



MSGR V. MARIADASAN: A SILENT RELIGIOUS GURU OF BASIC CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

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ABSTRACT

The personalities who involved in the activities of church are the beacon of light for Anbiyam (Basic Christian Communities) Movement in Kanyakumari District. Most of the other lay people who worked for Anbiyam were left unnoticed by the Church authorities. They offer not only an insight into their personal life, but also inspire the Anbiyam leaders for the growth and development of Anbiyam Movement. On the whole the Diocesan mechanism was motivated to effectively participate in the Anbiyam projects drafted by The Commission of Anbiyam based on the information, suggestions and human resources. But few personalities attained their dignity and came forward to the fullness of Anbiyam life. They paved the way for the emergence of new forms of community namely Anbiyam1. In this paper an attempt has been made to limelight the services of Fr. Mariadasan to Anbiyam Movement.

KEYWORDS: MSGR V., Religious Guru, Christian Community.

INTRODUCTION:

Msgr. V. Mariadasan, the Vicar General of Kottar diocese, (2005-2010) carries forward the policies of his predecessors. Bishop Leon A. Tharmaraj appointed him as his Vicar General. After his sudden demise, he is continuing his service for Bishop Peter Remigius. In his welcoming message, Bishop Leon A. Tharmaraj says, "I am happy to inform you that I have appointed Fr. V. Mariadasan as the new Vicar General of our diocese with effect from Sunday, 29 May 2005 at 5.00 p.m. Qualified in sacred science and having commendable qualities of mind and heart, he is called to assist the Bishop in the governance of the whole diocese. I extend a hearty welcome to Fr. V. Mariadasan".²

Fr. Mariadasan was born on 03-04-1942 at Ritapuram, near Colachel Harbour in Kanyakumari district to the pious parents Mr. V. Varuval and Maria Chellammal and was baptized on 9th April 1942 in Matravilai. He had his primary education in Providence Primary School at Ritapuram, and High School education in St Xavier's College High School, Palayamkottai. With the blessings of his parents and the spiritual direction of Fr. Milord, he was sent to St. Aloysius Minor Seminary, Nagercoil, in 1958 for priesthood³. After his Philosophical (1960-1963) and Theological (1963-1967) studies, he was ordained priest at St. Xavier's Cathedral Church, Kottar, by His Excellency, the Bishop Agnisamy on 13th March 1967. After he became priest, he underwent on-going formations for Doctorate study in Biblical Theology in Louvain University, Language Course in Germany and A Short Archeology Course in Israel. He is the master in Biblical theology, languages of English, French and German and music instruments.⁴

Fr. V. Mariadasan's contributions to the Catholic Church as one of the architects of Tamilnadu Church are chiefly the following⁵: **Assistant Parish Priest at Trituvapuram 1967-1968:** He reflected himself as a simple man and prepared the people for the meaningful celebration of sacraments.

Professor and Editor: He taught Catechism, Bible, Liturgy and Theology for Catechists who are building up the Small Christian communities in Tamilnadu. At the same time he acted as the Editor of Thozhan, Monthly Review on Catechetical, Biblical and Liturgy. On the whole he rendered his service at TNBCLC and LUMEN Institute, Tindivanam from 1969 to 1983.

First Director, St. Paul s' Bible Institute at Poonamallee 1983-1987: He imparted Biblical knowledge to the lay leaders and ministers who now serve in the Anbiyamgal in various dioceses of Tamilnadu. **General Secretary for Tamilnadu Bible Commission** 1984-1987: He published Bible, Children's Bible and Adult's Bible and introduced VBS and its techniques for the Tamilnadu Catholic Church and he was appointed as Convener for Ecumenical Bible Translation and brought out common Bible for all Christian denominations.⁶

Director of TNBCLC, Tndivanam 1987-2002: He established Catechetical Training Centre and created 510 Trained Catechists who now commit themselves to the growth and development of Anbiyamgal in Tamilnadu. In view of achieving Center's mission, he produced publications like Sunday Catechetic Books, Biblical Reflections, organized seminars like Catechism, liturgy and Bible, engaged in audio-visual activities, did social service and undertook activities that would promote Biblical, Catechetical and Liturgical knowledge. During the years 1999-2001, "lady Catechists" in Tamilnadu Catholic Church was introduced by his efforts with the aim of providing gender equality in the Church.⁷

President of Friends of Kottar: As a silent religious Guru, Fr. V. Mariadasan who came to know the plight of the rural youth of Vilavancode and Kalkulam taluks through the pastoral experience of Fr. Lucas took steps to help the students for higher education from 1980.

Parish Priest at Vizhinthayampalam: Fr. V. Mariadasan after his end of his term over from TNBCLC was appointed as the parish priest to Vizhinthayampalam in 2003. He worked hard for finishing the construction work of the Church building from 2003 to 2005. He was a good guide, teacher and social worker for the enlistment of the parish⁸.

The parishioners say, "The presence of Fr. Mariadasan as Guru is the embodiment of the parish life". His main concern is to be in solidarity with all people, available to all, and above all, to lead them to deeper awareness of God and society in Anbiyamgal, and to contribute to the emergence of a new society of justice and equality, freedom and peace in the parish. Meaningful Anbiyam Sunday celebrations were conducted in his parish and sub-stations⁹.

Vicar General from 2005: Vicar General Appointment came to Fr. Mariadasan when he was parish priest in Vizhinthayampalam. In the Year 2006, the Churches in Tamilnadu were invited to observe the 'Year of God's Word'. As the Vicar General in the Conferences of Anbiyam held on 3 June 2006 at Trituvapuram, he advised the people to live in the light of the Bible and to get God's experience by acquiring a deep knowledge of the Bible. So he suggested the Anbiyam leaders to give a gift of the Bible to all in the parishes. He also reflected that Anbiyamgal are the basic structures for proper reading, understanding and living by the Word of God. He quoted the sayings of Pope John Paul II that "BCCs are the real ground for evangelization. This is the place where one can express the love of Jesus, reconcile estrangement, and lead a peaceful life beyond caste and creed. It uplifted the downtrodden and led an exemplary life of sharing".¹⁰ After the death of Bishop Leon Tharmaraj, Msgr. V. Mariadasan was unanimously elected as the **Diocesan Administrator** on 16-01-2007. Msgr. V. Mariadasan guided the diocese so effectively and constructively till the Canonical possession of Bishop Peter Remigius held on 30-06-2007. While he was in diocesan administrative office, he issued Circulars regarding 'Holy Childhood', 'International Women's Day', 'May Day', 'Vocation Sunday' and 'Education Day'. All these 'days' are much enriched by the observance of Anbiyamgal which has received a profound renewal.

The present Bishop Peter Remigius announced in his installation ceremony held on 30 June, 2007 at Bishop's House campus that Msgr. V. Mariadasan was reappointed as his Vicar General. Another instance of great significance in his career of diocesan Vicar General needs mention here. With the initiative of Fr. V. Mariadasan, an alternative of pension scheme provided to Kottar diocesan retired catechists who had committed their service to the formation of Anbiyamgal since 1985 taught the value of catechists' humanitarian life to the society, and still glitter as the light to the gentiles.

Fr. V. Mariadasan's grassroots experience in the parish Vilunthayampalam, Vicar General activities in the diocese of Kottar, Church contributions in TNBCLC Tindivanam and involvement in creating vocation and mission of Catechists in Tamilnadu sharpened his vision and now give guidance to many to continue to work in the Anbiyam Movement. The youth who received higher education support from Fr. V.Mariadasan have high praise for his endeavour and Anbiyam movement honoured his service as the crown of all. He deserves special mention and better and greater appreciation as a silent religious Guru.

END NOTES

1. Gilbert de Lima, *Evangelization in India through Basic Communities*, Mumbai, 1996, p. 24. G. Daneels, *Le Phenomene Communautaire*, in *RTL 7* (1976), 329-336.
2. Pope Paul VI's Church document based on BCC namely *Evangelii nuntiandi* published in 1975.
3. Gilbert de Lima, *Op. Cit.*, p.37.
4. Paul Richard Joseph, *From the Venadu Roots*, Kuzhithurai, 2007, p.79.
5. KNL, news letter date: 07.05.2007
6. Arockiasamy. *The Christian Life and Ministry in the Diocese of Kottar*, No. 3, Bishops House, Nagercoil, 1986, p.2.
7. *Ibid.*
8. Thozhlan, *Special issue 1992*, p.40. Interview with Silver Jubilee Priestly ordination of Fr. V. Mariadasan, Director of TNBCLC, Tindivanam.
9. *TNBCLC Hand Book*, Tindivanam, 2004-05, pp.2-10.
10. *Anbiyam Report 2006*, Theda, I Kuzhithurai, p. 40.