for the Vincentian Congregation especially for the African Mission and individuals in difficulties, spiritual, mental and material.

It was in 1992 that he came to East African Mission of the Vincentian Congregation with lot of enthusiasm to preach the good news to the people in East Africa. His first attempt in Tanzania transformed many unbelievers into true apostles of Jesus. Very soon news about this zealous Vincentian Missionary spread far and wide in the whole of African Continent. His retreats attracted people in large numbers.

People, irrespective of faith, nationality and color flock to his preaching sessions. Meanwhile, he started getting requests from all over the world to conduct healing services. Consequently, he became an international preacher of great reputation within a short time. Bundles of passports and the retreat schedule he always carried will make one understand that how busy he was as a true messenger of Jesus' love and forgiveness.

With the intention of encouraging people in their spiritual life, he started many prayer homes in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Ireland, Germany, Italy, France, Canada and the US. Regular healing services and retreats are being conducted in these centers in line with the spirit and vision of Rev. Fr. J.K. Bill.

The future generation would remember him as a legendary figure. In spite of his human limitations and failures, he always remained a focus of attention. Clarity of his vision, insight, his meticulous planning, boundless confidence, zeal, practicality, dynamism, leadership qualities perhaps unparalleled his capacity to remain close to all those who came across, his simple life style, his ambition to do things, ordinarily unattainable for the common man. A person who meets him for the first time will definitely get himself engrossed in the mesmeric personality. He was immersed in his preaching ministry so much so he had no time for any other entertainment except sharing the word of God. Hi

simple life style of wearing the priestly habit all throughout his life, whether at home or abroad elicited surprise as well as high respect from his onlookers. He never cared for his personal comforts. Hours and hours he spent for preaching, standing on his leg, causing edema in his feet.

There is no word impossible in his dictionary. This year was his Sacerdotal Golden Jubilee. He could not see 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his Priestly Ordination. A few months before the golden jubilee, he was called by his Heavenly Father. It is only a few days since his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday was celebrated. At a time when it was the least expected drop-scene of his life drama took place and all those who loved him mourn for his unexpected departure to attain his eternal life. May his soul rest in peace.

Fr. Vincent Rathappillil  
(Regional Superior)