

EULOGY - REV. FR. MATHEW EDATHATTEL

Indeed with great pride and joy we all have gathered at the altar of the Lord to bid farewell to Rev. Fr. Mathew Edathattel who slept in the Lord on 02/07/2021 at 12.40 P.M. at Our Lady of Graces Hospital, Sardhana. We thank the Lord today for His amazing grace that moulded a fine and holy priest in the person of Fr. Mathew Edathattel who with his *Charism* could not only bring us closer to God but inspired us to tread the path he walked. It is not that we have no sorrow of the demise of this holy priest with whom we had close association and fellowship but the graceful and prayerful manner he approached death gives us hope to rejoice in the Lord who is the Resurrection and Life. Death becomes painful for a person due to three reasons: 1) attachment to the world; 2) remorse of one's sins and 3) uncertainty of heaven. But in Fr. Mathew's case all these causes were absent. So he gracefully and peacefully walked towards heaven and disappeared from our midst to bring down showers of heavenly blessings on all of us.

God our loving Father has been so gracious enough to grant Fr. Mathew Edathattel a very good health all through his life except for the latter stage of his life the knee problem and of late the problem of constipation. Due to this for the past few years he was visiting the hospital on and off. On the 15th of June he was admitted in Our Lady of Graces Hospital, Sardhana complaining of weakness and constipation. When checked his Haemoglobin was 5 so he was given 3 units of blood. With that Haemoglobin level came up but not his health. His health started deteriorating. All through these days he was praying, sometimes instructing those who came to meet him and kept repeating that he was ready and wanted to go to heaven, etc. Till 1st July evening he was very conscious and was speaking. However, on July 02 from 2 A.M. onwards he became speechless and unconscious. I was informed in the morning and I reached at 8.00 A.M. We were all around him to witness as he was slowly and peacefully bidding farewell to all of us. It was a very peaceful death.

Fr. Mathew Edathattel was born on January 21, 1929 in Manathoor, Pizhaku in Kottayam District of Kerala, as the eldest son to Mr. Iype (Joseph) and Mrs. Elizabeth. He had 4 brothers and one sister. He joined St. John's Minor Seminary, Sardhana in 1953 for the Archdiocese of Agra and when the Diocese of Meerut was bifurcated in 1956 he opted for Meerut. He did both Philosophy and Theology in St. Joseph's Seminary, Allahabad. On January 01, 1961 he was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Meerut by His Grace Most Rev. Joseph Bartholomew Evangelisti OFM Cap, the first Bishop of Meerut Diocese. His first appointment was in St. Joseph's Cathedral Parish, Meerut as Assistant Priest. After 5 years of his service there he was appointed as Parish Priest in Bhikanpur only for three months. From there he was sent to Rampur as a substitute for eight months. From there

he was transferred to Ghaziabad as Parish Priest and he was there for only 9 months. In 1967 he was appointed as the diocesan bursar in Bishop's House where he held the office for ten years. After this he was appointed as the Parish Priest of St. Joseph's Cathedral Parish in 1977. In 1982 he was transferred to Dehradun as Parish Priest where he served for five years. In 1987 at the request of the Regional Bishops he served as the Spiritual Director to the Seminarians in St. Joseph's Seminary, Allahabad for two years. From 1989 to 1995 he rendered his valuable service in Sardhana as Administrator and Rector in St. John's Minor Seminary. Then he was appointed a Parish Priest of St. Mary's Church, Clement Town till 2001. Then for a year he took up Ashram life under the guidance of Fr. Thomas Kochumattom CMI at Jaiharikal Ashram in Bijnor Diocese. After this experience he began to keep a beard and practiced vegetarianism. After his Ashram experience he was appointed Parish Priest in St. Theresa's Church, Modinagar in 2002. After serving for three years he was appointed as Chaplain of St. John's Medical College, Bangalore at the request of the Director Fr. Thomas Kalam CMI. After rendering his remarkable service for three years he began his retired life. But he was active and he chose to be with Fr. Alban Mendonca in helping in the Pastoral ministry in St. Paul's Church, Vikasnagar from 2005. In the year 2010 I requested him to come to St. John's Seminary, Sardhana as the Spiritual Director of the young seminarians and he was there till his last breath. Besides being in different parishes he was the Vicar General of the diocese for eleven years and ten years as the bursar of the Diocese. He was also diocesan Consultor for many terms besides being director of Propagation of Faith and director of Legion of Mary.

I just want to quote from his 'Will' a few extracts not only to know the person of Fr. Mathew but to inspire our minds and hearts:

- "True I am a Priest of God, '*Alter Christus*' but it does not mean that I deserve any worldly greatness and importance, but of course, Priesthood has great spiritual greatness and splendour, unparalleled to anything in the world. Therefore I request the bishop to allow me to have the same kind of ordinary treatment which any common man can afford to get. If and when I get sick and need treatment it should be in any hospital within the area of Meerut Diocese."
- "More importantly we, the priests and religious have renounced the world and the things of the world; then why should our dead bodies occupy the land in the cemetery permanently? God has given us the earth only to use it without any attachment to it as a means to reach our destination, which is heaven, like a ship that uses the waters of the sea to reach its destination, the harbour."

Fr. Mathew's life was very inspiring to all of us and it will continue to inspire us so it is worth mentioning. I personally believe that he grew gracefully old ascending heavenward with great faith and confidence. His life and the spirituality he practiced was simple and yet beautiful. He believed that he was called by the Lord to imitate him. So he tried his best to do so. In the process of imitating Christ he learned how to renounce himself - a spirituality of renunciation. Though he possessed wealth he never used it for himself and for his comforts rather he found joy in helping others with his wealth. Like Zacchaeus Fr. Mathew expressed his desire to make use of part of his property for the works of charity. He believed that he should not possess here on earth even a permanent tomb for himself because for him earth belongs to the living not for the dead. The body of man is created from earth and it should vanish here but the soul is from eternity and it belongs to God. I believe his meekness and the virtue of humility attracted all of us towards him. He had time for all of us. As a good spiritual director he prayerfully and patiently listened to all of us and gave his advice and guidance. He was always available for us as a minister of reconciliation. Through his compassionate approach he could bring forgiveness, solace and comfort to all the penitents. His prayer life was also something beautiful and inspiring. He was committed to sit before the Lord and found joy in it. As a good pastor he always interceded for his people so he wrote boldly that I would shower heavenly blessings when I will be with my Lord in heaven. So like that of St. Paul Fr. Mathew could say it with confidence, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim 4:7). As a faithful and obedient and humane priest Fr. Mathew inspires not only the Presbyterium of ours but all the priests, religious and faithful who came in touch with him.

+Francis Kalist
Bishop of Meerut