

***MARAN 'ATTA'***  
**COME LORD JESUS**

**FR.CANISIUS ENDOWMENT LECTURES 2001**

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Chapter One  
**MĀRĀN 'ĀTTĀ'**  
**DYNAMICS AND DIMENSIONS**

## 1. Inspiration

*Wā, wā, Yēsunādhā* - this is a very old Malayalam hymn, sung in the South Indian churches during the Holy Communion. It can be thus translated into English.

“Come, come, Lord Jesus,  
 come, come, the beloved Lord,  
 ah, you are the love which my heart seeks. (come...)

1. You are the Lord of my breath; you are my king of love,  
 all my life and love are in you. (come...)

2. No happiness can be thought out,  
 both on earth and on heaven, without you. (come...)

3. No flower has splendour, no honey tasty,  
 indescribable is my joy when you come. (come...)

4. Don't go away, Lord, please tarry on,  
 I shall erect an adorned chamber of flowers. (come...)

5. Even if worries pester and aches trouble,  
 if you are near me that is my relief. (come...)

6. Swimming in peace, plunging in brilliance,  
 I in you, you in me, and thus we one.” (come...)

In his notes entitled *Life Experiences*, published on September 1984 in *Devamatha Bulletin* he says: “My setting days have come. I welcome them! Wholly welcome!” The venerable Father composed a **Five step Rosary, which is a meditative reflection on Mary's different periods of life. In the introductory prayer he describes human life as a pilgrimage towards God, our Lord.** The fourth step reflects on Christ's resurrection and ascension, which he thus describes, “the triumphant journey through the sky towards the Father, in the company of the heavenly hosts.” According to Fr. Canisius, Mary, during the Assumption was accompanied by celestial hosts. The last prayer has the petition for the help to persevere in faith, *finish the race*, and earn the crown of victory. Here we find biblical references to 1Thes.2:19; 2 Tim.2:5; 4:8; Jam.1:12; 1Pet.5:4; Rev.2:10; 3:11. For the use of his spiritual children the venerable Father had written also a three-dimensional Rosary. After invoking the Blessed virgin as our precursor and model in the *pilgrimage* of faith and religious consecration, he thus writes: “We would like to spiritually follow you through the different periods of your *pilgrimage*...” He calls the Rosary as *pilgrimage*. Fr. Canisius concludes by invoking the Mother to pray for these sinners now and at the time of our death, in order to attain victory in the *pilgrimage*.

*The Testament* written by him thus begins: “At this time when the moment of my departure approaches...” “I request you humbly, please forgive me and pray for me, so that after the departure I could soon see the divine countenance.” He concludes: “Let us fight bravely in the arena of life in order to attain complete victory till we all join together in the house of the Father. For that let us help each other through prayer. Farewell”. As Fr. Canisius left C.S.R, Pariyaram, where he had spent many years in prayer,

his glance was fixed on everything as if he were bidding farewell to all his favourite beings, animate and inanimate, promising to see them in the abode of his Beloved. At the last day of his earthly life he told one of his spiritual sons that the time of his departure was at hand, and asked him to bless him.

During the last days of his life his spiritual daughters frequently visited him, and according to his desire the sisters used to sing “come, come Lord Jesus”. To those who asked him what song he liked to be sung, he, without hesitation answered joyfully: *Come, come Lord Jesus*. Fr. Canisius sang with them. Those who stood nearby experienced that he sang with his heart and soul, as if his whole person had become one with that invocation. They felt that the holy man was inviting his beloved Lord to come and fetch him to the eternal abode. As the singers came to the last lines, his voice became more and more inaudible. He dozed off, as if he had entered into a trance (*samādhi*). Even on January 28, the last evening of his life on earth the sisters sang that song in the company of Fr. Canisius. Later he told to one of his spiritual sons: “The time has come for my departure; my end has come”. The blessed soul finally welcomed his beloved Jesus on the early morning of January 29. *Mārān ’āttā*. And the Lord came.

## Chapter Two

### “PRAYER IS MY REST”

#### HUMAN AS A *SHŪB* AND *NUAḤ* BEING

#### 1. Inspiration

At CSR, Pariyaram Fr. Canisius faithfully stuck to the following daily programme;

A.M 6.30-7.30 Learning prayer

8.30-9.30 Intercessory prayer for missionaries

11.30-12.30 Intercessory prayer for leaders of the Church and State

P.M 3.00-4.00 Intercessory prayer for religious and lay apostles

6.30-7.30 Listening prayer alone with Jesus

7.45-8.10 Family prayer

9.00-9.30 Night prayer

Fr. Canisius had prepared and delivered a detailed paper on the *Governing Ministry and Prayer Life*, in which he stressed the need for the superiors to become guides and models of prayer life for the community. He summarizes the main elements of prayer life: *Spousal Prayer, Professional Prayer, and Occupational Prayer*. In prayer life the superiors have to give emphasis to mission orientation, intercession orientation and Carmel orientation.

In his memoir entitled *My Life Experiences* published in the official organ of Devamatha CMI Province, Thrissur in September 1984 he writes thus about his particular charism: “There used to arise in me boundless sympathy and solicitude for the suffering brethren. Immediately by offering them to the Lord I used to *pray* insistently for them: “Help, please”... “It is not my presence that is essential to them, but the presence of the divine Master. Therefore I will compel him to bless them by his helping presence... I am convinced that it is my vocation to engender in them the needed insight, hope and courage by *prayer* and penance, of which nobody may be aware”. That was why Fr. Canisius declined the offer to go and participate in the funeral

of Mar Jonas Thaliyath, who died on 7-11-1981 at Rajkot, saying: "I will sit here and *pray* for his Excellency". Fathers testify that he spent the whole day in the chapel.

In 1978 he wrote: "It is my desire to continue my days in an unknown atmosphere an unbroken simple life in *prayer* and penance and in the spiritual and material service for the poor". The Lord granted this desire of his devotee in 1981. He was blessed to continue such kind of life till 1996 at the Centre for Spiritual Realization, Pariyarm. The venerable religious wrote on 20-6-1981 to S.H. Mother General: "I will be in our *prayer* house. There I will be engaged in *prayer* and exposition of the Word of God, which may help one to *pray*. If those who come there are interested, I will *pray* with them". According to the witnesses the saintly person used to *pray* during the one hour adoration at *Sannidhi* (chapel) on his knees and with folded hands, even if he were very tired. One could notice a special brilliance reflected on his face. Others testify about his *praying* attitude in the church: "Although he was facing the tabernacle, his eyes were closed. There irradiated splendour on his smiling face." The smile reflected the different states of inner soul such as rapture and delight of the intimate communication with the Lord.

Fr. Canisius writes in *My Life Experiences*: "What I am capable of and what is delightful for me is a life of *prayer*...I spend daily five hours before the Blessed Sacrament in the name of our brethren, on behalf of them and interiorly in the company of them...Many, especially sisters come over here in order to *pray* together and grow in *prayer* by sharing their *prayer* experiences."

While he was staying as a sick person at Ampazhakad, he daily spent one hour for listening to the word of God, with keen attention, his face and eyes being gleaming with heavenly joy. To many who approached Fr. Canisius requesting for *prayer*, he used to say, "I will *pray* and bless you". To those who were suffering, he used to tell "I am *praying* for you." Four days before his death the sisters told him, "let us *pray*, dear Fr. Canisius". He answered: "Yes we shall *pray*, daughters." The sisters *prayed* with him, as if it were their last *prayer* with the saintly person. While leaving him they said, "let us once more *pray*;" then they spent few minutes more in *prayer*. As they visited him three days before his death, they found him vigilantly *praying*. Once more they *prayed* together.

The man of God not only *prayed* for others, but also requested their *prayers*. In his Testament he wrote: "Please *pray* for me...Let us help each other by *prayer*." The last evening he requested the visitors to *pray* for him. Then they *prayed* with him.

He thus wrote to one of his spiritual daughters on 10-9-1985: "I feel *prayer* as the tonic for my health." As the sisters thought that he may be too tired to join them in *prayers*, they asked him to rest. Then he answered, "*Prayer* is my rest." This talk is inspired by his words, "*Prayer* is my rest". I will try to draw a picture of a human person as a *praying* (in Hebrew *shûb*) and *resting* (*nuaḥ*) being. For the saintly person Canisius the biblical concepts of *shûb* and *nuaḥ* became one and the same reality; one became the synonym of the other. Let us enter into the biblical world of *shûb* and *nuaḥ* concepts.

## PART II HUMAN AS NUAḤ BEING

### Rest as Celebration

#### 3.1. Introduction

Fr. Canisius could enjoy his rest in remaining turned to God. For him the tonic for his health or rest, both physical and spiritual was prayer. **As he prayed, there irradiated on his face, as well as the whole person the heavenly bliss.** In this light let us try to understand the biblical meaning of rest (*nuaḥ*). Creatures need rest. One may say that they are resting beings. This rest has biblical foundations. God himself is said to have rested and has commended human beings to set apart a day for rest on which they should desist from every kind of work (Ex.20:8-11). He gave Israel a land where they could find rest. When they became unfaithful to God, he declared on oath that they could never enter His rest (Ps.95:7-11; Heb.3:11). This divine declaration makes clear that the ultimate destiny of humans is to enter the rest of God. Here is an attempt to illustrate the above-mentioned ideas.

#### 4. Fr. Canisius, an Authentic *Shûb&Nuaḥ* Being

**"Prayer is my rest" - this declaration of Fr. Canisius during his last days is the living testimony of this authentic human being, Christian, priest and religious person, that he had delved into the depths of Christ's personality and lived it, moved in it and had his being in it. Like his Master this disciple turned to God with his heart and soul, strength and mind (Dt.6:5). He turned to the Lord in his health and sickness, in his disabilities and disfigured status, in his agonies and ecstasies, in his humiliations and elevations. This existential man raised his eyes to the Bridegroom of his soul. He turned with others and offered to the merciful Lord their worries and needs, defects and difficulties, virtues and vices. Fr. Canisius spent long hours in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. He interceded for missionaries, leaders of the Church and state, for the religious and the faithful. Indeed, he became the personification of *shûb* being. Like Jesus this man of God had a special kind of prayer, listening alone to God. He used to make remember the Lord to give all light, the needed enlightenment strength and beingness as he attested in a letter dated 10-11-1990. For him prayer was not a monotonous, mechanical and tiresome act. It was his rest in the biblical sense. Like the resting God and the resting Son he lived as a *nuaḥ* being, celebrating the creation, incarnation, redemption, resurrection, ascension and the descent of the Spirit. Indeed, this *nuaḥ* person became a pneumatic being. His earthly body was transfigured into a heavenly body - to use the terminology of Paul in his first letter to Corinthians, 15:35-49. Let each of us pray for the grace to exclaim with Fr. Canisius, "Prayer is my rest".**

### Chapter Three

#### THY WILL, MY WILL

#### TOWARDS A CHRISTIC SPIRITUALITY

##### 1. Inspiration

**"The will of God/Christ - all of it, and that alone" (ssZthjvSw AXp apgp-h<sup>3</sup> AXp am{Xw) - this was the motto of the saintly Fr. Canisius. This ideal he inherited from his parents. In *My Life Experiences* he thus avows this fact: "The most important grace that the Lord had bestowed on me is my father and mother. Their law of life was this: the will of God, all of it and that alone."** According to the testimony of his religious sister it was because he had experienced an inner urge that he chose the Carmelite Order. The

boy was kneeling and praying to Our Lady concerning his vocation in a room. Suddenly he felt the presence of Mother of Carmel, holding a scapular in her hand. He felt then in his heart a strong inner attraction for the CMI Congregation. Without any hesitation he uttered his *fiat* to the divine will. In his final years he thus wrote in *My Life Experiences* "Briefly speaking this was my firm decision –to be only there, where the Lord demands me to be; to do fully whatever He asks me to do, without any further worries. I have tried my best to firmly persevere in that determination, without caring what the flesh and blood were saying. This was also my attitude towards accepting responsibilities and their execution."

Throughout his life this man of God sought God's will. He was never tired of speaking, writing and teaching of it. According to him "every member of the religious community has accepted the divine will, all of it, and that alone as the only enthusiasm of his life" (*Notes on Religious Obedience*). As a Christmas greeting he wrote thus on 19-12-1983: "His birth in a manger and life in a cottage filled with fragrance, the lifestyle hidden and simple, always concerned with the one thing necessary, performance of the will of God." These words wonderfully articulate the inner core of the mystery of Christ's birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension and the sending of the Spirit. It shows that the venerable Father had penetrated into the depths of religious obedience. He thus writes about the essence of obedience: "To do the will of the Father is my food – such a strong faith is the essence of the religious obedience." According to him the Constitution of the Congregation is the document form of a life of obedience.

According to him the superiors were the God's representatives who have to communicate the divine will to the community. He could assert in his last days his faith that he had done throughout his life the divine will. After serving as Superior General of the Congregation and Provincial of his Province he humbly expressed in writing his desire to lead a life of prayer and penance to Fr. General. But he was asked to undertake the office of the Superior of the theology section of the common study house of Bangalore. In a note of 1978 he says: "I have accepted as the divine will the decision of the major superior."

The venerable Father could thus console all who approached him with their problems: "It is Jesus, and not we who do everything. Let this thought be imprinted in your mind. Then we could enjoy peace, and everything will become positive." He thus spoke about confession: "The account which I present about the state of my soul's to the visible representative of the heavenly Father." In his last days Fr. Canisius continuously raised and lowered his right hand in obedience to the doctor's instruction, by saying, the will of Jesus, only that and all of it." On 30-10-1991 he wrote to a family about his sickness: "Whatever the heavenly Father gives, is a gift of his paternal love." On 3-5-1996 he informed a religious sister: "My pain and all other ills remain as usual. Let the divine will be fully accomplished." In the Three-dimensioned Rosary he penetrates into the inner being of the Blessed Virgin: "At all the moments of suffering your heart-beats, 'behold, the handmaid of the Lord' reached the presence of the Father as a gentile wave." He thus advised a family on 28-12-1991: "Father, Father, all for you! If it is so, the only thing which we have to do on earth is to perform the desire of the Father, only that, and all of it. This is what the holy infant uttered to his Father according to the Letter to Hebrews, 'Here I am – I have come to do your will, O God' (10:7). Let us help each other through prayer to accept and realize this as our life task." One who knew this man of God thus testifies: "he was a model religious who had tried to put into practise not only the decisions of the superiors but also their desires, which he could guess and understand.

#### 4. Fr.Canisius, A Personification of “Thy Will My Will”

Fr.Canisius like Jesus and Mary was a living paradigm of the listeningly listening person and a *shmr* being. To do the divine will was his food and drink. Thus he lived to realize God’s *rātsôn* in creation, liberation and covenant. Like Jesus and Mary he was a *thelma* being the doer of divine will. This ideal religious could say thus during the last days on earth: “When I look back, I believe that I had done only the will of God”. Seeing his terrible sufferings some of his friends wanted to pray for his recovery. Disagreeing with them he said: “It is the will of God that I should suffer. You are going to pray that God should take away the chalice of suffering from me. I cannot agree with it. If you pray, God may though unwillingly relent. However, it is not the divine plan concerning my sanctification. I want that the divine will be fully accomplished”. He thus wrote to a spiritual lay son: “Let us help each other with prayer for the grace to give the utmost importance to the determination, ‘the Lord’s will, and it all at once’” Letter dated 22-1-1990). In one of his letter Fr. Canisius thus confessed: “By the eternal mercy of God I had used every charism at its maximum possibility (77 years). Now at this moment he tells me, ‘it is enough’;yes yes. The *fiat* of our Mother.”Let the life of this *thelma* being inspire us.

### Chapter Four

#### A BEING OF PRAISE

#### THE INNER CORE OF A HUMAN

##### 1.Inspiration

Fr.Canisius always found joy in singing the praises of the Lord. In his *Life Experience* he thus writes: “*Eternal praise* to the divine Artist who kindly used this brush which has worn out because of frequent use.” He thus concludes his thoughts, “*Praise to God!*” He remembers his novitiate days in the *Centenary Souvenir* of the Ampazhakad Novitiate House (1889-1989): “Church, chapel, playground, cashewnut grove, recreation hall – all these places were unforgettable elements of the period of novitiate – centres of rest, joy and the community experience ... *Praise to God.*” On 24-5-1988 the blessed one wrote to Sr.Octavia: “*Praise to the Lord* who totally makes use of each moment of ours... There is no wonder that my fingers which were faithful to me 75 years have now become weak. *Praise to God!*” “*May the Lord be praised every day and always!*” (letter dated 21-9-1983). On hearing the election of a Superior General he wrote, “*Praise to God!*” (10-11-1987). He uses the same phrase in almost all the letters. Some instances of his divine praise are given below: He exclaimed: “*Praise to him*” (letter dated 26-7-1985) for the grace to pray to the Eucharistic Lord in the company of many people in which he found the foretaste of the heavenly bliss. On hearing the news about the new superior he wrote: “*Praise to God*” (letter dated 10-11-1987). As a marriage was well celebrated, the saintly soul wrote: “*Praise to God*” (letter dated 19-9-1985). About the golden Jubilee of religious profession of his sister: “*Eternal praise to him.* Let us together sing his praise for all the graces showered on Sr. Sarseela through fifty years of religious life” (letter dated 20-7-1984). Fr. Canisius *praises God* for the favour granted to him to look at the souvenir picture of the golden Jubilee of his sister and remain united with her in the divine presence (letter dated 6-12-1984).

Syro-Malabar Eucharistic liturgy excels itself in celebrating the divine praises. It consists of four acts, namely praise, honour, thanks and adoration. There

occur two types of formula: "We offer you praise, honour, thanks and adoration"; "We adore you, we praise you, we honour you, we thank you." In such acts heavenly and earthly beings join together; they become one heart and soul. Fr. Canisius seems to have imbibed this liturgical spirit, and had become a celestial being already on earth. Now let us enter into the biblical world of praise.

#### 4. Fr. Canisius, A Celestial Being

The saintly religious was gifted with a profound and mystical sense of praise dynamics. That was why he almost always uttered words of praise. To put it differently, he became already on earth a being of praise. Here itself he has joined the celestial community by celebrating the divine glories. Some more examples of his praising acts are given below:

-When a relative called Fiat embraced the religious life, Fr.Canisius wrote: "*I praise the Almighty* who has deigned to call Fiat to the most worthy state of life of the new covenant" (letter dated 30-9-1991).

- To the one who made his religious profession one month after the demise of his mother: "Let us *praise Him* who called the mother to Him one month before, so that she could enjoy the scene of God receiving the consecration of her son on 7<sup>th</sup>September" (letter dated 8-9-1984).

- On 21-9-1983 he wrote to Bro.Varghese: "The Lord had led Varghese to the earthly paradise. May *the Lord he praised* always and forever."

- Exhortation to Bro.Varghese: "*Praise to the Lord* who had arranged for us the opportunity to meditate on the paternal heart of the loving Father who pours out his love through everyone" (letter dated 17-2-1984).

- "The Lord says to the hand which had incessantly worked for him about 70 years, 'let this work stop for a while;' Very many thanks. Let *his name be praised*, which always gives us directions" (letter dated 4-7-1990).

- "I am not bed-ridden. Now I could continue my programmes. Only there is no certainty whether my head will be properly functioning when I get up in the morning.*Praise to God* who gives me life to do things as well as joy" (letter dated 12-7-1984).

- At having the photo of the Jubilee celebration of Sr.Serseela, he wrote: "When I see it (photo) I get the certainty that what sister had in mind at leaving the house at a young age, will become a reality. How much thanks I offer to the Almighty whenever I see it! *Eternal praise to Him*" (letter dated 10-9-1985).

- "May the divine hands lead us at all times! Our hands may be feeble. But His hands are always strong. This is the reason for our hope. *Eternal praise to Him*" (letter dated 18-4-1984).

- "All my organs have worked at their best for the Lord. Now they have become exhausted. What a great joy! When we are fully poured out as an offering, the objective of our life is accomplished. *Praise to Him!*" (letter dated 18-4-1984).

- "Since three months my left hand has become inactive. The reason was a fracture to the bone; it was put in plaster for two months. Now plaster is removed. The hand is slowly getting better. Many thanks for your sincere prayer. Now I can write with my right hand. *Praise to God, the Father!*" (letter dated 30-10-1991).

- "Many thanks for your letter. Congratulations for the glorious success of Manoj!*Praise to God*... May the Lord grant that the shower of roses of the Little Flower be always with the family! ( Fr.Canisius had printed and distributed a picture of St. Therese of Lisieux with a prayer). Even yesterday many came here asking for that picture and prayer. *Praise to God!*" (letter dated 2-3-1992).



- "I understand that both children are relaxing after finishing the examinations. I believe that the Lord would have certainly heard our prayers. *Praise to Him!*" (letter dated 10-6-1992).

- "I rejoice at hearing that you are fully recovering from your illness. *Praise to God!*" (letter dated 30-9-1986).

- "I rejoice that you have already written down a big chapter of the life. I am proud of it. *Praise to God!*" (letter dated 15-1-1986).

- "*Eternal praise* for the infinite Love who had called and elected us!" (letter dated 24-5-1986).

- "The message of your letter provided me great delight. I felt that Jesus is giving his hand and raising you up by saying: 'Well done, my faithful handmaid.' *Eternal praise to Him!*" (letter dated 1-1-1992).

- "I heard only now about the accident... These are occasions given to those who are led by divine grace so that they can publically manifest it. *Praise to Him!*" (letter dated 10-5-1988).

- He wrote thus about the coming marriage of his elder brother's son, who, according to him, was well prepared beforehand by God for that state of life: "*Eternal praise* for the hidden providence of the God of heavens!"

- In a letter to the head of a family, dated 22-1-1990 Fr. Canisius offers thrice *praise to God* on account of that happy family, for the visit of the family members to him, and at the thought of the deceased father being rejoicing in heaven seeing their loving fellowship.

These few texts present Fr. Canisius as a being of praise. He is raising his soul in praise to the Lord on every occasion. He sings the divine praises for the grace of religious call, religious profession, for sickness and death, for getting a photo, for the success in examinations, for receiving favours, for recovery, for the good works of others etc. This is indeed the portrait of an authentic human being. Let the model of this man of God inspire us in finding out our call to become beings of praise.

## Chapter Five

### **A SUFFERING *EBED***

#### **THE TRUE PORTRAIT OF HUMAN**

### **1. Inspiration**

#### **1.1. Introduction**

God provided Fr. Canisius an in-depth experience and sense of the mystery of suffering. Hence he wholeheartedly welcomed the sufferings as his beloved friend. The son of St. Teresa of Avila seemed to make his own her motto, *aut pati aut mori* (either suffer or die). He used to tell thus his spiritual daughters who came to him with their problems: "Jesus did not come to explain away suffering or remove it. He came to fill it." One may find in him a living and loving portrait of the suffering *ebed* of Is.52:13-53:1-12.

#### **1.2. One Affected With Rheumatoid Arthritis**

Already in 1984 Fr. Canisius became a prey of Rheumatoid arthritis a chronic disease, characterised by stiffness and inflammation of the joints, loss of

mobility, weakness and deformity. It affects tremendous pain. He used to present it as a trifling ache and swelling... But the patient could not stretch out his hands and legs as well as bend them. This saintly soul suffered all the pains without any trace of impatience and murmur, and told the bystanders with a smile, "let the divine will be fulfilled." The magnetic treatment reduced his pain a little, but the disease did not disappear. Also he was affected by dermatosis, inflammation of the skin.

### **1.3 Other Ills**

In 1990 Fr. Canisius began to feel giddiness, which was caused by spondylitis. Also he had to suffer urinal troubles; because of it he underwent prostatic surgery. By 1992 he was suffering intense pain on both shoulders. Once he told the sisters who promised him their prayers, "please pray, but not for the cure, but for the strength to suffer the pains." The loss of eye sight caused great suffering for Fr. Canisius who had till then found happiness in reading the Holy Scriptures. He was forced to undergo an eye operation in 1995, which helped him to recover eye sight. After some time there appeared on both his knees dry scurf and pus of ulcers. He was admitted to hospital. To spend in the hospital, for which he was constrained, was an agonizing thing for this saintly religious who wanted to live always inside the monastery.

What had brought out most of his ills? According to doctors Fr. Canisius had lived a life of severe penance by frequently fasting and eating only vegetarian food. Thus his body did not get essential elements to function properly. It was certain that the saintly man practised this kind of austere life because of his love for the suffering Lord.

In 1995 another infirmity brought terrible suffering to this venerable religious, herpes zoster, a viral infection causing eruption of vesicles along a nerve path on one side of the body, accompanied by severe neuralgia. Because of pain he was wriggling in the bed, often muttering, "my Mother (Mary), my help." He was taken to hospital.

### **1.4. Issues of Suffering**

Fr. Canisius loved to wear the religious habit, and that of the Carmelite tradition – brown cassock, scapular and hood. But because of Rheumatoid Arthritis, he could not raise his arms and wear the cassock, or even a shirt. Thus he was forced to be clothed in loin cloth, of saffron colour. He had to cover his chest with a shawl. This caused him great inner suffering. As he could not take bath by himself, his superior asked the servant to bathe him. This affected his delicate sense concerning nakedness. A whole day he spent in prayer. He offered himself to the Lord who was deprived of clothes during crucifixion and earned strength to face that suffering. At those days, the saintly person practised asceticism even during the celebration of Holy Mass. He did not want to enjoy the cooling effect of fan. He declined to sit on a chair, but preferred a stool which was uncomfortable to the patient.

### **1.5. Attitude to Suffering**

In one of his sermon notes Fr. Canisius says: "Suffering is not to be considered as a frightening dream; rather it is the foretaste of consolation." Fortified by his experience he exhorted others: "Find consolation through suffering. There is no need of running away in fear of suffering; better embrace it and find joy in suffering. One may think that a suffering person had lost everything. But in truth he is reaping a harvest. The sense of loss is only a temporary phenomenon. If one thinks in a lofty way, the loss is merely in this world. Actually one acquires a hundred fold profit, which one will get in this world itself, and in the other world eternal life. Thus what we are supposed to attain, (eternal life) is won easily through suffering."

### 1.6. Mental Sufferings

Although Fr. Canisius wanted to lead a humble and unknown life, he was forced to undertake many high and responsible offices in the Religious Congregation, such as Prior General, General Counsellor, Provincial, Rector of the Major Study House, Bangalore. Submitting to the divine will the venerable Father tried his best to perform the duties. Although he could bring out innovative and creative growth in every field, he had to pay a high price. Certain of his decisions and actions were highly criticized. This pained his delicate soul. Still he did not utter a word of complaint and offered all the sufferings to his Lord. Whenever he made a mistake he was willing to acknowledge it and was ever ready to ask pardon even to his students and inferiors.

### 3. Fr. Canisius, the Image of the Suffering Jesus

"I fill up in my flesh what is lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, which is the Church" (Col.1:24) – asserted Paul. Fr. Canisius lived these words. On the Good Friday he used to carry a big cross during the Way of the Cross. The participants were very much edified by the way he walked and looked, which brought into their memory the person of Christ. This true son of Carmel practised and lived what he had written on Carmel, namely *the meditation of suffering* (kl-vm-βl[ym\w), peace, patience and tranquility maintained by St. John of the Cross. As Paul the Apostle he also rejoiced in what he was suffering. On 18-4-1984 he wrote: "Let us with patience and joy accept the suffering and thank God for it." He did not want to be fully healed of his infirmities (letter dated 9-5-1992). Concerning his ills he said: "Whatever God the Father gives, is the gift of his paternal love" (letter dated 30-10-1991). According to him each moment of suffering earns for us eightfold eternal wealth:

- Reparation of my sins and increasing purity of heart  
(Ps.51:2; Mt.5:8).
- A little more reparatory merit which I earn for my brethren in order to lighten their weight (Gal.6:2).
- More likeness to the suffering Jesus (Rom.8: Gal.6:17).
- Fill my part in Christ's suffering at this moment  
(Col.1:24).
- My new contribution for the eternal wealth of every Member of the mystical body (Col.1:24).
- One step forward through the highway of glory  
(Lk.24:25-27; Rom.8:17).
- Storing up of energy for a better resurrection for me  
(1Cor.15:35-42; Heb.11:35).
- A better possibility of mediation (only those who have suffered can feel compassion for the suffering people; only they will hasten to the help of the suffering ones),  
Heb.5-8.

May this living image of Christ, the suffering *Ebed* inspire us to live up the call of the disciples!

## Chapter Six

### A HAPPY BEING

#### THE SATCHITANADA DIMENSION

##### 1. Inspiration

The children of an officer, who frequently visited and consulted Fr. Canisius with his family, once asked him: "Pappa, why this Father smiles whenever he utters the name Jesus?" He answered them: "That smile is the strength of his personal love-relationship with Jesus... Whenever others mention the name of a person whom we love, there often blossoms a smile in our hearts, is not it? I think that the Father was in intimate love-relationship and union with Jesus." The little ones had keenly observed that whenever the venerable religious uttered the name Jesus during the conversation, he could not but smile with inner joy. This fact speaks volumes; it reveals his spirituality of joy.

The happiness of Fr. Canisius emanated from his habitual meditation on and appropriation of the sacred mysteries. According to him Jesus and Mary were beings of joy, since they were intimately related with *Satchitananda*. In his reflection on Annunciation he calls it, the message of *inexpressible joy* (*The Threefold Rosary*). He thus puts the mystery of Resurrection: "*Exult O the queen of heaven! This is the last victory of your unshakable faith*" (*The Threefold Rosary*). According to him the act of Ascension "*thrilled Mary's maternal heart with joy.*"

When his right arm was paralyzed and he could not speak clearly he murmured, "I am so happy." Fr. Superior gives the following testimony: "Fr. Canisius still has the former ills such as difficulty to walk and bodily pains, but he takes with joy every suffering." On 18-4-1984 he wrote: "Almost all my bodily organs are slowly getting unfit. They show the signs of fatigue according to the climatic changes. By the special grace of God I feel contentment and pride at it. Every organ has done its work at its full capacity. Now they are exhausted and fade away. What a great joy!" He wrote on 20-12-1990: "I am *fully happy*". At his last confession he told: "I do not have any complaint. I am *very happy*." It seems that Fr. Canisius had been given the grace to enjoy the fruits of the garden of Carmel, namely "the *joyful nature* of St. Teresa and her followers" and "*the ever green beauty which engenders love for commandments*" (*Notes*).

##### 3. A Paradigm of Joy

In Fr. Canisius we can find a happy being in its biblical sense. One may say that the God of joy enriched him with the grace to enter into the inner depths of the Christian joy. Others found in him the face of Jesus, the incarnated form of bliss. He wrote on 21-11-1990 in his *Last Testament*: "I gladly hand over to my brethren my wealth, i.e., my testimony of experience that it is possible to live in the divine presence with pure heart, joyful countenance and innocence by keeping religious values." These words speak for themselves, and do not need for explanation.

This man of God found celestial joy in everything and in whatever happened to him and to others. It was always with a smiling face that Fr. Canisius appeared and approached others. As an apostle of joy he communicated the message of Christian happiness to all who visited him. Certain examples are given below:

- He wrote about the uncertainty of cure and his health: "God will make it known at the opportune time clearly. My only *joy* is to accept it totally" (letter dated 16-8-1990).

- At seeing that he did not have even a holy picture to give as a present for the religious profession of his sister: "It gave me great *joy*" (letter dated 13-10-1967).

- When his superior gave him a good picture to give as a present to his sister at her religious profession his feeling was this: "If it were the divine will that I should not get even it, I would not have less *happiness*" (letter dated 13-10-1967).

- He thus communicated his own experience: "When our soul will be illumined with the divine wisdom, every pain will be transformed into *joy*" (letter dated 27-6-1985).

- On 13-10-1967 he wrote: "May God enlighten us so that we can embrace the little crosses of daily life resolutely and *joyfully*."

- "When we reach at our destiny, the Paternal House, all our ills and pains will cease; we will get back youthfulness. Let us spend our remaining years with *happiness*, fixing our eyes on that day" (letter dated 19-9-1993).

- "I pray for you that you may get the grace to accept the troubles and difficulties" (letter dated 31-8-1994).

- Let us accept with *joy* all the sufferings permitted by the Lord" (letter dated 9-5-1992).

- "This heavenly communion will enable us to embrace the ups and downs of the world with celestial *joy*" (letter dated 2-3-1992).

- "Let us accept the pain of rheumatism with *joy* and thank God" (letter dated 18-4-1984).

- At the birth of a child in a family he wrote: "May the presence of the child transform the little family into a Holy Family, where *joy* and *gladness* incessantly overflowed like a little heaven" (letter dated 25-6-1983).

Some events which provided him happiness need to be mentioned. He rejoiced at the healthy state of others, at the well-conducted wedding ceremony, at the confidence of others that the correspondent enjoyed, at getting a travelling companion, at the courage the children showed in walking long distance to the school, at the successful solution of the partition issues, at the happy ending of transfers, at getting a photo of his sister, at one being sent as a missionary, at getting letters, at others reaching at the proper destination and at a spiritual daughter completing a big chapter of her life. In *My Life experiences* Fr. Canicius wrote: "I always found *joy* in the teaching task." According to the testimony of the Superior he enjoyed taking classes for the novices during his final days.

May this apostle of *joy* inspire us to become children of happiness.

## Chapter Seven

### A JOSEPH PARADIGM

#### THE DIVINE MILIEU

##### 1. Inspiration

Fr. Canisius, the youngest son of Lonappan and Mariam was born on May 12 1914 at Anandapuram. As the baby was very sick, he was baptised only on 6<sup>th</sup> June. At the insistence of the mother child was given the name of St. Joseph, which meant one who brings growth, increase and addition. The family members affectionately called the child *Kochauseph*, little Joseph. Fr. Canisius lived up the meaning of his name. He brought throughout his life growth, increase and addition in the life of others, by words and deeds of love, kindness, peace, joy, confidence, which brought conversion and renewal of life. Now we unveil the world of the Bible which will give us deep insights into the personality of this man of God.

While serving as Superior General Fr. Canisius wanted to celebrate Mission Sunday in order to engender apostolic spirit among the faithful. He worked hard for it, even joining others till midnight in doing services such as cutting papers and pasting them. Also this *Joseph-being* made a Holy Land in Ernakulum, so that the people could have a deeper knowledge of the Bible. In that work it was he who drew the sketch and made the plan. His Christmas crib with a show attracted thousands of people, who for the first time had a visual experience of the mystery of the birth of Jesus. The man of God always came forward with new and new ideas which served to enkindle religious fervour among the public. The crib with an exhibition at Trissur common compound won unreserved appreciation of all. Also he opened a public library in order to make the people grow in knowledge, culture and nobility. *Kalasadana* was inaugurated in 1977 for the development of art, culture, drama and dance. For the young people he gave form to a new centre called *Kalavihar*. It was he who started the periodical *Province Bulletin*.

This *Joseph-being* wanted to bring out an integral growth in the life of all. For the social uplift of the poor Fr. Canisius began Kuriakose Elias Service Society with its multifarious activities. It was because of his inspiration and initiative that the idea of empowerment of laity became a reality. He organized the first family meeting at Trissur. The venerable father even wrote a testament to the Ancestral Family Gathering, which still serves as catalysis of the unity and amity of its members.

The *Joseph-being's* charisma and spiritual dynamism were recognized even by Vatican authorities. They appointed him as the apostolic visitor of the Society of Catholic Medical Missionaries. He took great pains to visit all the convents of sisters, discussed the issues with them and submitted a report with suggestions for the growth of that Congregation. Similarly Fr. Canisius was entrusted the arduous job of uniting the different branches of the sisters of Sacred Heart. He did it in a wonderful way by unifying the independent houses and by drawing a common constitution.

It was during his tenure of office of the Superior General that CMI Congregation was given the Sagar Mission. Also Fr. Canisius paved the way for getting two more mission territories, namely, Jagadpur and Bijnor outside Kerala. Thus one may say that the former *Kochauseph* lived the meaning of his name.

The life of this humble and pious religious as a *Joseph-being* reminds us of our sublime call to become the living and loving images of God and Christ – the archetypes a architects of *Joseph* dynamics.