

The Compassionate Pastor

December 2022

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**62nd Death Anniversary of
Servant of God**

**Raymond Francis Camillus Mascarenhas
St Sebastian Church, Bendur, Mangalore
23.12.2022**



Prayer for the Beatification of the Servant of God Raymond Mascarenhas

God our loving Father, we thank you for choosing your servant Raymond to be your faithful priest and the Founder of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Little Flower of Bethany. His ardent devotion to the Eucharist, love for the Mother Church, zeal for the proclamation of the Gospel and his compassionate love especially for the poor have borne abundant fruit. Like him may we too in union with Mary, our Mother, become bearers of the Good News.

We humbly implore you Father to grant us this special request through the intercession of your beloved servant Raymond... (mention your request).

Deign o Lord, to grant your beloved servant the honours of the altar for your greater glory and the spreading of the Gospel. Amen.

Glory be...

Imprimatur

Most Rev. A.P. D'Souza
Bishop of Mangalore

Mangalore
16.06.2008

N.B. Please report any favours or miracles received through the intercession of the Servant of God Raymond Mascarenhas to:

**The Postulator, C/o Office of the Cause of Beatification and Canonization
of the Servant of God Raymond Mascarenhas, Bethany Convent
Bendur, Mangalore D.K. 575002.**

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THE COMPASSIONATE PASTOR

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EDITORIAL



In the early hours of 23 December 1960 Mgr Raymond was breathing hard signalling his end. He appeared peaceful and ready to meet his Creator. The Bethany Sisters were at his bedside praying and Mgr Marian Castelino his close friend was making the prayer for the dying and anoint him. Fortified by the sacraments and prayers, the devout priest gave a deep sigh and stopped breathing at 4.15 am and surrendered his soul in the hands of his Maker. A priest of God, a saintly man, a zealous apostle of Christ flew to heaven to receive his reward, leaving behind a great legacy to live on.

God-centeredness was the hallmark of Mgr Raymond's life; the contemplation of the mystery of the Incarnation was his forte. When the Mother Church was preparing to celebrate Christmas, the feast of the mystery of the Incarnation - God becoming flesh - Mgr Raymond was called to his eternal home, to be with God Incarnate, face to face. In fact, his whole life was a preparation for this sublime moment. While on earth, the indwelling Spirit led him to the Father and he took delight in God more than in anything else. At this juncture, one can recall the words of St John of the Cross who said, "A spiritually advanced person looks for his Beloved in all things. In all his thoughts, he turns immediately to the Beloved; when eating, sleeping, keeping vigil or doing anything else, he centres all his care on the Beloved." Rev Fr G. Castelino a diocesan priest who knew Mgr Raymond well had to say something similar in 1976, "One could gather from one's connections, that he was a man of God, moved by supernatural values...His own needs were last in the list." Truly, this says a great deal.

On the occasion of the fourth centenary of the death of St Francis de Sales, Pope Francis through his apostolic letter *Totum Amoris Est* (28 December 2022) summarizes the spiritual legacy left by the saint as 'Everything pertains to Love'. "In Holy Church, everything pertains to love, lives in love, is done for love and comes from love" is what the great saint summed up in the Preface to the Treatise on the Love of God. It is learnt that this Treatise on the

Love of God was the fruit of his contemplation of the life of the Incarnate Son. On 26 December, De Sales spoke of the Christmas mystery: "Do you see the baby Jesus in the crib? He accepts all the discomforts of that season, the bitter cold and everything that the Father lets happen to him. He does not refuse the small consolations that his Mother gives him... So too, we ourselves should neither desire nor refuse anything, but accept all that God sends us, the bitter cold and the discomforts of the season." This is 'Kenosis', spirit of self-emptying and solidarity of God with the wounded/sinful humanity, a mystery of profound depth which Mgr Raymond contemplated often. He was never tired of meditating over and over again on this mystery of LOVE, to the extent of even shedding tears of joy and gratitude.

Compassion means full immersion in the condition of being human. True compassion asks us to go where it hurts, to enter into places of pain, to share in brokenness, fear, confusion, and anguish. Compassion challenges us to cry out with those in misery, to mourn with those who are lonely, to weep with those in tears. Compassion requires us to be weak with the weak, vulnerable with the vulnerable, and powerless with the powerless. It is very significant that the people in question are especially the poor, those without means of subsistence, those deprived of their freedom, the blind who cannot see the beauty of creation, those living with broken hearts, or suffering from social injustice. It is especially for these that the Messiah becomes a clear sign of God, a sign of the Father, a sign of love as Pope St John Paul II puts it in *Dives in Misericordia*.

Having grasped the meaning of compassion in action, Mgr Raymond moved to the periphery and manifested self-transcending service, service with unconditional love. He dared to take risks, risks on behalf of the poor and the marginalized. He was convinced that taking risks was part of being compassionate, actualizing the words of Martin Luther King Jr, "The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy."

Today we take pride in our religious and cultural values, such as love of silence and contemplation, simplicity, harmony, detachment, non-violence, the spirit of hard work, discipline, frugal

living, the thirst for learning and philosophical enquiry. We esteem the values of respect for life, compassion for all beings, closeness to nature, filial piety towards parents, elders and ancestors, and a highly developed sense of community. We hold the family to be a vital source of strength, a closely knit community with a powerful sense of solidarity. We uphold the spirit of religious tolerance and peaceful co-existence (cf. Ecclesia in Asia No 6). However, in the troubled context of today, we are still far from the ideal – of living as Jesus lived, of walking as Jesus walked, of daring to do what Jesus did, as exemplified to some extent by Mgr Raymond.

Through his article 'Formation of Conscience in the Light of the Exhortations Given by Mgr RFC Mascarenhas' Rev Fr Dr Leo Lasrado highlights the importance of forming one's conscience at the wake of the conflict of values and ethics in the society today. He focuses on the necessity of being God-oriented with a pure desire of doing good and not harm to the other. Mr Clarence Machado sees from a lay man's perspective Mgr RFC Mascarenhas as an angel mercy and kindness who established the Society of St Vincent de Paul in St Sebastian Church - Bendur, and cultivated a sense of fraternity where he served long for 17 years. Rev Fr Dr Godwin Veigas SVD enumerates through examples the profound faith and extensive vision of the Servant of God RFC Mascarenhas that takes him to unbeaten paths and makes him immortal. He beckons the readers to emulate the example of Mgr Raymond, a beacon of faith. Rev Sr Dr Shalet Mendonca lauds RFC Mascarenhas as the shepherd with the 'smell of the sheep', a pastor who laughed and cried with his people; in a word, a pastor grounded in the situation of his flock. I pray that their insights help us in our pursuit of holiness, in making our lives embodiments of compassion and grace.

Sr Mariette BS
Chief Editor



THE FORMATION OF CONSCIENCE IN THE LIGHT OF THE EXHORTATIONS GIVEN BY SERVANT OF GOD RFC MASCARENHAS

Rev Fr Dr Leo Lasrado

1. Introduction

The discussion on conscience and its formation is never old and ever new. So much is spoken about it already and yet it appears that much more can be still said and written. In a time of technological revolution, when mass media, electronic communication, social networking, internet has become an integral part of human life, at a juncture where man has delegated a great deal of his decision making to Artificial Intelligence (AI), Robots and Humanoids, at a period when man is replaced by machines, the question of the understanding of conscience and its formation is a challenge and at the same time, an exigency. There is an effort to create machines who can think like human beings, who can act like human beings, who can speak like human beings. However, the question remains whether the scientists will succeed to create a human machine which can feel, which has consciousness and more importantly a being with conscience- with a moral capacity of right and wrong. Amidst all these advances, the questions that disturb us are: Is there a moral decadence today? Do subjectivity and individualism dominate in our times? Has it affected the realm of formation of the seminarians and religious as well? Do our Christian lives in general and in particular of the priests and religious still inspire and reflect values, virtues and a genuine desire to do what is right?

Years back Mgr RFC Mascarenhas had taken the above questions seriously and given importance to the formation of conscience of the Sisters of Bethany, through his conferences and exhortations. The purpose of this article is to revisit some of the important aspects of his teachings, on the above mentioned subject and see it in the light of Moral Theology and in particular, the teachings of the Church. My wish is that this article will help us to pause for a while and start an interior journey in a world which otherwise appears to be restless.

2. What is Conscience?

Conscience= *Cum* (together) and *Scientia, Scire* (to know). In Greek it is known as Synderesis (*Syneidesis*). Josef Fuchs defines conscience as a place in which the human person is illuminated by a light that comes, not from one's own reason, but from the wisdom of God.¹ The Vatican Council II, in its Pastoral Constitution of the Church *Gaudium et spes* explains conscience in very many different ways. It says that conscience is 'a law deep within', 'a voice calling man to love and to do what is good and to avoid evil', 'a law in his heart inscribed by God', 'man's most secret core and his sanctuary', and 'voice of God'.² Cardinal Newman outlined and focused on truly interesting facts of conscience, above all its religious and moral dimension saying that conscience is the Vicar of Christ, a Prophet, and a Monarch.³

Falling in line with the above definitions, Mgr RFC Mascarenhas refers to conscience as 'heart of man'.⁴ His references to conscience are mostly in the context of examination of conscience which is an integral part of the formation and life of a Religious Sister. Conscience as 'heart of man' is basically the Old Testament idea, where the word 'conscience' was not yet in use. It was only the Greek world that introduced the word 'conscience'.

3. The Duty to Form One's Conscience

The Catechism of the Catholic Church in nos 1783 and 1784 enumerates the need of the formation of the conscience. The education of conscience is indispensable for human beings who are subjected to negative influences and tempted by sin.⁵ Mgr RFC Mascarenhas in several of his discourses warns the sisters the dangers of sin and negative influence on the soul and purity of heart and hence the need of formation of the conscience. In a world where

¹ J. Fuchs, *Moral Demands and Personal Obligations*, Georgetown university Press, Washington D.C. (1993), p.157.

² *Gaudium et spes* The Pastoral Constitution, in Austin Flannery ed. Vatican Council II, St Pauls, New Delhi (2001). Hereafter GS.

³ J. H. Newman, "Letter to the Duke of Norfolk," in *Certain Difficulties Felt by Anglicans in Catholic Teaching* II, Longman Green, London (1885), p. 248.

⁴ Sr M Bertha BS ed., *From the Lips of the Founder*, Bethany Publications, Bendur (2018), p.23.

⁵ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, TPI New Delhi (1996), n.1783. Hereafter CCC.

there is laxity and gross negligence on the matters of the soul and virtuous life, the exhortation of Mgr is a clarion call.

The education of the conscience is a lifelong task.⁶ Accordingly Mgr, in almost all of his discourses urges for a change of life turning away from sin and selfishness. Whether you are young or old, perpetually professed or a novice, learned or otherwise, the responsibility to form one's conscience is an inalienable duty.

4. The Means of Forming One's Conscience

The formation of conscience does not take place automatically. A positive, conscious, responsible effort is a must. The CCC in no 1785 says, "In the formation of the conscience the Word of God is the light for our path, we must assimilate it in prayer and put it into practice. We must also examine our conscience before the Lord's Cross. We are assisted by the gifts of the Holy Spirit, aided by the witness or advice of others and guided by the authoritative teaching of the Church."⁷

Based on the above number of CCC, we can underline six tools through which one can form one's conscience. They are the Word of God, Prayer, Examination of Conscience, Assistance of the Holy Spirit, Witness or advice of others and the Authoritative teaching of the Church. Among these we will highlight only those which Mgr underlined in his discourses as important.

4.1 The Word of God

The first means that we need in order to form our conscience is the Word of God. God's word is a light for our path. As the letter to the Hebrews says, "Indeed the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart."⁸ Therefore the Word of God becomes the foundational means of formation. Monsignor himself was the champion of the Word of God in terms of making it available to the people in a language that they could understand, through his homilies and preaching especially to the Sisters of Bethany and to his

⁶ CCC 1784.

⁷ *Ibid.* 1785.

⁸ Heb 4:12

parishioners. In a world where there is a tendency more than ever to relativize each and every value, in a time where people think that there is more grey than black and white, the Word of God and its reading, understanding, and a sincere effort to live it, remains and will remain the primary means of forming a 'true conscience'. To know what is the right course of action, to realise Jesus' intention, to think like Jesus in all that we do, and to understand the Christian values, familiarity with the Word of God is inevitable. It is St Jerome who said, "Ignorance of the scriptures is ignorance of Christ."⁹ Accordingly, if one does not know the Word of God, Christ, it is difficult to say that such a person may know how to act in a 'Christian way'. An honest person will always look to deepen his relationship with the Word of God.

4.2 Prayer

The second coordinate of this effort is prayer, which is a privileged path in the education of Christian conscience. This does not mean that in prayer a Christian gets a readymade package of answers for his problems as complex as they are in our present times. Prayer emerges as a formative path of the Christian's moral dependence on God. He who prays makes himself available to, surrender to, and look closer at the presence of Jesus' intentionality in him. Mgr Raymond himself was a man of prayer and deep spirituality. He used to spend considerable amount of time praying. Prayer gave him strength to carry out the tasks that were demanded of him and ordained to him. He was such a powerful example of a person having personal intimacy with the Lord that he could authentically demand the same of the sisters and the lay faithful. For Monsignor, prayer included daily prayers, meditation, daily Mass and reception of communion, annual retreat and personal moments of prayer. He would repeatedly urge the sisters to take all these spiritual exercises seriously, for he knew that there lay the tools of preparing sincere and committed religious.

⁹ St Jerome, "Prologue of the Commentaries of St Jerome on the Prophet Isaiah" in *The Divine Office Vol III*, 30th September, Collins, London (2006).

4.3 Examination of Conscience

A third factor in the formation of the conscience is 'the examination of conscience'. As the popular saying goes 'a life without reflection is not worth living' so, a life of a Christian which does not have an examination of one's conscience is like a rudderless ship, not knowing where it is going. Letting only other human faculties to take control of one's life and not heeding to the voice of conscience through daily examination, is not the wisest way to live a religious or Christian life. It's in the examination of conscience that the so called 'consequent conscience' speaks to the person either giving one internal joy or remorse. Joy if one has done well, remorse or guilt if one has failed to do well.¹⁰ Such an exercise also prompts one to always go one step higher morally and then the so called 'antecedent conscience' places before the person the right course of action that has to be chosen for the near future. Therefore, the spiritual exercise of examination of conscience is an indispensable task in the formation of conscience and an honest person will never take the risk of skipping it at any time of his life. Monsignor had rightly understood the indispensability of such an important spiritual endeavour that he in almost all of his spiritual discourses urges the sisters to take up this powerful weapon of evaluating the conscience daily, before one could go to bed. He says that there would be no improvement in one's life without examination of conscience.¹¹ According to RFC, a true examination of conscience would lead a person to go for confession, because sin is a great obstacle to purity of conscience.¹² The sacrament of confession for him is a means of obtaining God's grace to avoid sin. He considered it to be the best remedy to avoid faults and imperfections. If examination of conscience was to be done daily, confession according to him should be at least once a week. Examination and confession would make one aware of one's faults.¹³ These two exercises would help a person to acquire purity of heart, avoid venial sins and form a good conscience.¹⁴

¹⁰ C.E. Curran, "Conscience in the Light of the Catholic Moral Tradition," in C.E. Curran ed., *Conscience*, Paulist Press, New Jersey (2004), pp.18-19.

¹¹ Sr M Bertha BS, *From the Lips of the Founder*, p.23.

¹² Ibid p.160.

¹³ Ibid p.149.

¹⁴ Ibid p.77.

5. Conclusion

Conscience is the sheep dog of moral life. The sheep dog will be dormant when there are no dangers. But when it perceives the impending threats it gets into action. Conscience too like the sheep dog has a presence almost impalpable, lying still and silently in our heart, in our inner self. But when a person is solicited by an external issue that can possibly compromise his personal dignity, moral conscience stirs, as if warned, to discern the best possible line of conduct in that situation. In other words, moral conscience is not an academic exercise but rather the condition of possibility that turns us into moral agents capable of acting. RFC always wanted his sisters to be alert, agile, and upright in their conscience by forming them well. All his exhortations and teachings go to show that we had a saintly soul and an honest conscience in the person of the Servant of God RFC Mascarenhas.

Post Covid world appears to be much different from what it was before, especially in the way people look at life and matters of the Spirit/Soul. I have heard people saying that many have given up going to church, the attendance of the faithful for spiritual matters has come down. The youth are going away from faith and from God. The number of vocations both to priesthood and religious life has come down drastically even in those areas where there used to be plenty. Therefore, the task of forming the conscience of the people has become all the more important. Man's quest to know what is right has to be duly supported and fostered by the ones who have the responsibility of the care of the souls. If our pastoral and spiritual ministry has not been effective, we need to rethink of our strategies. Post Covid time should be one of informing and forming the sincere consciences, especially those of the young and vulnerable. RFC Mascarenhas not only is an inspiration for us but also a role model for the same.

SOCIETY OF ST VINCENT DE PAUL (SSVP) AND THE SERVANT OF GOD MGR RAYMOND F C MASCARENHAS

Mr Clarence Machado, President, SSVP Bendur

The name of the Servant of God Raymond FC Mascarenhas, the pioneering parish priest of the Bendur Parish remains synonymous with the Society of St Vincent de Paul of Bendur. This is because it was under his patronage and blessings, the SSVP Society was founded by Louis Mascarenhas on 26 January 1926 together with Alex Pais, William Xavier Sequeira, Francis Tauro and A V Tauro in Bendur. The Bendur Conference of the SSVP is the first one to be set up in the combined dioceses of Mangalore and Udupi.

It is therefore a matter of great joy for the members of SSVP Bendur that Mgr Raymond Mascarenhas is declared the Servant of God and that his claims to sainthood are being pursued at the Sacred Congregation for the Causes of Saints in Rome. He is the first Servant of God in the Konkani speaking belt of the coastal Karnataka region which includes the dioceses of Mangalore and Udupi. Fr Raymond Mascarenhas founded the Congregation of the "Sisters of the Little Flower of Bethany" on 16 July 1921 at Bendur, Mangalore. As a great legacy to Konkani speaking Catholics everywhere Mgr Raymond has left behind a legacy by translating in 1949 the 4 Gospels into Konkani. In 1952 he translated the New Testament into Konkani. The vast majority of the Konkani speaking Christians could now read and understand the Gospel and the New Testament in their own language. This also drew the attention and appreciation of the Holy See. Pope Pius XII conferred on him the title of the Domestic Prelate on 20 June 1955 in view of his unceasing and valiant contribution to the Church in the field of education. Fr Raymond Mascarenhas served as parish priest of Bendur from 1914 to 1931. He was appointed Vicar General of Mangalore Diocese on 1 August 1931 by Bishop V R Fernandes and moved to the Bishop's House at Kodialbail, Mangalore.

Internationally the Society of St Vincent de Paul was founded in Paris in 1833 by a group of youngsters under the leadership of a

brilliant lawyer Antonia Fredrick Ozanam, who was just 20 years old. It soon spread to other countries. Today it is operating in 151 countries and has over 9,50,000 members. Frederick Ozanam died in 1853 at the age of 40. He was beatified by Pope John Paul II on August 1997 and now is referred to as Blessed.

Founding of the St Vincent de Paul Conference at Bendur:

In the year 1914 at the age of 39, Fr Raymond Mascarenhas was appointed parish priest of the newly constituted Bendur parish and with him began the steady journey of Bendur as a parish. A number of associations and institutions sprouted under his leadership. The founding of the St Vincent de Paul Society was one such. The Bendur parish Church dedicated to St Sebastian was built by Fr Raymond Mascarenhas with the support of the parishioners and donors and was blessed and inaugurated by Bishop Valerian D'Souza on 3 January in 1931.

During those years a young man Louis Mascarenhas from Bendur was nursing a dream to work selflessly for the poor and the helpless without seeking any publicity. It was at this time that Alex Pinto an advocate from Bombay and also a Vincentian came to Mangalore and met his good friend Louis. What transpired between them was an exchange of ideas. After hearing from Louis his plans and intentions, Alex suggested to him that the Society of St Vincent de Paul be started in Mangalore. Louis Mascarenhas was impressed by the rules and regulations of the Society. He felt it was the right answer to the many questions he had in his mind to help the poor.

Without losing any time Alexander and Louis met Fr Raymond Mascarenhas. He openly supported this idea and assured every help and support from his side. Alex and Louis were joined by three more aspirants nephew of Louis William Sequeira, Francis Tauro and his brother A.V. Tauro.

Fr Raymond Mascarenhas becomes the first Spiritual Director of SSVP: At a meeting convened on 10 January 1926, where Louis Mascarenhas and his friends were present with Fr Raymond Mascarenhas the die was cast. Fr Raymond gave them his blessings and the Society of St Vincent de Paul became a reality. On the same day Louis Mascarenhas convened a meeting of his

Vincentian brothers and sent an application to the Council General in Paris to get the affiliation also called the 'aggregation.' This was received on 26 March 1926. Thus was started, the first conference of the Society of St Vincent de Paul in the undivided diocese of Mangalore. The first Parish Priest of Bendur Fr Raymond Mascarenhas became its first Spiritual Director. Like a true Vincentian he too lived the true Christian sense of poverty with the detachment of self from possessions and all comforts. A series of positive initiatives taken by him both spiritual and material helped the Society of St Vincent de Paul to take firm roots at Bendur and spread to other parishes in the diocese.

The Vincentian Spirituality: The vocation of Vincentians centres round two main basic principles: 1) Continuing prayer and 2) Meeting Christ through the poor. The spiritual mission of the Society is to continue the mission of Jesus Christ. The Society sees in the life of Jesus, compassion, simplicity, gentleness and concern for all people especially the deprived in the society. Prayer is essential to being a Vincentian. Coming closer to God is the first objective of our Society. Encountering Christ in the poor is the essence of Vincentian Spirituality. St Vincent tells us to see Christ in the poor and the suffering in such a way that the poor become our masters and we, their servants. Vincentian Spirituality centres around this concept. Jesus said, "Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did it for me." Jesus showed this by a stunning example when he bent down and washed the feet of his disciples.

In the persons of the poor we serve Jesus Christ. The poor bring us to God and they help evangelise us. The poor are an integral part of our family and merely recipients of our benevolence and charity. Daily mental prayer plays an important role in strengthening one's spirituality. Genuine spirituality transforms our humanity. There is a close link between gentleness and compassion. Every time we help someone, we end up getting more than we have given. One has to empty oneself in order to put on Jesus Christ. The union of contemplation and action is one of the most important keys to Vincentian Spirituality. The association of Fr Raymond Mascarenhas with the SSVF Conference assumes great significance from the fact that the spirituality that he practised and preached is very much in

line with the Vincentian spirituality of encountering Christ, the poor and the suffering.

The Bendur parish was in the formation stage during the 1920s. The new Church building that exists today was in the construction stage. There were no rooms or shelters to be occupied for meetings. Hence in the early years meetings were held in a thatched roof hut and members squatted on the mud floor. But very soon Fr Raymond gave the Society a small classroom which had a few benches, although the members had some difficulty sitting on them. What was important was that the Vincentian spirit overflowed among the founding members and others who joined them.

Bendur SSVP and Bethany Sisters Engaged in Small and Micro Industries: The enterprising Fr Raymond Mascarenhas was not short of innovative ideas. Seeing the enterprising nature of the parishioners, he devised ways and methods to generate employment and some income to the parishioners. He made available in 1929 at Bendur a structure, in the place where Sahodaya stands today, to start small and tiny industries. It was in this building which was modelled like the present industrial estates, the Society of St Vincent de Paul in association with the Bethany Sisters started a number of manufacturing and processing business enterprises. The manufacturing operations in these units were organized in such a way as to provide employment to both the physically able and those with weak physical statures. Some of the things that were produced here included papadams, pickles, preserves, jams, masala powders, condiments, bakery items, dairy products, brooms and coconut palm plaited items. Pounding, milling, sifting and packaging of rice and grains were also done here.

The packages were affixed with the SSVP-Bethany brand labels to assure the consumers a guarantee of quality. The local landlords also helped in the entire exercise of helping the poor by sending from their fields, wheat, ragi, paddy and cereals for processing at this industrial estate at Bendur. Cartloads of coconut palms were also sent here for plaiting. The Bethany Sisters supervised the manufacturing and packaging operations.

This shows how actively and industriously the then Society of St Vincent de Paul and the Bethany Sisters strived jointly not only in

managing and running these industries but to also in providing gainful employment to the unemployed. The Society of St Vincent de Paul adopts poor families and provides them with monetary assistance to ease their livelihood. They are also assisted in meeting their medical treatment expenses. Many youngsters both boys and girls are helped in the payment of school and college fees. To a certain extent poor families who deserve assistance in building their own houses are also helped financially. Apart from the members of the adopted families, others who genuinely deserve help are given financial assistance towards payment of hospital bills, school and college fees, including those of professional courses, medical expenses, funeral expenses, house building and house repairs and other genuine needs. The SSVP Bendur conference has built 35 houses for the shelterless on the land given by the Bishop of Mangalore.

Apostolic Work: Breaking the cycle of poverty in its own way is the core work of the SSVP apostolic work. To do this the root cause of poverty in each case is identified and the respective families are helped and counselled to come out of poverty. Those neglected and downtrodden are selected and offered financial and other assistance depending on the merits of each case. Such activities also help in advancing the spirituality of the members. The weekly visits by the SSVP members to the homes of adopted families makes it possible to the members to indulge in the exercise of conversing with them, counselling them and praying with them. Mentoring of the school and college going youth is also done to help them journey out of poverty.

The order of SSVP is based on two virtues, Justice and Charity. Vincentians live in ordinary conditions of life in the family and society. The people would be more receptive of Vincentian lay persons approaching them rather than the clergy or the religious. Vincentian spirituality of inner life is prayer and meditation. Outer life is bearing witness to the life of Christ by meeting the needs of others. Simplicity and humility are more important than any rules and regulations.

Simplicity implies simple living. Mgr Raymond Mascarenhas also propagated and lived with simplicity and humility. Humility is

accepting the truth of our frailties, gifts, talents and charism knowing that all that God gives us is for others and that we achieve nothing of Eternal Value without His grace. Vincentians live a life of selflessness and sacrifice. The members share their time, their possessions, their talents and themselves in a spirit of generosity.

Internationally the Society of St Vincent de Paul was founded in 1833 by eight men who wanted to create an organization dedicated to helping those impoverished people living in Paris, France. The primary figure behind the Society's founding was venerable Frederick Ozanam, a French lawyer, author, and professor in the Sorbonne. He was 20 years old in the year the Society was founded. The Bendur unit of SVP progressed as the years passed, with an increased number of members rendering ample services to the needy parishioners. Two of the dedicated members of Bendur SVP, William Sequeira and Fredrik Viegas later joined the seminary and were ordained as Jesuit priests. The dedicated services of Mr Louis Macarenhas, Mr J D Lobo, Mr Frederick Mascarenhas and Mr A R D'Souza were recognized by the then Pope, who blessed and presented them with a Golden Cross – 'Pro Ecclesia eth Ponthifice'. SSVV Bendur conference is in its 96th year and will be stepping into its centenary year in 2025-2026.

Reference: Prof. Edmund Frank, St Vincent de Paul Souvenir-Bendur, 1926-2016 pp 32 to 39



LIGHTER MOMENTS WITH MR MARITTO SEQUEIRA, BENDUR, MANGALORE

(Mr Maritto Sequeira who had around 60 years of association with the Bethany Sisters at Bendur is a focussed person. He has been the President of Catholic Sabha at Bendur. As a Zonal President he had made the Catholic Sabha quite popular in the undivided Mangalore Diocese. He has served as the Vice President of the Parish Council and has been entrusted by the people and ecclesial authorities a leader's role as a convener of significant events of the diocese. His personality is adorned with wise and intelligent planning strategy. Having known him for a long time at Bendur Parish I had some lighter moments with Mr Maritto which I would love to share with the readers of *The Compassionate Pastor*. **Sr M Celine Vas BS**)

Mr Maritto, could you recall your association with our dear Founder and Sisters?

Well, I have seen your Founder R F C Mascarenhas (RFCM) as a little child. My father revered RFCM. We daily passed through Bethany Mother House to the church, school and bazaar. One day we visited the old man RFCM. I do not know what the conversation that went between my father and your Founder. As far as my memory goes I remember being seated comfortably on his lap. This gives me a feeling even as I speak to you now that he was an affectionate and effective communicator.

As I was a student of St Aloysius College at degree level though he was no more I heard much of him. He being the Founder and first Parish Priest of Bendur, elders of Bendur had great respect for him. They knew him as a man of prayer, man of deeds than words. As an intelligent and innovative man when things did not work for him he found alternatives. For example, there was a bridge from the loom/ Boarding house to the chapel. The public opposed it. In their opinion it was a barrier to the vehicles passing by as well as to the commuters. Hence the bridge was brought down. RFCM rose to the occasion by carving out a tunnel under the existing road. Even today the tunnel is used by the sisters.

What is your opinion about Bethany Sisters?

As for me and my family we were close to Bethany Sisters as they were simple and loving nuns. They would visit the houses of the parishioners. Their approach was direct and humane. From the start till today Bethany Sisters keep visiting us. Sr Alfreeda, Sr Honoratha, Sr Lilian of happy memory, Sr Virginia, Sr Lillis, Sr Jessy Rita, Sr Jyoti and Sr Rose Celine are a few among many Bethany Sisters we are associated with. It was a friendly visit that we cherished.

Do you wish to share something more about our Founder?

Oh yes. What is the strength of Bethany nuns in the Congregation? On getting answer to his question he continued his query 'who are the 1400 nuns?' They are all Bethany Sisters who want their Founder to be a Saint!

In the Parish of Bendur how many of them know your Founder? In all the Parishes of Mangalore Diocese how many know your Founder? In the whole of Karnataka how many know your Founder? So you know the answer. Where have you failed? Can you evolve a strategy? You are organising many programmes in the name of your Founder. All those who attend are usually your own sisters, a few priests and a hand full of lay people. A saint is a saint for all. Your Founder does not lack holiness or credible works. Then where have you gone wrong? Can you draw up a sustainable strategy to be evolved? Let me tell you honestly that any programme or strategy should be directed towards the people. The voice of the people is the voice of God. Whatever you plan should become people oriented. Is your founder known to the people? When you succeed in telling the people that RFCM is their man who lived and walked into this land of Mangalore, they will start accepting him. Let the people feel proud to call him as their own and prepare a positive profile of RFCM. **Create awareness that they need a saint of their own** as Calcutta has St Mother Teresa. Mangalore needs a saint and RFCM has all the requirements of a saint. His holiness will be proved in all his achievements and weaknesses. Go for it and people will support you.

(Sr Celine Vas, a former lecturer of the Department of Journalism, St Aloysius College and Rtd Principal of St Raymond Degree College, Vamanjoor)

62nd Death Anniversary Mass
Mgr RFC Mascarenhas, St Sebastian Church, Bendur



62nd Death Anniversary Mass
Mgr RFC Mascarenhas, St Sebastian Church, Bendur



62nd Death Anniversary Mass
Mgr RFC Mascarenhas, St Sebastian Church, Bendur



Visitors to Mgr Raymond Memorial



Sr Patsy and Sr Gracy
Roshni Nilaya, Mangalore



Archbishop Emeritus Leo Cornelio SVD,
Bhopal



Ms Beena Vincent and Dona,
Champanoda



Daughters of IMS Congregation, Alleppey



Mr Halappa, Bangalore



Miss Marceline Mendes
Bethany Convent, Kakkada



BLA Members , Nanthoor



BLA Members, Bendur



Mr Jerome & Family, Vittal

Visitors to Mgr Raymond Memorial



**Sr Laureena MC & Sisters
Falnir, Mangalore**



**Sr Sheeja Chacko Berlin,
Germany**



**Mrs Ausis and Mr Nelson D'Silva
Puttur**



**Students-Sacred Hearts'
Hr. Pry. School, Kulshekar, Mangalore**



Mrs Apsara Andrade, Udupi



Mr Brian Rodrigues, Mangalore



**Mrs Vanitha D'Souza & Family
Brahmavar**



**Arrow team Hyderabad
(P. Srinivas Rao, C.H. Suresh, N. Ravindra)**



**Ms Jyothi & Ms Vandana
Bejai, Mangalore**

Visitors to Mgr Raymond Memorial



Sr Reena Cholnekar's family
Belgaum



Staff and Students
Loyola High School, Gadag



Fr Joshi & Team, Alleppey



Mr Robert Rodrigues & Family, Mumbai



Seminarians - St Joseph Seminary Jeppu,
Mangalore



Bethany Candidates, Kirem



BLA Members, Kulshekar



Bethany Sisters - Kulshekar Community



Women Sodality, Badyar

Visitors to Mgr Raymond Memorial



Bethany Sanjeevini Kendra, Guledgudd



BLA Memebres, Kollangana



Fr Andrew, Cate, Simon
Mizoram



Novices - Rosa Mystica



Sisters - Nazareth Convent, Bajpe



Students - Humnabad, Bidar



St Joseph Hr Pry. School, Sagar



Sr Maureen & Family
USA



St Michael's Convent High School, Dandeli



Ms Diana Dhote, Mumbai



Mr Vincent DSouza & Family
Kulshekar



Mr Michael & Family
Bajpe



Mr Robert & Therese, Mangalore

We Remember with Gratitude...

He Unearthed Sainly Lives

The Late Rev Fr George Nedungatt SJ

Fr George Nedungatt was a pillar of strength and a guiding light to Bethany Congregation from 2005 in taking up the Cause of the Beatification and the Canonization of the Servant of God Raymond Francis Camillus Mascarenhas, the Founder of the Congregation and former Vicar General of the diocese of Mangalore. He came to our assistance at a time when neither the Diocese of Mangalore nor the neighbouring dioceses had experts to provide guidance in initiating the Cause of a Servant of God.



In 1998 when the General Chapter of the Congregation had decided to begin the process of initiating the Cause of our Founder, the assistance of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints in Rome was consulted with regard to the process to be followed. The Congregation suggested the name of Rev Fr Nedungatt as a consultor. At the invitation of the Superior General, Rev Fr George Nedungatt who was then the Professor at the Pontifical Oriental Institute in Rome in 2005 visited the Raymond Museum which was the residence of the Servant of God and viewed all the artefacts of the Servant of God exhibited there. He also witnessed the people coming to the memorial for prayer.

Fr George provided the needed guidelines to proceed on this matter and spoke about the need of training personnel to take up the offices connected with the Cause. It was he who suggested to start a magazine to promote the Cause of the Founder which was done under the title *The Compassionate Pastor* in December 2008 and has continued to be a successful medium to make known the Servant of God all over the world. Fr George used to go through the articles with great interest and would give his feedback regularly to the Editor. Fr Nedungatt visited Bethany Generalate in 2007 and meticulously directed the Postulator Sr Lillis and the Petitioner Sr Jyoti with regard to the procedures to be followed. Fr Nedungatt was a consultant and guide during the opening of the Diocesan Inquiry for the Cause of the Beatification and Canonization in the year 2008.

On the occasion of the of Exhumation and transfer of the mortal remains of the Servant of God Fr George Nedungatt made it possible to be present and

We Remember with Gratitude...

offer necessary guidance. He also introduced to us Rev Fr George, who was very generous in translating all the Latin documents from the Congregation with regard to the procedures into English. His astuteness in guiding the Historical Commission members and the Postulator till he was incapacitated was commendable. He keenly desired and prayed that Mgr Raymond be raised to the honours of the Altar.

Bethany pays its tribute to him and salutes him for striving to raise numerous saints for the Mother Church through his assistance for the completion of numerous Causes of Saints. May he rest in peace and be counted as a saint in the future.

Sr Lillis BS
West Hill, Calicut

An Altar Boy to RFC Mascarenhas, the Servant of God The Late Mr James D'Souza

James D'Souza was born on 12 April 1929 and entered the eternal home on 06 September 2022, at the ripe age of 93. As he lived in the vicinity of the Bethany Mother House, Mangalore he served as the Altar boy to Mgr RFC Mascarenhas while offering Mass in the Mother House Chapel. Since then, he had great love and reverence towards this holy priest.

In his advanced years, he wrote the life of the Servant of God, Mgr Raymond Mascarenhas titled, *If only I knew...* and followed it up with another book: *And Now We All Know...* He wrote a number of articles about Mgr Raymond Mascarenhas, which were published in the bulletin – *The Compassionate Pastor*. He was balanced in his outlook, prudent in his judgement and expressive in his writing and earnestly promoted the Cause of Mgr Mascarenhas. In every encounter, he would enthuse the Bethany Sisters to live up to the ideals set by Mgr Mascarenhas. At this juncture, it is worthwhile to note that his family prays daily for the Cause of the Canonization of Mgr Raymond Mascarenhas. He was known to be compassionate to the poor and helped anyone who asked for help regardless of caste or creed, in the footsteps of the priest whom he held in high esteem. May he rest in peace!



Rev Fr Michael Fernandes SDB

Mumbai

Impressions of the Visitors to Mgr Raymond Memorial

My husband Robert and I have come from Mumbai. I thank the Almighty for giving us this opportunity to visit Mgr FC Mascarenhas' house. Really we felt blessed here...This will be a memorial day for us...

- Mrs Irene Rodrigues, Mumbai

29.12.2022

It is truly an edifying and enriching experience to visit this place. The Founder has done great wonders. May he be beatified soon.

- Sr Shanthi FC, West Bengal

27.12.2022

...Everything is arranged and displayed very systematically and beautiful. It creates an awe and admiration towards the founder - his life, writings and inspirational quotes. May his Cause be taken up soon and his spirit and vision energize and inspire the Bethany Sisters.

- Sr Edna AC, Bendur

24.12.2022



It was really a great blessing to spend time visiting the relics of the Servant of God. We were really touched by the ambience as well as the display of things used by him. We wish and earnestly pray that the Church may award him with the honours of the altar soon.

-Fr Rathan Nicholas, OCD

19.12.2022

It is a real blessing for me to come and see this holy place. Syria needs your prayer and intercession and I am sure you are going to pray for us from above.

-Ms Vivian Shaheen, Syria

18.12.2022



Impressions of the Visitors to Mgr Raymond Memorial

I came here with a heavy heart and I was very scared but now I am feeling very calm and I have prayed for some vocations. I am feeling that this Servant of God is surely interceding for this. I promise that I will give him witness.

-A Seminarian from St Joseph's Seminary, Jeppu, Mangalore

11.12.2022

I feel blessed today as I have visited the tomb and known the history of this Servant of God. May the process of beatification speed up. May he intercede for us.

-Fr Robin J Kennedy, Jeppu, Mangalore.

11.12.2022

I am really inspired by the life, mission and spirituality of the Servant of God Mgr RFC Mascarenhas. I also admire the way his life history is depicted... I along with my seminarians here pray for the speedy process of his beatification.

-Fr Boniface Pinto, Jeppu, Mangalore

11.12.2022



I was happy to visit the tomb of the servant of God, Mgr RFC Mascarenhas and pray for the speedy process of beatification of the Servant of God. I am happy to recall his services of opening the missions at remote areas, in Belgaum Diocese. God bless and choose him to be close to him and all of us in his saintly countenance.

-Rt Rev Dr Peter Machado, Archbishop of Bangalore

10.12.2022

It was a joyful and a memorable experience for me to visit the house where the saintly Mgr R Mascarenhas lived. I pray that God may bless his process.

**-His Eminence Filipe Neri Cardinal Ferrao,
Archbishop of Goa and Daman**

10.12.2022



Impressions of the Visitors to Mgr Raymond Memorial

A very well kept museum of a very holy soul, Mgr Mascarenhas. The whole atmosphere in the museum enables one to prayerfully reflect on this noble Servant of God who closely imitated the Lord in his genuine concern for souls.

-Fr James Mathew Kadankavil SDB, Kristu Jyoti College, Bengaluru
07.12.2022

I consider it my privilege to go through the well-arranged documents and memory marks connected with the life and works of the founder of Bethany Congregation. It is certainly impressive and those who worked for it deserve our appreciation. I pray that the beatification process of Mgr RFC Mascarenhas, the Servant of God may proceed on the right track and the Lord may fulfil the desire of many.

- Rt Rev Dr Leo Cornelio SVD, Archbishop Emeritus of Bhopal
23.11.2022

I am so glad for visiting Bethany Convent with 20 brothers and 4 sisters. It is really inspiring to see a diocesan priest doing such a great work. As we will also be diocesan priests, he is a real model and inspiration for us.

- A Seminarian from Allahabad
23.06.2019

It's blessed to be here. A place of grace and prayer. As I go back to St Peter's Bangalore, I carry with me the spiritual graces of Bethany Founder.

- Fr Royston Pinto SJ
25.04.2022



MGR RAYMOND FC MASCARENHAS: A FOUNDER WITH PROFOUND FAITH AND EXTENSIVE VISION

Rev Fr Dr Godwin Veigas, SVD

1. Introduction:

A visionary is a leader who sees what others do not see or cannot see, who achieves for now and plans for the future, who positively impacts different generations and raises up other visionaries. In the history of the Church we know that when the time was right, the Lord raised men and women to shepherd his Church towards new pastures. Mgr R F C Mascarenhas was one among them and saw great potential and ability among the women of his time. Without stopping with his vision, he dared to make it real. My own mother who knew Mgr Raymond from her school days would say, "Where others say all is well and perfect and found nothing more to do, he saw opportunities to achieve many things." In her opinion, he had a keen insight for sensing the pulse of the people in whom the Spirit was ready and waiting to be set on fire.

The story is often told of two shoe salesmen. "Once upon a time, a shoe company sent two salesmen to Africa to determine the market potential for their products. One salesman was sent to the East coast of Africa, while the other to the West Coast. Both the salesmen completed a basic survey of the target market. The salesman from the East Coast reported: "No one here wears any shoes; there is no market for us here!" The other salesman stated, "No one here wears any shoes, there is a huge market for us, send inventory fast!" Mgr Raymond belonged to this second category. He found opportunities in the given circumstances and ventured into something special and different.

2. Mgr Raymond, a Passionate Visionary

At different times in the history of the Catholic Church, many religious Congregations of men and women have emerged. Their founders or foundresses saw opportunities amidst ordinary realities. As charismatic leaders, they saw what others failed to see, heard what others failed to hear. They heeded to the call of God to break

a new ground and manifested courage in this regard, as the hymn goes, 'It takes courage to answer a call; it takes courage to give your all!'

Mgr Raymond was a passionate visionary. His unprecedented farsightedness led him to discover a huge potential among ordinary young women who were willing to join him in the great mission that he had in mind. He trusted that God has the power to transform their routineness into grace, their ordinariness into uniqueness. He believed that Mother Mary, in whom he had confided everything would be at his side, as continual protection which is best expressed in his words, "Even if you forsake me, Mother, do not abandon these children who have come trusting in you and me and Bethany"¹ For him, the realisation of his vision was more a journey of trusting God and the Blessed Mother than a mere accomplishment. Knowing well their presence in all his ventures, he faced challenges courageously. He often stated, "Whatever work has been given us, let us do our best without any pessimistic outlook, but only trusting in God."²

3. Mgr Raymond, with an Attitude of Trust and Surrender

Prophets suffer. They suffer because they see beyond the horizons. They suffer because they understand the present history from the perspective of the Word and orient the same towards the future. Ordinary minds do not grasp their far-sightedness. Their small minds make the visionaries suffer. Mgr Raymond suffered for his farsighted thinking. When ventured into something new in accordance with the vision of the Gospel, he rarely received encouragement. At times he even experienced opposition, that too, from his own.

Those whom God calls, He leads them through great trials. All founders of religious congregations have gone through this phase. They have their own stories to narrate, stories of darkness and light, stories of disappointments and achievements, stories of failures and victories. In such moments they manifest an attitude of surrender and submission. Mgr Raymond as a founder was tested severely;

¹ Sr Miriam BS, *A Treasury of Pearls*, p.10.

² Ibid, p.22.

the tests sometimes came from close quarters but he exhibited gracefulness to accept them in their tide, so much so that he "converted the dirt hurled at him as a stepping stone to venture into new ground."³ His faith led him to surrender into the hands of the one who suffered on the Cross and became strong while fighting the battle. Often he would say, "To become saints without the least suffering or self-consequent is impossible."⁴

During his exhortations to the sisters, Mgr Raymond spoke often of the value of suffering. "Suffering is a must in our lives" he would say and continuing further he would add, "If He has trodden the way to Calvary, we have to go by this narrow way... To become a saint without suffering is unthinkable..."⁵ In another occasion, he would exhort, "What was the life of our Blessed Lady, but a life of suffering? From the Incarnation, she had her cross on her shoulders... Ask her to give you a great desire to suffer for Jesus, to love suffering and to suffer lovingly."⁶

Yes, sufferings are common in the lives of those who take the unbeaten path. They are not surprises for them. In such moments they move forward with hope that God will not abandon them. Sometimes the trying circumstances are so challenging and disparaging, that they can even doubt their ability to accomplish the task entrusted or forget the hand of God that sustains. What keeps their spirits high in such moments is their profound faith and unflinching trust in the Divine. This was true in the case of Mgr Raymond. His words testify to this fact. "We must not be troubled even if we find our prayers said hopelessly, for Jesus does not count our victories, but he counts our efforts."⁷

Persons who trust in the Divine Providence have their security – whether material or spiritual – in God. Mgr Raymond was known for this. Neither did he own personal wealth nor did Bethany Congregation that he founded have a large income. But he was not desperate about the financial constraints. His trust rested in God. His words bear testimony to this fact:

³ *The Compassionate Pastor* (CP), July 2016, p.26

⁴ CP, July 2022, p.15.

⁵ RFC Mascarenhas, *Conference*, 21.12.1940.

⁶ RFC Mascarenhas, *Conference*, 06.09.1940.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p.34.

...Being a Congregation recruited from the poor for the poor, the dowries received from the sisters do not amount to much... Besides for its own personal maintenance, the Congregation had to spend large sums of money for the construction of the several Convent buildings, Schools, Orphanages and other various institutions. This has involved it in vast debts, which it struggles to pay... Thus financial difficulties beset us on every side and we are almost sinking under them. We have committed the matter to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary and rest in hope...⁸

The above manifests how Mgr Raymond trusted in the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary and entrusted all his concerns to them, knowing well that everything would be taken care by them.

4. Mgr Raymond, a Priest who Laboured for the Greater Glory of God

The word *magis* denotes an important element of the Jesuit spirituality. It means "more" or "to a greater degree" or as some say, "doing more than what is expected" for the greater glory of God. *Magis* has inspired many a zealous missionary to dedicate oneself to a greater and higher degree of commitment to prayer and action than what is normally evident. The idea not only means being/doing more, rather it means paying heed to God's invitation and doing everything for His glory.

The spirit of *magis* was seen concretely in the life of Mgr Raymond who went about doing his work knowing well that the ultimate end is the greater glory of God. The founding of the Congregation of the Bethany Sisters in the year 1921 was an offering to the glory of God. The translation of the four Gospels for the first time in Konkani in 1949 and the translation of the whole New Testament in 1952 was another act of offering for the glory of God. The translation of the first five books of the Old Testament in 1954 was still another act of offering for the glory of God. For such renowned acts and magnanimous works, Pope Pius XII conferred

⁸ RFC Mascarenhas, *History of the Congregation*, p.2.

on him 'Domestic Prelate' a title fit for his distinguished contribution.⁹ Yet his attitude was of humility and stated, "Indeed I am an unprofitable servant. I have done what I have to do and that so imperfectly. All glory to Him, who by His grace has enabled me to begin and continue and to end. I am an unprofitable servant."¹⁰

5. Mgr Raymond, Served as Leaven in the Dough

There is a lot of discussion these days on whether we are busy with the 'maintenance of the church' or becoming a 'growing church.' Maintenance is defined as forever doing the same things without taking any risk or being crippled with the fear of failure. It values stability over progress. On the other hand, becoming a 'growing church' requires tremendous spiritual depth; one needs to make a shift from the superficial to a transcendental level, gripped by the vision of the Kingdom of God. Mgr Raymond was at the transcendental level; his actions testify to this fact.

...I have been greatly moved by the great good which an institute of this kind was calculated to do among our people by giving an opportunity of religious life to many among our girls who, on account of the circumstances of their education, means and conditions of life, would have no facility for joining any of the Religious Congregations existing in the Diocese, but nevertheless could be received and prove suitable for an institute of this kind. As a matter of fact, the circumstances of most of those that I have got together are such that either they could not have the privilege of a religious life at all or would have had to go outside the Diocese to find it."¹¹

Mgr Raymond was a man of God, a man with deep divine experience. He was habituated to go to God in everything "The very appearance of Monsignor was God-inspiring... He was a man of prayer and a source of inspiration to others."¹² Every day he spent

⁹ CP, December 2008, pp.12-13.

¹⁰ RFC Mascarenhas, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, p.156.

¹¹ RFC Mascarenhas, *A Report on Bethany to the Rt Rev Dr Valerian J. D'Souza, Bishop of Mangalore*, (31 August 1928).

¹² Sr M Celine Vas BS, "An Interview with Mr. V.J.P. Saldanha," p. 40.

long hours before the Blessed Sacrament and confided to the Lord everything of his life. He drew strength from his moments of being alone with God and faced trials with his life of faith and prayer. Noticing the godly nature and deep spirit of prayer, one of the lay persons wrote convincingly:

Not one, but many admirers mention how often he was to be seen, reading his breviary on a pile of stones, near the Church, or kneeling before the Blessed Sacrament with both arms, raised aloft in prayer. Saying the Mass was not a perfunctory routine, but a profound mystical experience, which he succeeded in communicating by his loving enunciation of every word in the Sacrifice.¹³

6. Mgr Raymond translates his Vision to Action

Visionaries are farsighted. Far sightedness is looking ahead in the direction in which God takes the lead. It is discovering God's ways in anticipation. It requires vision, vision animated by faith and hope. Mgr Raymond was a farsighted man with a long-range vision. While addressing the Bethany Congregation on the occasion of the sacerdotal centenary jubilee of Mgr Raymond, Miss J. Mascarenhas, said:

...He was a visionary who saw, thought and acted far ahead of his times had to meet with many difficulties, misunderstandings, yet he took all in his stride with great determination and trust in God and Our Lady. Like all prophets he was tested in the crucible of suffering-criticism, lack of support from persons higher up. Misunderstanding was the thorny path he had to tread to form a band of Bethany Apostles for the Kingdom...¹⁴

The call of Mgr Raymond was to imitate Jesus, who was compassionate to the sufferer. Compassion meant for him not a sentiment but an active participation in the salvific mission of Jesus. He was very sympathetic and kind-hearted when it was a question

¹³ L. Lobo Prabhu, *Footprints on the Sands of Time*, p.4.

¹⁴ J. Mascarenhas, *Speech*, 04.03.2000.

of the poor. The plight of the poor and of women in particular affected him the most. He took their hopes and aspirations, struggles and pains, joys and sorrows as part and parcel of his priestly vocation. Never did he rest until he sought an appropriate remedy for those troubled by the anxieties of life. His compassionate heart was restless until a troubled heart was comforted and wearied soul lifted up. As an anointed one, he was in solidarity with the plight of his flock. His heart would feel the pain of fatherless children, widow/widower, sick, weak etc. He had special love for parentless children. Downtrodden and poor had a place in his heart. Realizing that the immediate need of the church during his time was primarily to promote education among the deprived sections of the society, especially women, he opened schools in rural areas.

The noble recognition of his holy life lies in his being raised to the stature of the Servant of God. In the true spirit of Mgr Raymond who was known for his immediate response to the needs of the times, the Bethany Sisters carry on with the tasks begun by him, as well as venture into newer fields of services like skill-training institutes for women, human resource development, care of the destitute, holistic cum palliative care, alternative systems of health care, collaboration with other institutes of social welfare, care for migrants, social justice, care for creation and involving lay collaborators in their endeavours. In faithful dedication to the founder, the Bethany Sisters keep alive the mission of their founder and live his ideals in multiple ways. This is truly a befitting tribute to this saintly priest!

Conclusion

Mgr Raymond as the founder of the Bethany Sisters was indeed a man of the Spirit. His prophetic vision and mission was not born of flesh and blood but originated in the Spirit. The community that he founded was the fruit of listening to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The good done to the poor, especially, women in the rural areas, to the Catholic population of Mangalore diocese initially and later to other dioceses by the Bethany Congregation bears evidence that the Spirit is at work in all of them. May the profound faith and the extensive vision of the Mgr Raymond, the Servant of God be an inspiration for us, pilgrims on earth.

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MGR RAYMOND MASCARENHAS: A SHEPHERD WITH THE SMELL OF THE SHEEP

Rev Sr Dr Shalet Mendonca BS

Introduction

We have stepped into the post- centenary year with high hopes and expectations. We have witnessed the growth and expansion of Bethany. Our progress has been remarkable, in every aspect of life and mission. As I was reflecting on the foundation of the Congregation and the manifold blessings showered on it by the Lord a thought flashed across my mind that all is due to the holiness of the Founder. His sole desire to emulate the good shepherd with the smell of the sheep made him popular among the poor and the marginalized. In this article I would like to take the imagery of 'Smell of the Sheep' from the Document of the Pope Francis *Evangelii Gaudium* (EG, 24).¹

In this context, I would like to refer Jn 10: 11, "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." This biblical quote highlights the significant characteristics of the Good Shepherd Jesus which the founder tried to emulate in his life as a compassionate pastor. He had a close personal bond between the one who shepherds and his flock. It is a challenge for each of us in our various roles as leaders and shepherds to imitate the good shepherd in our diverse responsibilities and ministry. Keeping in mind the imagery of the shepherd with the smell of the sheep we need to examine how we live and work among our people who are marginalized, downtrodden, poor, migrants and the vulnerable sections of the society.

1. Shepherd's Heart

In the Bible we have numerous biblical references to shepherd, sheep, lambs, pasture and so on. Though God had judged Israel, he had not completely given up on his faithless people. He pleaded through Jeremiah, "I will not remain angry with you; for I am

¹ Pope Francis, *Apostolic Exhortation, Evangelii Gaudium: The Joy of the Gospel*. (India: Carmel International Publishing house, 2013), no. 24.

merciful" (3:12). The Lord promised to bring the Israelites back to their own land if they would only return to him. Moreover, he pledged: "I will appoint over you shepherds after my own heart, who will shepherd you wisely and prudently" (3:15). In our churches, we usually think the ordained pastors as shepherds. Indeed, the word "pastor" is based on the Latin term shepherd. In Jeremiah, the shepherds of the people are not simply the religious leaders but are kings and those who are in any position of authority, in church or in government, in business or in family.

During the time of Jesus' birth, Shepherds were almost considered outcasts in the society. They lived a difficult life, spending their time in the countryside, sleeping outdoors, but protecting their sheep. They were not well-educated; they were not wealthy and important people of any kind. But those were the ones who received the first message that the Son of God had entered into human history and became part of our human family. God sent the message about Jesus first of all to people on the margins, to the poor, the rejected. He was born with nothing, totally poor. In human mind it is almost impossible to believe that God would enter into our history in this way. But God, in Jesus, wanted to identify with us and with those who are the poorest in our society so that he could lift them up, liberate them from their bondages and proclaim good news to the poor.

Throughout Jesus' ministry, he talked about himself as the Good Shepherd and people who followed him as sheep. Sheep are known to be defenseless and reliant upon the shepherd for care, protection and direction. They follow the shepherd and his voice and flock together. The main concern of a priest is to shepherd his flock, to go to the periphery and take time to be with the poor. That is where we will discover Jesus most of all. Mgr Raymond very often used to speak about the loving heart of Jesus and strove to translate this love into action capturing the daily situations. As a dedicated priest, pastoral ministry was most dear to the heart of Fr Founder. He imitated Jesus the Good Shepherd, in shepherding his flock. God had blessed Bethany in the person of Servant of God RFC Mascarenhas, a shepherd after His own heart. He was deeply pained to see the distress of many young women who had genuine vocation

to religious life but could not get entry into the then existing Congregations because of the requirement of higher education and sizeable dowry. He was ready to spend his life for the poor and the neglected so dear to the heart of the good shepherd.²

Since Raymond was a person with the smell of the sheep he could respond to the triple needs of that period., viz providing Catholic education for the poor, presenting an opportunity for the girls with genuine vocation to consecrate their life to God and to supply dedicated and qualified teachers in order to impart Christian doctrine in schools and parishes in the rural areas. Raymond's heart was always for the less fortunate and unnoticed in the society. His heart moved with pity to see the flight of the poor and the lonely whom he would reach out with the necessities of life.³

The life-giving and selfless service of SD Raymond Mascarenhas during the plague of cholera at Udyavar gave him the recognition of being the 'Good Shepherd' of the people. He popularized indigenous medicines and advised the sisters to carry these medicines during the family visits. The first health centre was in the far-flung village, Gadenahalli in the diocese of Mysore in 1950. As a caring Shepherd he always had solidarity with the people and named the convent as 'Mother of Mercy' which is closely linked to the beatitude that guided him in his priestly ministry.⁴

2. Smell of the Sheep

In 2013, Pope Francis, addressing the priests said that they need to become 'shepherds with the smell of the sheep'. What he meant was "to go out and spend time with the people, not closed off in their churches, to go and listen, and serve and help others."⁵ Though Servant of God Raymond Mascarenhas was pre-Vatican yet we witnessed in him the imagery spotlighted by Pope Francis. With his farsighted vision he went in search of the lost sheep. His approach

² Sr M Lillis BS, *First Mangalorean Servant of God Raymond FC Mascarenhas: A Brief Biographical Sketch*, December 23, 2010, p.8.

³ Sr M Bertha BS (ed), *From the Lips of the Founder: A Collection of Exhortations and Reflections of Mgr Rf C Mascarenhas* (Mangalore: Bethany Publications), p.296.

⁴ Sr M Jyoti BS, *Let It Grow, Let It Flower, Let It Bear Fruit: Reflection on the Growth, Flowering and Fruition of Bethany*. (Mangalore: Assisi Press, 2020), 88.

⁵ <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2021-06/pope-francis-priests-students-church-louis-french.html>

towards the sheep was kind and merciful. Msgr Raymond's life was governed by compassion, forgiveness, love, care, and understanding. Here I would like to cite an example. In the year 1956 during the admissions to Nirmala High School Sagar, girls were standing in a long queue with their parents and guardians. Without prior notice Father Founder arrived from Mangalore. He saw the queue on the school verandah and among them was one, Vanamala of humble birth. She was lame and was leaning on a crutch. Stepping into the school office Founder told the then headmistress "Admit Vanamala before you admit anyone else."⁶ This is one of the examples that comes to my mind where the Founder went out of the way to help and express empathy towards the helpless and the disabled.

The Servant of God patterned his life after the example of Jesus the Good Shepherd. He had touched many a heart during the years of his priestly ministry as a good shepherd, borne out by the fact that he closely walked in the footsteps of Jesus, the Good Shepherd, by being kind, gentle, affable, loving and selfless in his devotion to the flock. He was a bearer of hope to the downtrodden and the marginalized, ever ready to sacrifice his own comfort. Epidemics or any plagues did not deter him from his noble objectives of bringing solace and comfort to the most deprived of the people of the area during the pandemic.

3. Zeal for the Kingdom of God

Obsessed with the desire of spreading the Word of God and zeal for the kingdom, Servant of God Raymond translated the four Gospels and the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary into Konkani in 1949 which is the first of its kind in the history of the diocese. In 1952 Mgr Raymond completed and published the whole New Testament into Konkani. By 1954 he had finished the translation of the five books of the Old Testament. He has written many books on many subjects in several languages and was known as a 'Media Pioneer' in his time. In acknowledgement of his outstanding contribution of translating the entire New Testament from Latin to Konkani for the benefit of the ordinary people he was granted with special honour the title of 'Domestic Prelate' by Pope Pius XII. He

⁶ Sr M Bertha BS, *From the Lips of the Founder*, p.295.

composed or translated many devotional hymns in Konkani. His primar 'Poilem Pustak' was a great boon to the people for adult education and was ever treasured. All these activities reveal the ardent desire of SD Raymond to preach the Word of God to the simple and the poor.⁷

He unceasingly worked for God's glory and the salvation of souls through his writings. The Word of God reached the homes of ordinary Christians. The Konkani translation enabled local people to meaningfully participate in worship and increased their desire to pray. That was an expression of his great zeal to make Jesus known to the people and loved by them.⁸

Gifted with a retentive memory and eloquence of speech Servant of God Raymond could speak on any topic of interest and expound on it at length with clarity of thought and accuracy. As a dynamic pastor he preached retreats to the priests, religious and lay people both in English and Konkani. One sentence from the Bible sufficed for reflection to the pastor with the smell of the sheep, and words of affection and devotion would naturally flow from him to stir the hearts of those who heard it. The splendid aspects of his priestly life, his commitment to the priestly vocation with great pastoral zeal, wide vision for the church and the society and his sacrificial love for the poor and the neglected particularly women have left his footprints on the sands of time. Raymond Mascarenhas is an inspiration today to all levels of people in this world.

4. Reaching out to the Peripheries

Jesus was born in Bethlehem, a simple village a periphery of Nazareth. It was a very insignificant place in Palestine. Therefore Jesus understands those who live on peripheries. Unlikely Galilee became the chosen place for the proclamation of the Kingdom of God. Jesus' message finds its way into the periphery. In his abounding love for the good shepherd the founder was prepared to reach out to the peripheries of the country so that the Word of God and light

⁷ Sr M Lillis BS, *First Mangalorean Servant of God Raymond FC Mascarenhas: A Brief Biographical Sketch*, December 23, 2010, pp.10-11.

⁸ Sr M Violette BS, *Unless the Seed Die: A Brief Sketch of the Life of Monsignor RFC Mascarenhas*, (Mangalore: Bethany Publications, 1985), pp.46-47.

of education could spread in the remotest areas.⁹ The enterprising mission of our Founder is the fresh memory that lingers in each of us. For example, walking to Kinnai mission station and acquainting with the families was the venture of our beginners in a new mission. The instruction of the Parish priest to the sisters as Jesus did to his disciples on a mission, enabled the sisters to go without any provision except a little money and two camp coats. They travelled through a bullock cart on a rainy day. Having had their food at Mr Aranha's house they proceeded to Balekundri mission.¹⁰

While he was at Bendur, he keenly perceived the painful reality of the people of South Canara. His shepherding heart for the poor and principally for women led him to question the excruciating reality of the society, particularly plight of the illiterate women in the villages. Example of such as these were an everyday occurrence which inspires the entire Church to be the shepherd with the smell of the sheep. He seemed to have such a passion to reach out to the people in need, of unmindful of distance, culture or religions. Penetrating into the heart of the Gospel, he brought to the poor, a tangible experience of God's merciful love. He consistently and relentlessly toiled hard for the total emancipation and development of the underprivileged, illiterate and backward people. RFC Mascarenhas was a man of great compassion and empathy. He founded the Congregation to be motivated by the self-giving and self-sacrificing love and the mercy Jesus the Good Shepherd.

5. Listening with the Ear of the Heart

A synodal process has been launched in recent times. The message of Pope Francis on the 56th World Day of Social Communications day speaks of "Listening with the ear of the heart".¹¹ What does it mean to listen with the heart? Listening with the ear of the heart is a kind of silence and not absence of sound. It does not come easily; it is difficult and quite challenging. It calls for radical

⁹ Sr M Bertha BS (ed), *From the Lips of the Founder* (Mangalore: Bethany Publications, 2018), p.295.

¹⁰ Sr M Annette BS, *The Saga of Bethany in North Karnataka* (Mangalore: Bethany Publications, 2004), p.44.

¹¹ Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for the 56th World Day of Social Communications. <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/communications/documents/20220124-messaggio-comunicazioni-sociali.html>

change. Bible offers us many sterling examples of what real listening looks like. Listening with the ear of the heart can take place only with a person who is noble, loving and compassionate. Servant of God Raymond as a shepherd had a personal love for the Lord and his sheep. He constantly listened to the voice of God and to the voice of the people. He took time to listen to their questions, fears and doubts. He always listened to the cries of those suffering and in anguish with the ear of the heart.

To give an example—One day Fr Founder was returning to Mangalore along with a sister from one of our convents in Bijapur. The sisters had packed some food for his journey. In the train, a poor woman who sat beside him had no food. At lunch time, the sister who was accompanying Fr founder saw him giving the best portion of the food to the woman. Sister who accompanied Founder said “Father you could have given her the leftovers...” But Founder replied, “Sister, you and I may get such fare at least sometimes, but what about this lady”¹². In another instance he listened to the silent weeping of the farmers. —While he was the parish priest at Udyavar, he took time to listen to the cry of the poor farmers. He visited the sick and sorrowing in their homes in good and bad times especially when poor farmers’ huts got washed away during the monsoons leaving hardly anything for their sustenance. As a caring and empathetic listener, he would walk several miles through the slushy paddy fields and bring comfort and solace to the disheartened and disappointed.

When people were suffering with epidemics of small pox and cholera at Udyavar and many fell victims to these terrible diseases, he became a father and doctor to them. They found him a praying, caring, serving, sacrificing, simple and personally poor and who lived for the poor imitating Jesus the Good Shepherd. Many a time even in the middle of the night, there would be a knock on his door and the response would always be an unhesitating “yes”, I will be there or I shall come immediately. Soon he would then rush to the church for Holy Viaticum and hurry to the bedside of the dying man and his sorrowing family. He spent much of his time, energy,

¹² Sr M Bertha BS (ed), *From the Lips of the Founder*, p.295.

resources in relieving the misery of these suffering people. ¹³

Conclusion

Servant of God Raymond Mascarenhas was truly a shepherd after the heart of God in the true sense of the word for he had the smell of the sheep. In his life and his dealings he manifested to the people that he was a shepherd of his flock and his parishioners and people around recognized him as a shepherd. If one examines all the points that I have highlighted, one will get an accurate picture to show that he followed the Good Shepherd and always walked in His ways. Today Bethany Sisters keep alive his vision by living out his charism and the spirituality and carry forward his legacy. In our times, Servant of God is widely known to many in every nook and corner of the world as a compassionate pastor and a shepherd with the smell of the sheep. Following his example, may all the Bethany Sisters become instruments of caring, compassion and love as they touch the lives of the people in their diverse apostolates.



¹³ Sr M Violette BS, *Unless the Seed Die*, pp.17-18.

FAVOURS RECEIVED

FAVOURABLE JUDGEMENT IN THE HIGH COURT

Grateful thanks to Almighty God for the favourable judgment obtained in the High Court, Bangalore through the intercession of the Servant of God Raymond Francis Camillus Mascarenhas, revered Founder of Bethany; thereafter closing of the long drawn legal battle of St Martha's Convent land at Mudigere, Chikmagalur District for 19 years. May he receive the honours of the altar very soon.

Sr Sahana BS

Provincial Superior, Bangalore Province

SUCCESSFUL SURGERY OF MY ANKLE

I met with an accident on March 2022 and had a fracture in my right ankle. The doctor suggested that I undergo the surgery. Although the surgery was successful, I was unable to walk and do anything for more than 7 months. I prayed earnestly through the intercession of our Founder SD RFC Mascarenhas and now I am completely healed and able to walk. I thank the Almighty God for the favour I received through his intercession and pray that he may be raised soon to the honours of the altar.

Sr Isabella BS

Bethany Convent, Bendur



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Mr Clarence Machado is a Bendur Parishioner and currently serves as the President of the Society of St Vincent de Paul Conference (SSVP). Bendur as well as the Treasurer of SSVP, Mangalore Central Council. Prior to this, he has rendered his services as the Manager of the Corporation Bank, Mangalore.



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**Paying tribute to the Servant of God
RFC Mascarenhas on the occasion of his
62nd Death Anniversary**

