IN MEMORIAM

D.S. AMALORPAVADASS 1932 - 1990

With the tragic death of Fr. D.S. Amalorpavadass the Church in India has lost one of the most articulate promotors of Church Renewal. We recall his constant and tireless working for the inculturation of Christian life, his belief in the providential role of all authentic religions and his inclusive, open understanding of evangelization. He integrated the Church's preferential option for the poor and its consequent commitment to a radical restructuring of our unjust society, and its urgent task to become incarnate in a nation that breathes religiously, a subcontinent where most of the major world religions have been born.

Fr. D.S. Amalorpavadass was born in Kallery near Pondicherry on 15 June, 1932. After his College education he studied philosophy and theology at St. Peter's seminary, Bangalore. He was a brilliant student in spite of the fact that his health was so weak that some wondered whether he could be ordained. It is remarkable that after his priestly ordination (12 April, 1959) the same person never fell ill, working often more than 20 hours per day. His first appointment, on the staff of the Regional Catechetical Centre at Tindivanam (1959-1962), soon revealed his extraordinary talent for animation, organisation and administration.

From 1962-1965 he studied for his Master's Degree in Catechetics and his Doctorate in Theology at the Institut Catholique at Paris. His theses are: L'Inde à la rencontre du Seigneur, a critical examination of the history and the life of the Church in India, particularly its approach to evangelization, and: Destinée de l'Eglise dans l'Inde d'aujourd'hui, in many ways a prophetic book, in which he clearly indicates the conditions for an effective evangelization. His studies in Paris enabled him to follow the Second Vatican Council very closely; as an accredited journalist he came into personal contact with prominent bishops and the best theologians.

After his return from Paris in June 1965 he was parish priest at Viryur, a big parish with 63 villages, till December 1966. In October 1966 the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI) appointed him Founder-
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Director of the National Biblical (from 1971) Catechetical Liturgical Centre (NBCLC), Bangalore, and Secretary of the CBCI Commissions for Catechetics and Liturgy. These functions enabled him to use his many talents and tireless energy for the promotion of the spirit of the Council and the implementation of the documents of Vatican II. He initiated thousands into the new outlook of the Church, consistently worked for the indigenisation of the liturgy, systematically spread the anthropological approach to catechesis, producing a series of original textbooks for religious instruction in schools and colleges, and helped lay people discover their rightful place in the Church. In 1973 he organised with FERES the Asian Seminar on Religion and Development. Religiously inspired persons learned to use a reliable tool to critically analyse and reflect on the role of religion in the transformation of society. In 1974 he served as special secretary at the Episcopal Synod on Evangelization in Rome. His report, in which he strongly voiced the wholly different experience and approach of the Third World, was so different from that of the Roman (First World’s) secretary that for the first time an Episcopal Synod did not end with a final declaration. More than a year later Pope Paul VI published Evangelii Nuntiandi. In December 1974 he broke new ground in theology by organizing the Research Seminar on Non-Biblical Scriptures: God’s inspiration has also been working in the sacred scriptures of other faiths.

Amalorpavadass was the first to start a Chair (1979) and Department (1981) of Christianity in a secular (state) university in India. This Chair and Department clearly manifest the secular character of the Indian nation. But for his tact, insight and perseverance this bold venture would never have materialised. From the very beginning Prof. Amalorpavadass did his academic work living in Anjali Ashram, because he was firmly convinced that teaching and learning our Christian faith should go together with living this faith in a milieu conducive to God-experience. His typically Asian contribution to the liberative thrust of Third World Theologians, who regularly meet organised as they are in EATWOT, was the emphasis on the contemplative, religious dimension of human life. This came clearly to the fore in the interdisciplinary Research Seminar on The Indian Church in the Struggle for a New Society (1981). The socio-cultural and religious factors appear to be more decisive than many Latin-American analyses seem to suggest. That makes the Asian approach so important for people of all continents in their quest for well-being, wholeness and harmony.

In spite of his time-consuming involvement in formation and animation, Amalorpavadass’ list of publications is impressive. For 15 years he edited Word and Worship, the Centre’s review, and many documents and papers. It is impossible to give an order of importance. His main concerns and