



BROTHERS OF HOLY CROSS
PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATION
NOTRE DAME, INDIANA

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Midwest Province

From: Brother Donald Gibbs, C.S.C.

Date: August 14, 2000

I want to share with you a letter I received from Father Hugh Cleary, C.S.C., superior general. Father Cleary writes about the sad incident in Northeast India that took the life of Father Victor Crasta, C.S.C., and seriously wounded Father Paul Pudussery, C.S.C., and Father Albano Fernandes, a diocesan priest from Goa working in this area. In solidarity with our confreres in India, I ask that you remember in your prayers these priests and the people of Northeast India during these difficult times as they not only struggle for justice and their basic human rights but also strive to inculturate Gospel values in that part of the country. I include also a copy of my calendar for the coming months.

Provincial Calendar

September

September 2 - 3	Provincial Council Meeting
September 15	Feast of Our Lady of Seven Sorrows
	Boysville: Board Meeting
September 16	Holy Trinity High School: Board of Trustees Retreat
September 18	Gilmour Academy: Members of the Corporation Meeting
September 20	St. Edward High School: Board Meeting
September 21	Archbishop Hoban High School: Board Meeting
September 28 - 29	Ancilla Health Systems, Inc.: Corporate Board Retreat, Merrillville, IN
September 30	Le Mans Academy: Board Meeting

October

October 2	Midwest School Leadership Meeting
October 16 - 17	CMSM Region 5 Meeting, Glenview, IL
October 27	Holy Cross College: Board of Trustees Meeting

November

November 6 - 11	Council of the Congregation, Santiago, Chile
November 18	Provincial Council Meeting



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August 1, 2000

Dear Provincials and District Superiors,

The entire congregation is in shock and prayer on hearing the tragic events surrounding the death of Father Victor and the injuries of Father Paul, members of the Indian Province, and the victims of this terrorist activity.

Father Victor Crasta, CSC died in a tragic ambush attack in Northeast India on July 25, 2000 at about 7:30 a.m. Father Paul Pudussery, CSC, Father Albano Fernandes, a priest who came from the Archdiocese of Goa to work in the Diocese of Agartala, and their driver Sanjoy Sangma, were injured. From the latest information we have, the injured are re-covering fast. However, we are sad to learn that Fr. Paul has lost the sight of his left eye.

They were going from Panisagar, a Holy Cross community in Tripura where they had spent the night, to the Parish Centre Kanhmun in the neighboring State of Mizoram when the tragedy occurred.

Tripura, one of the seven states of N.E. India, with $\frac{3}{4}$ of its boundary running contiguous with Bangladesh on the North, South, and West, is land-locked. A State of great antiquity, it is the poorest of all seven states. The population may be broadly classified into non-tribal and tribal. Tribal population is classified according to 19 scheduled tribes who form about 28% of the State population. Once a tribal state, Tripura has now become a non-tribal state. Tribals are victims of illiteracy and social exploitation. The Holy Cross connection with Tripura goes back to soon after the arrival of the first missionaries in Bengal in 1853. The first parish in Tripura was erected in 1939. Since then, Holy Cross Fathers are working with mostly tribals to emancipate them from illiteracy and social exploitation. Today the educated tribal youth have taken up arms to reclaim their rights from a community of non-tribals who govern the State. Although the Church does not approve the means employed by the youth, the Catholic Church was allegedly accused of abetting terrorism in the state. Killing members of rival communities, burning villages, and kidnapping are everyday events. Missionaries and tribal students of our schools are victims of this mutual hatred.

Father Victor was born December 28, 1960, at Narampady, Mangalore Diocese. He made his first profession on May 28, 1983, Final Commitment on October 15, 1988 and was ordained on May 9, 1989.

It was especially touching to hear of Fr. Victor's last words "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing". He breathed his last shortly thereafter in the jeep as they were on the way to the police station about 10 Km away.

Most Rev. Lumen Monteiro, CSC, DD, the bishop of Agartala, who presided over the funeral Mass said the Church will not be "cowed down by a brutal act like the murder of Fr. Crasta." Bishop Monteiro, in terms clear and precise, addressed the militants and others that nothing can "ever detract us from our commitment to the cause" of the people of Tripura. "Even though our human selves seem shattered, our wills are not. If, like our Master Jesus Christ, we have to give up our life for the sake of the people, we shall do so bravely, gloriously and fearlessly" said Bishop Monteiro. "The blood of Fr. Crasta that has enriched the soil of Tripura also emboldens

us to work for the sick, the poor, the downtrodden, the marginalized and the illiterate in the State of Tripura," he asserted. He also condemned the many inhuman activities meted out to helpless and defenceless people of the State and offered the life of Fr. Crasta for the cause of lasting peace in Tripura.

Fr. Roy Paul Thalackan, CSC, District Superior, in his farewell address said that the tragic loss of Fr. Victor gives them "renewed energy and enthusiasm to work for the Lord and His people." Father Roy reiterated that the commitment of the Fathers of Holy Cross to the Northeast especially to the people of Tripura through their various services will continue undaunted despite this tragic incident. He hoped that the blood shed by Fr. Victor on Tripura soil will not be in vain but will lead towards peace in this trouble torn State.

Sr. Natalie, the elder sister of Fr. Victor who was present at the funeral, in her moving message asked, "Militants of Tripura, you have killed such a young and holy priest who spent his life serving the people of Tripura and neighboring Mizoram?" On behalf of Fr. Victor's family, Natalie forgave the killers and prayed that God will enlighten their hearts and minds.

Fr. Maurice D'Souza, CSC, Provincial, said that those who think that peace can be bought by violence will be ultimately proved wrong. "One day, we will realize that peace can be achieved only by peaceful means and negotiations... The death of Fr. Victor has put to shame those who think that guns can bring peace."

The funeral was attended by a large number of religious and laity and people of other faiths including many dignitaries of the State.

We extend our deepest sympathy and prayerful support to the Province of India, the District of Northeastern India as well as to the family and friends of Fr. Victor in their bereavement and sad loss. In my message to the District, I said that we feel inadequate and helpless in the face of these events but we are inspired by the courage and faith of the Holy Cross community, the Christians and all the people of goodwill in NE India". We are deeply challenged by the heroic witness Holy Cross brings to Northeast India at this painful time of its history and grateful to all the confreres for their wholehearted dedication

The members of the general administration and myself thank you for sharing our prayers and concern at this moment.

May Fr. Victor enjoy eternal happiness! May his death bear fruit in abundance!

In Holy Cross,

Hugh Cleary, C.S.C.
Superior General